

**His Eminence, Metropolitan of Sachkhere and Chiatura,**

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### **The Most Holy Theotokos and Spiritual Values**

The phenomenon of the Most Holy Theotokos is one of the most important spiritual treasures of mankind. The Virgin Mary had been the chosen follower of Moses' religion before the foundation of the Church of Christ. She is the only woman in the whole history of Israel who by the divine providence was honored to enter the holy of holies, where even the head of church could enter only once a year, at the age of three. The Mother of God, as the Mother of Apostle, is mentioned in the Koran with respect.

The Mother of God not only preaches mutual love and tolerance, but She herself is the perfect example of accomplishment of highest virtues. Taking this into account, the scientific gathering dedicated to the Mother of God acquires additional significance besides its scientific content. Such a symposium could make a certain contribution to the sphere of dialogue among cultures and civilizations. The Mother of God is not only a mediator between God and men, but She is the example of love and mutual understanding among the societies having various beliefs. Our present symposium is the confirmation of it. Although the symposium was confined to the orthodox tradition of veneration of the Mother of God, not only catholic and protestant scientists but scientist from Israel too expressed the wish of participating in it.

The teaching of Jesus Christ, God incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, is one of the most principal sources of universal values, acknowledged in the contemporary world. Christian civilization assisted greatly in developing of culture of dialogue among various views.

Today in the modern world taking into consideration of the will of people on the one hand and the will of every individual person on the other hand and assistance in realization of their rights occupies the special place. In the process of interrelations of these values, there is one eternal problem. Sometimes general norms and interests do not coincide with personal and vice versa. In different epochs and cultural spaces this problem was considered and solved in various ways. Organization of similar collisions is not so easy, but it is doubtless what society should not suppress personal and the person should not neglect common interests.

General norms are based on different grounds in different cultures. These norms reflect aspiration of society and are indicators of its self-knowledge and maturity. Their respect is the guarantee of social peace, but their neglecting could become the reason of turmoil and discord. Unreserved restriction of personal freedom on behalf of public authority is not less dangerous. Retaining of balance between these interests requires great wisdom and diligence. General and universal truth is revelational and correspondingly of compulsory character for the most of religious teachings. We should not forget as well that in interacting with mystical world the person possesses both his rights and his duties.

The man created in the image and likeness of God is called upon for cooperation with God. God is almighty, but retaining of harmony in the universe is impossible without man's free will. God's incarnation couldn't have been accomplished, if not good will of Virgin Mary: „Let it be to me according to your word“ (Luke 1, 38). Such an honor, distinguishing man from all other creatures, imposes the greatest responsibility on him before God and the universe.

According to biblical teaching, disruption of the primeval harmony was caused exactly by the deviation of the will of man from the will of God. In the point of view of religion, the history of humanity represents the seeking of this lost paradise. On the way of restoration of the disrupted harmony, mankind mainly faces two kinds of temptations: either deviation from the will of God and relying on the own will, or groundless limitation of human freedom in the name of God happen. Neglecting of both divine and human nature in some or other form arouses the tensions in the social life. Rational delimitation between ecclesiastical and secular spheres, i.e. secularism, aims exactly at easing this tension; but it is not an easy task to find the golden mean. In case of overdoing, institutional secularism can be transformed into totalitarianism.

The phenomenon of the Mother of God is just the harmonious synthesis of divine and human. Her icon with Child Jesus is one of the most distinguished symbols of the purest motherly love, on the one hand, and of boundless respect of the creator of the universe, on the other hand, of civilization of humanity.

Despite the fact that Virgin Mary is the mother of God, she does not lose her humility and retains reverence for her Son and God. Eve lost the paradise putting her will above the will of god, but Virgin Mary accomplished the greatest personal merit by the complete obedience to the

will of God. Obedience to the will of God not only belittles personal freedom, but on the contrary, assists the perfect manifestation of human potentialities.

We find the examples of both atheism and pseudo-religiosity in the history of mankind, which paid high price for both of them. The most extreme manifestations of them were followed by the severe ordeals, in the first case it was the Flood and the mixture of languages, and in the second case there were religious wars. Conducting of dialogue between religious and secular societies acquires a special importance in the époque of globalization. In the second millennium AD, opposition between religion and science caused increasing of the specific weight of non-religious society. Certain austerity of religion, on the one hand, and excessive striving of science toward autonomy, on the other hand, conditioned gradual delimitation of these two spheres. Separation of spiritual and intellectual, mystical and rational gives us imperfect idea of the universe. The mother of God with her deep mysticism and at the same time with her intellectual faculties is the best example of unity of heart and mind. One of the conditions of success of the dialogue between religious and non-religious societies is the close connection between belief and science. There has been a rich experience of such union in Georgia: Georgian monasteries in Georgia itself and out of its borders had been great education centers at the same time. In XI century, the Holy King David the Builder founded the scientific academy at Gelaty Monastery of the Mother of God, later called the Second Jerusalem and Other Athens, as a symbol of unity of spirituality and intellect, belief and science. This tradition has endured centuries in Georgia, escaped the atheistic violence of the XX century and today again experiences renaissance. In our country, strong union of spirituality and intellect conditioned healthy attitude between divine and human nature. This union was reflected in all spheres of social life: state system, culture, the family institute and mutual understanding and respect of groups having different cultural or religious views. High spiritual values – God, motherland and the man – have been developed and set in our life during centuries. Georgian nation defended these values selflessly, but if not extraordinary patronage and assistance of the Mother of God, it would have been impossible to save us. Georgia is the allotted portion of the Mother of God. Divine Providence allotted conversion of our country to the Queen of Heaven. The Mother of God sent Apostle Andrew the First-Called to preach in our country and gave him her icon not made by hands as a sign of her patronage of Georgia. By means of this icon the grace of the Mother of God came and settled in our country. Whole Georgia celebrates the coming of this grace today and dedicates the week of

veneration of the Mother of God to it. The phenomenon of the Mother of God fulfilled the decisive role in formation of spirituality of Georgian nation. She is the person who perfectly accomplished two most principal values given to humans by God: striving to heavenly perfection and unselfish love to the fellow man.

**Representative of the World Patriarchate,  
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**The Honor of the Theotokos on Mount Athos**

Your Eminence! Your Graces! Honorable Fathers! Ladies and Gentlemen!

Christ is Risen!

It is truly a joy and a blessing for me to have been given the privilege of participating, as a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in this Conference, dedicated to the person of the All-Holy Theotokos and, more particularly (as I was able to gather from the brief missive that I received through the Ecumenical Patriarchate) on the exchange of honors paid to the Theotokos by the local Orthodox Churches. Congratulations are due to the Church of Georgia for this commendable initiative, one that will contribute to the strengthening of our brotherly ties and unity, which is our sacred duty to preserve and maintain.

In view of the topic at hand, therefore, I have chosen to share my thoughts regarding the holiest of all places under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, namely Mount Athos: a setting given to monastic spiritual exercises and struggle spanning well over a millennium. As well as including *metochia* or glebes, sketes and individual monastic cells, Athos encompasses the world-famous 20 stavropegiac monasteries, in all staffed by a total of approximately 2,000 monks, mostly of Greek origin but inclusive of other national origins as well.

The monks residing in the Holy Mountain, like those of ourselves who serve in the Ecumenical Patriarchate, call Athos “the garden of the Mother of God.” Obviously, the nickname reflects the fact that Mary is the prime role model for the monastic community of Athos. If a sincere monk’s life should be characterized by poverty, obedience, and chastity, Mary was in possession of all three virtues to the utmost degree. According to Orthodox patristic theology, Mary was clean from sin, even though she bore with her the original sin of humankind and could lean toward sin like every other man and woman on earth, since she did not possess the

ontological sinlessness of her Son, the God-man and our Savior, Jesus Christ. According to St. Gregory Palamas, who himself resided in Mt. Athos for many years and dealt successfully with the scholastic views of the Calabrian monk Barlaam and Gregory Akindynos, the Theotokos was, properly speaking, the sole real virgin. For, she had attained the perfect purity, having been virgin in body and soul, and no defilement could sully either her bodily sensations or the virtues of her spirit. This line of thought was followed by St. Nicholas Kavasilas, a near contemporary of St. Gregory. Kavasilas wrote that “it is a cause for astonishment, not only for humans but for the angels no less, how the Virgin Mary, while not being humanly different from other people, nevertheless managed to escape humankind’s common sickness, namely sin. For, she was ”the first and only human being delivered from sin.” Another Athonite monk, St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, wrote that “the Theotokos was above every voluntary sin, whether forgivable or deadly, being immune even from evil thoughts.” This will be further corroborated near the end of our speech, with the citation of a Russian monk, St. Siluan, who excelled in his monastic zeal during the early decades of the previous century, in the Athonite monastery of St. Panteleimon. We shall see how Siluan witnessed, in the Holy Spirit, that “the Mother of God never ever sinned, not even in thought.”

There exists a certain ancient tradition originating in Mount Athos linking the latter organically to the Lady Theotokos, even as early as her earthly days. This tradition was rapidly spread and became popular, in effect, first among the pious people of Georgia and then in Russia, particularly in those countries’ monastic centers. From there, this tradition apparently made inroads in Athonite monasticism, wherein the Theotokos is seen not only as the protector of Mount Athos but as its permanent source of grace, by virtue of her constant presence.

The said tradition is registered in Λ 66, Φ. 114 fonts, in a code of the Megisti Lavra Holy Monastery. Aside from its historical truth, this narrative appeases the minds and hearts of the monks, filling them with a sense of reassurance and joy in view of such a glorious prospect, one that is also transmitted to the crowding pilgrims. In Athos, the presence of Mary is felt by everyone. Athonites and non-Athonite visitors alike pause, standing in awe before the magnificent artistic renditions of the Theotokos (often of Russian style) decorating the Sacristies of monasteries and the private cells of the residing elders.

Here we would be remiss if no mention was made of the so-called first monk to ever inhabit Mount Athos, Peter the Athonite, who was tonsured in the West by Pope Agatho in 681, and whose biography was written by St. Gregory Palamas. Prominent in this biography, is the declaration of the immediate stewardship, protection, blessing, and gracing of all Athonite monks down the centuries by the Lady Theotokos, as was ascertained in her revelation to Peter: “there exists in the European continent,” as Palamas chronicles the Theotokos’ revelation to Peter, “a very large, marvelous mountainside, extending far into the sea in the direction of African Libya. Having singled it out from the entire earth, I have decided – so said the Theotokos to Peter – to destine it as an appropriate residing place for monks. From this moment on, it shall be called Holy. And I pledge to all those who shall decide to undertake in its premises a struggle against the common enemy of humanity, i.e. the devil, that I shall be the first to fight by their side throughout their entire lives. And I shall also stand by them unfailingly as comrade, teacher, and mentor in the doing of good works, just as I shall remain a vigilant mentor advising the avoidance of evil deeds. I shall be their guardian, their physician and caregiver, providing them with all that is necessary to sustain the body and soul in their common struggle against the devil. These I pledge, as regards the present life. As far as the afterlife is concerned, I shall strongly defend before my Son and God those who, as monks, shall finish their mortal lives in this appointed land, asking Him for the complete remission and forgiveness of their sins.

St. Gregory Palamas adds the following comment on the foregoing revelation of the Theotokos to monk Peter: “I am well aware of the immense joy that the Theotokos’ revealed words have caused to all, as was to be expected. For she has explicitly promised to us and to everyone who thinks rightly the salvation of our souls, which is the main concern in this life. For, when the Mother of God Herself, who has made the impossible possible, promises to assist us, not only temporarily in this present life, but also with regard to eternity (certainly not a small matter), to the effect of freeing us completely from the burden of our sins, who cannot be overwhelmed with joy, if they have a sane mind?”

A milestone in the history of the Athonite community is the year 963, in which the Monastery of Megisti Lavra was founded by St. Athanasius of Trabzon, following permission and grants from Nicephorus Focas. This was soon followed by the issuance of the first *typicon* or charter of the Holy Mountain, signed by Ioannis Tsimiskes in 972. Soon thereafter, in 980, the

faithful friend and supporter of Emperor Basil the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ioannis Iver, a disciple of St. Athanasius, manages to obtain permission and the necessary funds to build the Iviron Monastery, for the monastic repose of his fellow countrymen Georgians. This milestone marks the beginning of the inter-Orthodox, international character of Mount Athos. These two monasteries, which honor the Theotokos in particular, as we shall further see in the course of this lecture, were destined to mark the historic itinerary of Athos, as they became the model for the other great Athonite monasteries.

As centuries passed, and the Athonite monastic life and order consolidated into distinct patterns, spiritual exercises and the pursuit of virtues became the daily task of each and every monk residing in the community – a community filled with the broadly perceived and acknowledged grace and protection of the Lady Theotokos. Numerous examples of Athonite saints could be cited who, in a rupture of their minds, witnessed visions that testified to the protection and strengthening of Athos and its monks by the All-Holy Theotokos. Several more cases could be stated of monks who, in full consciousness, conversed with the Theotokos and were personally reassured by her of her unfailing favor and motherly care. As an impartial chronicler of Athonite life wrote in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Virgin uttered the following words to Maximus Kafsokalyvites, a frequent conversant with the Theotokos: “accept the grace against the demons, you who are a champion of virtues. Reside at the foot of the top of Athos, for that is the will of my Son. You must rise in heights of virtue and become a teacher and guide for everyone in the desert. Instruct the new Israel to obey the holy and pious commands of my Son. Follow in the footsteps of Moses and Elijah, who once steered Israel into the right path.”

This was about the same time when St. Gregory the Sinanite explored the Athonite peninsula, associating and conversing with saints as well as teaching the high craft of the Jesus Prayer. At that same time, too, his pupil, Mark the Monk was alerted by the Theotokos not to follow St. Gregory in his mission to the outside world, but move rather further in the interior of Mount Athos. He was then graced with a marvelous vision, in which, as he related, he saw the entire mountain as a stunningly beautiful city raised high above the ground, and the Theotokos being surrounded by angels who praised her at a point above the city’s palaces. Prompted by such a similar experience, St. Maximus decided not to leave the Athonite top, so as not to be deprived of its spiritual joy and pleasure. Eventually, he confided his experience to another elder,



who spread it around the community. As a result of this, some monks began to venerate him with exaggeration, while others saw him as mentally deranged. Seeing as he did that the latter sort of treatment was to his spiritual benefit, St. Maximus henceforth decided to act accordingly, as a *salos* or madman. Thus, he lived in a makeshift cabin made of tree branches, and as soon as he discerned that he was accosted with veneration, he burned the cabin and moved on to another place, and so forth.

Such is the multitude of the Theotokos' affectionate interventions and manifestations to elect persons distinguished for their holy lives, that one would be justified to view the entire history of Mount Athos as a record of Mary's posthumous life. It should be quite evident why the Mother of God stands as model for the monastic community of Athos. It was St. Gregory Palamas who, to a greater extent than the preceding Church Fathers, emphasized the anthropological significance of the person of Theotokos, though of course without neglecting her Christological significance, which he presupposed. Palamas wrote at length on the Theotokos' personhood and ascetic life, presenting her as a hesychast inside the Holy of Holies, as a model of spiritual perfection. He believed that Mary was the first to have seen the Risen Christ; that she possessed spotless purity, as a virgin in both body and soul, which stood immune from spiritual infection. She alone from the whole human race preserved intact and bright the divine image in us. The Virgin was conceived "wisely" by St. Anne, from Joachim, in the sense that her manner of conception was blameless. For her to have had an "immaculate conception," she should've been born from a virgin, like Christ. With her benevolent will and spiritual exercise, she freely cultivated her virtues to the highest extent. The Athonite Fathers concur that it is only in the person of the Theotokos that we encounter nature and hypostasis co-existing in complete harmony, which is why, as St. Maximus the Confessor would put it, she embodies "God's peace with nature." Her will was fully identified with that of God, for she had surrendered her entire conscience to God.

The Virgin's words, "behold the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word," are a source of strength for everyone, particularly to the Athonite monks in their struggle for obedience. Only when it was explained to her that Christ's conception would occur through the might of the Holy Spirit in her virginal uterus, was she able to accept the indescribable economy of God. Indeed, only someone who led a spotless life would be capable of receiving

this incomprehensible economy of God without expressing doubts. The holy Virgin accepted with unpretentious humility Gabriel's praise and message regarding God's Incarnation; for she was the only one worthy of the high honor and mission entrusted upon her by God. Herein precisely lies Mary's central, active role in the mystery of the Incarnation. She had so prepared herself with her all-holy life, as to attract God from heaven to earth. The ever-virgin Mary wasn't simply the best woman on earth, nor was she the greatest woman to have ever lived; rather, her uniqueness consists in being the only one able to bring heaven down on earth, to turn God into man.

Every pilgrim to Athos can easily observe that among the monasteries, the sketes and the countless cells, some icons of the Theotokos have been singled out from hundreds of others and placed more prominently in specially adorned shrines. When approaching them for veneration, pilgrims are overwhelmed with a sense of awe, respect, and devotion, which is natural, considering that they stand before a miraculous icon of the Theotokos – facing her holy figure in its material depiction by wood and paint, by means of which the Theotokos eagerly manifests and transmits her grace, to monks and lay pilgrims alike. Certainly, Mount Athos does not claim an exclusive privileged access to her mind, grace, and protection. Miraculous icons of the Theotokos can be found all over the world, and countless shrines dedicated to her attract people who rush to lay thereupon their pain and sorrow and to receive strength, comfort, and help. Nevertheless, just as true is it that there is not a single monastery on Athos lacking at least one famed, miraculous icon of the Theotokos, with Megistis Lavras and Vatopaidi monasteries being in possession of most. The Protaton of Karyes, the spiritual and administrative center of Athos, is home to the icon of Axion Esti, while the Panagia Kokozelissa is kept in the Monastery of Lavra. In the Lavriotie, cenobetic Skete of the Holy Forerunner, one can see the “acheiropietos” icon. More marvelous icons of the Theotokos include the “Vimatarissa” and the “Antifonitria” of the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, as well as those of the “Paramythia,” “Esfagmeni,” “Eleovrytissa,” “Pyrovolisteisa” and “Pantanassa.” The Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi is also home to the “Holy Belt” of the Theotokos. The Skete of St. Andrew, in Karyes, of the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, hosts the icon named “solace to the sad ones.” The Holy Monastery of Iviron holds the “Portaitissa,” which has been repeatedly copied. The Serbian Holy Monastery of Hilandariou keeps the “Triheroussa,” while another famed icon, the “Galactotrofousa (Breast Feeder),” is also preserved in a Serbian Hilandric cell, near Karyes. The Holy Monastery of

Dionysiou is home to the icon of the “Akathyst Hymn.” Koutlounousiou Monastery hosts the “Fovera Prostasia” (Mighty Protection). Pantocratoros Monastery boasts of its icon of the “Gerontissa.” Zografou Monastery is home to the “Haerovo” and “Epacouousa” icons. Doheiarou Monastery hosts the “Gorgoepikoos.” Filotheou has the “Glykofyloussa (Sweet-kisser),” while St. Paul’s keeps the “Mirror.” Xenophontos owns the “Odigitria” (Guide), and Gregoriou, finally, holds the “Pantanassa.”

This was but a short list of the miraculous icons preserved in the monasteries of Mount Athos. By no means is it a full list; for, several more icons of the Theotokos could be cited as well. All are indicative of the monks’ respect to the person of Mary for well over a millennium of years in Athos, just as they reflect her live presence in this community. Time limitations prevent me from offering even a summary of the rich history of these icons. Hence, I will have to limit myself to a brief narration of only two of these.

The manner by which the icon of “Portaitissa” found its way in Iviron Monastery is truly miraculous. Our knowledge of it comes from the relevant work of the Ivirite monk Damascene. The icon was found in the sea, in a spot facing Iviron. Previously, it had been thrown into the sea by an Arab pirate named Rahai, who had pilfered it from the home of a widow in Nicaea. One cannot but stand in awe at seeing the wound inflicted by the Arab’s sword in the figure of Mary, with the dried blood lying right under the chin. The perpetrator was covered all over with the blood that gushed forth from the icon, and that terrible event was actually the cause for his repentance and salvation. As soon as the icon was picked up by the monks, it was placed in the monastery’s church, and it was there that the Arab pirate came with a contrite heart, seeking the Theotokos’ forgiveness and asking the monks to accept them in their brotherhood. Following a period of spiritual discipleship and preparation, he was baptized, tonsured, and received the name of Damascene. He was beseeching the monks not to call him Damascene, but barbarian, so as to preserve in him the memory of his sinful past.

It is worth mentioning that while this icon had been placed at the monastery’s catholicon, it was inexplicably found at the entrance in the morning. The mystery was solved thanks to the Theotokos’ revelation to an exceptional monk named Gabriel. “Tell the Abbot, that I brought my icon to the monastery so that I would guard and protect it, not you.” The Mother of God gave further promises of assistance and protection to all Athonite monks, besides the Ivirites, provided

that they remain mindful of their tasks and duties and seek recourse to her intercession and mercy. The multitude of gold and silver coins hung on the icon, along with other valuables and material dedications, by the countless receivers of the Theotokos' mercy, indicate the active presence of the Theotokos in the lives of lay believers and monks alike.

Also worth mentioning is the icon of the "Axion Esti," which was initially kept in a Skete, in a cell dedicated to the Theotokos' dormition. In that cell there lived a hieromonk along with his subordinate. When one Saturday evening the elder was off to a vigil service, his subordinate (left alone) heard someone knock on the cell's door. An unknown monk entered. During the Orthros, the local monk sang the well-known hymn of St. Cosmas the poet, "more honorable than the Cherubim, etc." through to the end. The foreigner monk picked up from there by chanting "Truly you are worthy to be blessed, Mother of our God, the Theotokos," to which he then added the "more honorable than the Cherubim" at the end. The local monk marveled and wondered at the "Truly you are worthy to be blessed" hymn, and so asked the stranger to write it down for him. As he had neither paper nor ink, he brought him a plaque, upon which the stranger carved with his finger the phrase "Truly you are worthy," etc. Paradoxically, the words were deeply carved onto the hard surface of the plaque. The foreign monk then asked the subordinate to make sure that the hymn would be sang to the Theotokos by all Orthodox Christians, and vanished. When the elder returned from the vigil, and was informed about the incident, he and his subordinate went to the Protaton, with the intent of showing the plaque to the Primate, while the plaque itself was then sent to Constantinople for the Patriarch to see. From that time on, the angelic hymn has spread throughout the Orthodox world, and the icon before which it was first sang was moved to the church of the Protaton, where it stays till today. This miracle occurred during the reign of emperors Basil and Constantine in 980. It is believed that the unknown monk was the Archangel Gabriel. Just as God once gave the ten commandments to Moses, so did Gabriel give to the Orthodox the sweetest and most popular hymn to the Mother of God, inscribed on a piece of stone with his hand.

A few words are now due concerning the Theotokos' Holy Belt, which is nowadays kept in Vatopaidiou Monastery. This is the sole object that the Theotokos left on earth through the hands of St. Thomas. The term concerns the God-touched garment that encircled the most holy body of the Theotokos. Theodosius the Great (398-408) transferred the Belt from Jerusalem to

Constantinople, and ordered that a special holder be constructed for its greater protection. In 458, Leo the 1<sup>st</sup> ceremoniously placed it in the Holy Church of Vlacherna, which was deemed the prettiest Church dedicated to the Theotokos at that time. The Holy Belt was temporarily removed from its holder approximately three centuries later, as a result of the illness ailing Zoe, the wife of emperor Leo 6<sup>th</sup> the Wise (886-912). Suffering from an incurable mental illness, Zoe was told in a vision that she would be cured, if presented with the Holy Belt. The Belt was taken to the royal palace with a litany, and was placed on the ill empress' body by the Patriarch. Empress Zoe was indeed cured of her illness. As tradition would have it, sometime later when Patriarch Photius was in office in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Kiev rulers Osgold and Dir sent military ships against Constantinople. To counter the attack, Photius took out the Belt from the Church of Vlacherna and dropped it into the sea. The sea then boiled underneath the enemy ships, and they crashed. Thereafter, the Akathist Hymn of the Eastern Church, sang in praise and thanksgiving to the Theotokos for the triumph against the hostile attack, has been strengthening the souls of Orthodox Christians worldwide in their various life struggles. Perhaps we need not offer more instances from the record of the Holy Belt's miraculous interventions in history. It wouldn't be possible to fit them in the limited extent of a speech, anyway. Suffice it to say only, that in cases of dire emergency and persistent foreign aggravation, the Holy Belt was always extracted from its case by the monastery's authorities in search of assistance. One such critical case concerns its temporary transfer to Constantinople, in 1871, for the city's deliverance from cholera. After a three- month settlement in Constantinople, and following the miraculous intervention of the Theotokos, which warded off the pestilence, the Holy Belt returned to Vatopaidi with a grand ceremony.

In light of the foregoing events, it must've become evident that Mount Athos is a special place, a territory lying outside the reasoning of this present world, in which we live. It can only be approached as a mystery, a revealed mystery of our faith, largely incomprehensible but no any less real, at that. Above all, Athos is a place dedicated for several centuries now, to the Theotokos.

As St Siluan the Athonite characteristically remarks, whenever we love, we undergo a feeling of sadness at the same time. The deeper the love, the greater is the sadness. When the Theotokos was standing beside the Cross, her grief was as huge as the ocean, and her heart's

agony much greater than the sorrow of Adam after his exile from Paradise. Falling as we do short of the fullness of love attained by Mary, we cannot share in the depths of her sadness and pain either. She loved God and her Son immensely, but she also loved humanity dearly, the selfsame people that crucified her Son. St. Siluan confessed that he had observed many miracles and mercies from the Theotokos in his life. But, as he further explained, it was impossible for him to reciprocate her love. As he admitted in awe and gratitude, the Virgin Mary never ignored or disdained him when he was given to sin; rather, she visited him and knocked sense into him. He did not see Mary physically, but was nevertheless enabled by the Holy Spirit to recognize her by her graceful words. The mere invocation of her name alone sufficed to sweeten his heart. When he was a young subordinate, St. Siluan used to pray so intently before the icon of the Mother of God that the Jesus prayer finally entered his heart, to the point of uttering itself within the saint's heart. Another time as he listened to Isaiah, and in particular the words "Wash and make yourselves clean" (Is. 1:16), he thought to himself: "Is it possible that the Theotokos ever sinned, even once, at least in thought?" No sooner did he ask himself, than a voice joint to the Jesus prayer said in his heart: "The Theotokos never sinned, not even in thought." It was the Holy Spirit witnessing to the Virgin's purity in his heart.

St. Siluan's heart was always filled with fear and trembling the moment he considered the glory of the Mother of God. The Theotokos did not make statements recorded in Scripture concerning her thoughts, her love for her Son, or the grief that she felt as she witnessed His crucifixion. Her love for God was stronger than the love shown to Him by the Cherubim and the Seraphim; enough so, actually, as to cause astonishment to all angelic powers.

Although the Theotokos' life was surrounded by silence, the Lord nevertheless revealed to our Orthodox Church that the Virgin Mary engulfs the whole world with her love: that she watches over, through the power of the Holy Spirit, all the peoples on earth, and, like her Son, shows mercy on everyone without exception.

Certainly, we cannot fathom how much the Virgin loves those who obey Christ's commands, or how sorrowful she feels for the unrepentant. This much is attested by St. Siluan from his own experience. Had it not been for her mercy, his soul would have perished. She visited him, and he paid heed. "I do not like your works," is what she told him. Nonetheless, her words sounded pleasant, calm, and moved his heart. Forty years after hearing them, St. Siluan

still could not forget the Theotokos' sweet voice. And he was clueless as to how he could adequately express his gratitude towards the merciful Mother of God. Heaven and earth are overjoyed by her love.

The Theotokos lives in heaven, from where she unfailingly perceives the glory of God; yet in her mercifulness she is not oblivious to the earth and its inhabitants, worldwide. What a splendid gift Christ has granted us, His own immaculate mother as our own mother. She is our spiritual mother, our joy and hope. She stands by us, and every Christian soul is attracted to her by her own love.

The glory and the heavenly bliss which God grants to the saints are truly marvelous, beyond what the fleshly human being can endure. The glory of the Most Holy Theotokos, however, far exceeds even the glory of the saints. St. Gregory Palamas relays better than anyone else the experience of Athonite monks in the following words: “[The Virgin] is not only ‘holier than the cherubim, and incomparably more glorious than the seraphim,’ nor is she merely ‘holier than the saints’; she is the unique human being standing between God and humanity, the one person that turned people to sons and daughters of God, the one who elevated earth in heaven and made gods out of humans. The Theotokos is the very “frontier between the created and uncreated natures,” the “God after God,” standing in rank only after the Holy Trinity. She is, very literally, the hope and the protection of the faithful people of God.

Thank you very sincerely for your attention.

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## The Theotokos and the Eucharist: an Orthodox Perspective

### 1 – Annunciation and Epiclesis:

On the basis of a straightforward reading of the New Testament there might not appear to be a connection between the Theotokos and the Eucharist, and it is not even recorded that she was present at the Last Supper. The connection is to be sought elsewhere, and is provided by the Holy Spirit Who plays a very similar role at the Annunciation and in the course of the Divine Liturgy. It is this parallelism that I will explore. My sources will be the Holy Fathers and writers in the Greek and Syriac traditions.

In the Orthodox Eucharistic liturgies, the climax of the service comes with the priest's invocation of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the Bread and the Wine, the Epiclesis. In the Liturgy of St. **John Chrysostom** (†407) the priest prays:

“**Send down** Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these offerings here presented, and **make** this Bread the precious Body of Your Christ; and that which is in this Cup the precious Blood of Your Christ; **changing them** by Your Holy Spirit.”

In the Liturgy of St. **Basil the Great** (†379) the priest prays:

“Your Holy Spirit may **come** upon us and upon these offerings here presented, to bless them, sanctify them, and **show** this Bread to be indeed the precious Body of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ; and this Cup to be indeed the precious Blood of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The connection between the Epiclesis and the Annunciation is made all the more patent by the use of the term ‘**send down**’ or ‘**overshadow**’ in the Epiclesis itself. Thus the Liturgy of Apostle **James** contains the following passage:

“Your same all-Holy Spirit, O Lord, **send down** upon us and upon these holy offerings here presented, that having come by His holy, good, and glorious presence... He may sanctify this Bread and **make** it indeed the holy Body of Your Christ, and this Cup indeed the precious Blood of Your Christ.”



“The priest’s invocation of the Holy Spirit symbolizes Archangel Gabriel’s Annunciation to the Virgin,” is how **Dionysius bar Salibi** (†1179), a twelfth-century Syriac commentator on the Liturgy, puts it in his “*Commentary on the Liturgy*”.

## **2 – The Christological Background:**

This view of the intimate relationship between the Annunciation and the Epiclesis is often tied up with one particular tradition of Christological thinking, the Antiochian tradition. In the Annunciation, the Word of God became flesh. The Son of God took on a new mode of being: without ceasing to be God, the Word became Man. Comparatively, in the Epiclesis, the Word of God takes the Bread and the Wine as His flesh. The whole aim of the Incarnation is the sanctification, glorification, divinization, and deification of Man, that is to say, the Theosis; although his nature remains unchanged, Man takes on a new dimension through baptism and asceticism, as a son of God. The entire purpose of the Incarnation is to amend this situation: the Word, who is God by nature, becomes Man by grace, so that Man, who is human by nature, becomes a son of God by grace.

The Bread and the Wine undergo consubstantiation at the Epiclesis. Without ceasing to be outwardly Bread and Wine, they take on a totally new significance. **Dionysius bar Salibi**, in his “*Commentary on the Liturgy*”, puts it as follows:

“The Body and Blood are called ‘mysteries’ because they are not what they appear to the physical eye to be; for outwardly, they are just Bread and Wine, but actually, they are the Body and Blood of God. Just as Jesus is seen by the physical eye as Man, yet He is also God; similarly the mysteries are seen outwardly to be Bread and Wine, but they are in fact the Body and Blood.”

## **3 – Co-operation with the Holy Spirit:**

It is in the realization of the effects of the Holy Spirit’s consecration of the Bread and the Wine at the Eucharist that the parallelism with the Annunciation takes on its Significance – for it is the Theotokos’ receptivity there which provides the model for co-operation between Man and the Holy Spirit. Through the Eucharist, Man is given the potential for sanctification. But in order for this to take effect, Man must consent to be transformed, as the Theotokos consented; Man must allow the Holy Spirit to work in him, give full space to the Holy Spirit, and not ‘grieve’ or ‘constrain’ him, as Apostle **Paul** puts it (Eph. 4:30).

A hint on the way in which the Eucharist can transform the whole of human life is described by the great seventh-century ascetic, St. **Isaac the Syriac**, in a famous passage from his heavenly “*Ascetical Homilies*”:

“The man who has found love eats and drinks Christ every day and hour, and hereby he is made immortal. ‘He that eats of this Bread,’ He says, ‘which I will give him, shall not see death unto eternity.’ Blessed is he who consumes the Bread of love, which is Jesus. He eats of love eats Christ, the God over all, as John bears witness, saying, ‘God is love.’ Wherefore, the man who lives in love reaps the fruit of life from God, and while yet in this world, he even now breathes the air of the resurrection; in this air the righteous will delight in the resurrection... Love is sufficient to nourish a man instead of food and drink. This is the Wine ‘which makes glad the heart of man.’ Blessed is he who partakes of this Wine. Licentious men have drunk this Wine and felt shame; sinners have drunk it and have forgotten the pathways of stumbling; drunkards have drunk this Wine and become fasters; the rich have drunk it and desired poverty; the poor have drunk it and been enriched with hope; the sick have drunk it and became strong; the unlearned have taken it and been made wise.”

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Theotokos, who bears Christ as the fruit of her co-operation, with Him, thus finds close correspondence with the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Bread and the Wine – provided their recipients are as open to the action of the Holy Spirit as was the Theotokos. In turn fruit is borne in them as they are transformed into the faithful who are truly ‘conformed to Christ’.

In like manner, at the Annunciation, not only Christ became incarnate, but also, the Holy Virgin herself was transformed to a higher divine mode which made her the Theotokos. It is an awareness of this aspect of the Theotokos’ co-operation with the Holy Spirit that accounts for the great veneration that the Orthodox tradition has for the ever-Virgin Mary in her role as Theotokos. She conceived the Lord in her womb, not as the result of an initiative of her own, but solely thanks to her receptivity, the active emptying of her own self-will (Lk. 1:38; Philip. 2:7). Thus she was able to unite her will totally with God’s.

#### **4 – Typological Links:**

The other way by which the Eastern Holy Fathers implicitly brought out the relationship between the Theotokos and the Eucharist was through *typology*. **Typology** is essentially a means of

providing a network of links between the Old and New Testament, between this world and the heavenly; these connections draw out meanings of great profundity from the Holy Scriptures.

How then does the Theotokos provide *typological* links with the Eucharist? The pivotal biblical verse: the piercing of the side of Christ on the Cross, as the result of which “there came forth Blood and Water” (Jn. 19:34). It may be that already in the mind of the Author of the Gospel, the Evangelist **John**, the words ‘Blood and Water’ were intended to bear a sacramental meaning. This is the usual understanding of the passage in the Holy Fathers: the Water represents Baptism and the Blood the Eucharist.

In more poetical terms this sacramental ‘Blood and Water’ can be described as the Church, the Bride born miraculously from the side of Christ, as Eve was ‘born’ from Adam’s side in Paradise. As another great Syriac poet of the late fifth century, **Jacob of Sarugh** (†521), puts it in a wonderful *Homily on the Veil of Moses*:

“The Bridegroom’s side was pierced, and from it came forth the Bride, fulfilling the type provided by Eve and Adam;

for from the first God knew and depicted

Adam and Eve in the likeness of the image of His Only-Begotten:

Christ slept on the cross as Adam had slept his deep sleep,

his side was pierced, and from it there came forth the Daughter of Light –

Water and Blood as an image of Divine Children

to be heirs to the Father who loves His Only-Begotten.

Eve in prophecy is the mother of all that lives –

and what, if not Baptism, is the Mother of Life?

Adam’s wife bore human bodies subject to death,

but the virgin Church bears living beings who are spiritual.

Adam’s side gave birth to a woman who gives birth to mortals,

while our Lord’s to the Church who gives birth to immortals.”

Eve is here contrasted *typologically* with the Church, Mother of the Sacraments. But in innumerable other passages the contrast is with the Theotokos, the Second Eve and Mother of the Second Adam.

Into this *typological* pattern, the grand fourth-century St. **Ephrem the Syriac** (†373), in his *Hymns on Unleavened Bread*, introduces a specifically Eucharistic note to describe the Theotokos' role:

“Mary has given us the Bread of Rest  
in place of that Bread of Toil which Eve provided.”

At the Epiclesis, the Bread and the Wine are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit; however, the transformation of the faithful at the Epiclesis does not occur without their own consent. This corresponds to the consent of the Holy Virgin which allowed, not only the Incarnation to occur but also brought about her own transformation to become the Theotokos. The consent of the faithful to transform makes them ‘*conceive*’ Christ in their hearts. This bold and striking idea is put forward by the Spiritual Father St. **Symeon the New Theologian** (†1022), an ascetic of the tenth-eleventh century.

## 5 – ‘Mothers of Christ’:

St. **Symeon** was commenting on one of the Parables of the Kingdom, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who made a marriage feast for his son and invited many” (Mt. 22:1-14). In answer to the question, “Who is the Bride?”, the **New Theologian** states that she is none other than the Theotokos. St. **Symeon** continues:

“Why does the Gospel text speak of ‘marriage feasts’ and not ‘a marriage feast’? This suggests to me a novel idea; why should it use the *plural*? It is because in the case of each of the faithful, the Children of Light, the same marriage is continuously taking place in an analogous fashion. How does this happen? By uniting Himself to us in a completely spotless and holy marriage, God effects something quite beyond our powers.”

St. **Symeon** here, in his wonderful “*Ethical Discourses*”, begins on a new chapter which has the heading:

“Concerning how all the saints *conceive* the Word of God within themselves in an analogous way to the Theotokos: as they give birth to Him, He is born in them and they themselves are given birth by Him; and concerning how they are described as His **mothers** as well as children and brothers.”

The chapter then opens:

“The Son of God, who is God himself, by entering the womb of the all-Holy Virgin and taking flesh from her and becoming Man, was born, perfect God and perfect Man, being both at one and

the same time without confusion. Consider how this compares with what has happened to us. Each of us believes in the same Son of God and Son of the ever Virgin Mary, the Theotokos; if, truly believing, we receive the message concerning him in our hearts and confess him with our mouths, repenting for our former sins with all our soul, then immediately, just as God the Word of the Father entered into the Virgin's womb, so too the Word which we receive in our theological teaching takes seed within us too. This is a mystery full of awe and utter astonishment, and what has been said is trustworthy and is to be received with assurance and faith. We *conceive* Him, not in Body, as the Virgin Theotokos conceived Him, but spiritually – though none the less really. We have Him, Whom the chaste Virgin conceived in our own hearts... That immaculate flesh which He took from the chaste Body of Mary, the immaculate Theotokos, that flesh with which He was physically born, He gives us for food. And as we eat it, each of us who eat this flesh in faith and worthily, will have wholly in ourselves the incarnate God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of the immaculate Virgin Mary.”

In all this I feel we are touching upon a mystery of great profundity and meaning. Something of this is brought out in the dramatic tension implied in the *typological* relationship between the Theotokos and the Church and the Sacraments. *On the one hand*, the Theotokos corresponds to the Church as the source of the Sacraments, in that she herself gave birth to Christ, the very fountain-head of these Sacraments. *On the other hand*, she corresponds to, and provides the model for, the faithful who receive the vivifying Sacraments. Whether they will allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives through the Sacraments depends on whether they make the same reply as the Theotokos at her Annunciation. If they do, they too will become, as St. **Symeon** hints, ‘**mothers**’ of Christ.

In a few profound words, the grand St. **Maximus the Confessor** (†662), in his “*Life of the Virgin*” – only extant in Georgian, also explained, “Every chaste and Marian soul will *conceive* the Word of God.”

### The Virgin Mary in the „Baptismal Symbols” of the Pre-Nicene Church

Ever since the Apostolic Age, in the Confession or the Symbol of Faith were essentialised what was „uncovered”, that is unveiled or revealed by „God through the Holy Ghost”, and that the first Christians expressed „... not in words learnt from the human wisdom, but in words learnt from the Holy Ghost, ...” (I Cor. 2, 6-12). That is why „the Revelation” contained and expressed in the text of this „Regula fidei” (Rule of faith) was considered by the theologians of the Pre-Nicene Church to be „above the human thinking”, as it „contained the entire truth”<sup>1</sup>, that is the Christian truth, which – as the Christian philosopher Athenagoras (of Athens) specified around 154 – is not „...human reason”<sup>2</sup>, but the truth revealed in the Holy Scripture, hence the leading role of faith in the act of knowledge, that Tertullian († 240) also emphasized when he launched the formula „credo ut intelligam” (I believe so that I can understand).

From the II-nd half of the I-st century, the Christians thanked the Father of Heaven – during the Holy Eucharistic Liturgy – „... for the life and awareness” made „known us through Jesus, Your Son”<sup>3</sup>. But, with regard to the Son of God, too – who incarnated by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary – heterodox opinions and faiths<sup>4</sup> had emerged ever since the first centuries. Some of these had been circulated by those Christians who were Judaizers (Ebionites, Elchesaites and Nazarenes); by the followers of Docetism, who thought that the birth and the sufferings of the Son of God had been apparent; by the followers of the antitrinitary heresy, known under the name of „Monarchianism”, who identified with the Patropaschites (Modalists) and Adoptionists; by „the prophetic movement” emerging in the II-nd half of the II-nd century, known under the name of „Montanism” etc. In this sense, the emergence of heresies, that is of „unorthodox faiths” (κακοδοξίαι), determined the Church to formulate its Creed of faith

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<sup>1</sup> I.G. Coman, *Patrologie (Patrology)*, vol. I, Institutul Biblic (The Biblical Institute) Publ. House, Bucharest, 1984, p. 476.

<sup>2</sup> Athenagoras (of Athens), *Solia pentru creștini (Πρεσβεΐα), A Plea for the Christians*, 9 (cf. G. Ruhbach, *Altkirchliche Apologeten*, Gütersloh, 1966, p. 35-62).

<sup>3</sup> *Didahia Sfinților Apostoli (The Didache of the Saints Apostles)*, par. 9. Cf. J. Betz, *Die Eucharistie in der Didache*, in *Archive für Liturgiewissenschaft*, 11 (1969), p. 10-39.

<sup>4</sup> See, St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία (Patrology)*, vol. I, transl. by A. Marinescu, IBMBOR Publ. House, Bucharest, 2006, p. 152-153.

in the form of that „Symbol of faith”, namely of that „Canon of faith”, that was uttered during the baptismal Liturgy as a Confession of faith.

„The Orthodox Confession” of Peter Moghila (Petru Movilă), the metropolitan bishop of Kiev (1596-1646) - approved by the Pan-Orthodox Synod gathered in Iassy in the year 1642 and then revised and confirmed by the Synod of Constantinople of the year 1643 - also certifies that, ever since the first centuries, every Church in the great ecclesiastical centres has had its own „Symbol” of faith, that the people had to utter during their Baptism. And, according to the confession of this Pan-Orthodox „Catechism”, such Symbols were: a) the „Apostolic or Roman” one; b) the one of the „Church from the Neo-Caesarea of Pontus”; c) the one from „the Caesarea of Palestine”; d) the one of „the Church of Alexandria and others”<sup>5</sup>.

Before proceeding with the identification and enumeration of these Symbols of faith from the pre-nicene age, we want to specify that the opinions of theologians still differ with regard to the oldest Symbol of faith, which, in our opinion, cannot be other than that uttered in the first Christian Church, that is in the Church of Jerusalem, whence it could be taken over, adapted and developed in the Churches of Antioch, Alexandria and Rome, Efes, Corinth etc., namely in the Apostolic Churches.

Regarding „the Symbol of faith”, the patrologists tell us that it „is one of the oldest documents of the primary Church, necessary to its missionary work and for the acceptance of Christians in the bosom of Christianity. It developed since the first moments of the emergence of the Church, imposed by its internal needs”<sup>6</sup>.

According to the testimony left by the old Tradition of the Church, a „regula fidei” (a rule of faith) was written as early as in the Apostolic age (cf. Rufinus). This „rule” of faith was designated in the Greek language through the word „symbol”, which means „sign and contribution to what is common, that is what several people bring together”, a thing that – according to the Apostolic Tradition – the Apostles did do, „each of them contributing with his

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<sup>5</sup> *Învățătura de credință ortodoxă (The Orthodox Teaching of Faith)*, Centrul Mitropolitan (The Metropolitan Centre) Publ. House), Craiova, 1952, p. 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> I.G. Coman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 87.

own word”. However, the Greek word symbol „also has the meaning of sign or clue that serves to distinguish the Apostolic teaching from the teaching of other preachers...”<sup>7</sup>.

Both the Post-Apostolic Fathers<sup>8</sup> and the old liturgical Manuscripts certify that during the baptismal.Liturgy the Symbol of faith was also uttered. Thus, this „Rule of faith” – known in the East through the phrase „Symbol of faith” – was uttered during the receipt of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism before all believers, which is also done today by the „one who will be baptised”, or by „the child’s godfather”, or even by the „priest”<sup>9</sup>.

Among other, the Orthodox liturgists also confirm the fact that, in the Old Church, “the administration of Sacraments was unified with the Holy Liturgy ...”<sup>10</sup>, and that during every eucharistic Sacrifice<sup>11</sup> the clergy and the people, all of them, „in one voice” and „with one heart”, uttered the Symbol of faith of „the old Church”<sup>12</sup> openly, namely the one of the Apostolic Church, that also referred – be it in brief – to the Virgin Mary.

However, ever since the post-Apostolic age certain heresies had emerged which denied both the Maternity and the Virginity and Perpetual Virginity of the Mother of Jesus. In this sense, through such heresiarch teachings they actually denied the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ipso facto His Divinity, hence the preoccupation of the main local Churches to write their own Confessions of faith, that is their own Symbols of faith. That this was the reality is also

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> See, J. Antoni de Aldama, *Maria en la Patristica de los siglos I y II*, La Editorial Catolica, Madrid, 1070, p. 9 sq.

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, the *Molitfelnic (Prayer Book)* of the Orthodox Church specifies that „the Symbol of faith”, that is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan one, can only be uttered by „the one who will be baptised”, by „the child’s godfather” or by the serving „priest”, „and by nobody else” (*Molitfelnic (Prayer Book)*), printed with the blessing of His Beatitude Father Daniel, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, IBMBOR Publ. House, Bucharest, 2013, p. 34). About the genesis, history and content of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol, see N. V. Dură, *Canoanele Sinodului II ecumenic și obligativitatea de a mărturisi și păstra cu credincioșie Crezul niceo-constantinopolitan (The Canons of the Second Ecumenical Synod and the obligation to confess and to keep the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed with good faith)*, in *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, XXXIII (1981), no. 2, p. 442-459; Idem, *Crezul niceo-constantinopolitan, fundamentul învățăturii creștine (The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the basis of the Christian teaching)*, in *Îndrumător bisericesc (Church Guide Book)*, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, 1985, no. 2, p. 83-87.

<sup>10</sup> I. Foundoulis, *Απαντασείς εἰς λειτουργικάς ἀπορίας (Răspunsuri la probleme liturgice)*, (*Answers to Liturgical Problems*), vol. I, transl. in Romanian by V. Manolache, Bucharest, 2008, p. 226.

<sup>11</sup> See, N. V. Dură, *Biserica etiopiană și „Anaforalele” ei liturgice (The Ethiopian Church and its Liturgical „Anaphorales”)*, in *Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei (Saint Andrew the Apostle Theological Review)*, XII (2008), no. 1, p. 9-45.

<sup>12</sup> I. Foundoulis, op. cit., p. 193-194.



certified by „the fragments of some Symbols of faith” preserved and transmitted by the text of the writings of some Fathers of the Church from „the beginning of the II-nd century”<sup>13</sup>.

Taking over the testimony provided by the Symbol of faith uttered during the baptismal Liturgy in his Church, that is in the Apostolic Church of Alexandria, Saint Justin, the Martyr and Philosopher († 165), wrote that „...through the power of the Word, according to the will of God the Father and Lord of all, He (our Saviour, n.n.) was born of a Virgin as a Man, and was named Jesus, ...”<sup>14</sup>. The same Christian writer and theologian of philosophical training also referred to a Confession of faith used in the exorcism ritual during Baptism in his age, that mentioned „expressis verbis” that „... the Son of God and the First-Born among all the creatures, was born of the Virgin and became a Man, ...”<sup>15</sup>.

In his work, „Combat and refutation of deceitful knowledge”, - written around the year 185 - Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (177/178 – 202), said that the Scripture is „the jointing rule of truth” (I, 9, 4), and that is why it is „irreformable” and „certain” (I, 95), and in „The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching” – written after the year 190 – the theologian of the „Holy Tradition” begins „with the analysis of the rule (of the canon) of faith we receive when we are baptised, ...”<sup>16</sup>. In this regard, this rule of faith – uttered during the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism – also expressly referred to the Virgin Mary, of which our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

Among other, Tertullian († 240) wrote that, „... through their Testament”, the Saints Apostles „... vowed to remain believers”, that is believers to the christian faith, whose legal inheritants could not be „heretics”, as the latter „... do not own the Holy Scripture, and the Scripture do not belong to them”<sup>17</sup>. Commenting on this text, an Orthodox theologian concluded that, „since the Orthodox Church was acknowledged to own the truth because it follows the rule it has handed down from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ and Christ from God, [heretics](#)

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<sup>13</sup> Marius Țepelea, *Mariologia primelor trei secole (The Mariology of the First Three Centuries)*, Emia Publ. House, Deva, 2004, p. 92.

<sup>14</sup> St. Justin (the Martyr and Philosopher), *The First Apology*, 46, 5, transl. in Romanian by Ol. Căciulă, in *Apologeti de limbă greacă (Apologists of Greek language)*, vol. II, the Collection Părinți și Scriitori bisericești (Church Fathers and Writers, (P.S.B.)), Institutul Biblic (The Biblical Institute) Publ. House, Bucharest, 1980, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, *Dialogul cu iudeul Trifon (The Dialogue with Trypho the Jew)*, 8, 5, 2, in *Apologeti de limbă greacă (Apologists of Greek language)*, vol. II, ..., p. 193.

<sup>16</sup> St. G. Papadopoulos, op. cit., vol. I, p. 291.

<sup>17</sup> Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 37, in P.L. 2, 61 ABC.

ought not to be allowed to challenge an appeal to the [Scriptures](#)”, as they „do not own the Scripture, and they have no right to the Scripture”<sup>18</sup>.

With regard to „Regula fidei”, - which essentialises and expresses the revealed word of the Scripture - Tertullian tells us that „una omnio est” (there is only one anywhere), as it is „unchangeable (immobilis) and irreformable (irreformabilis) ...”<sup>19</sup>, and that, „The rule of faith is .... that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, ... This Word, called His Son, ..., at last brought down (delatum) by the Spirit and Power of God - the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in Her womb, and, being born of Her, became Jesus Christ...”<sup>20</sup>.

In the same Confession of Faith of the Church of Cartagena - that, according to testimony given by Tertullian, was „one in the whole world”, that is one and the same for the whole Church and, therefore, unchangeable, - it was clearly mentioned that Jesus Christ „... was born of the Virgin Mary (natum ex Virgine Maria) ...”<sup>21</sup>. In fact, referring to the baptismal Symbol uttered in his Church of Proconsular Africa, Tertullian stated again, among other, that in its text it was specified that „Filius eius Iesum Christum, natum ex Virgine Maria”<sup>22</sup> (His Son, Jesus Christ, was born of the Virgin Mary), or that „... in Virginem Mariam, carnem factum in utero eius et ex ea natum ...”<sup>23</sup> (... in the Virgin Mary, made flesh in Her womb, and, born of Her). Therefore, in the text of the baptismal Symbol of the African Church (of Cartagena) not only the „two mariological elements: the real maternity of Mary and the virginal nature of this maternity”<sup>24</sup> are emphasized, but also the Incarnation of Jesus Christ our Saviour, as a real historical fact, with soteriological consequences for all the people whom – through his expiatory sacrifice – he redeemed from the slavery of sin.

In the opinion of certain patrologists of our days, „the oldest Symbol of faith known after the unclear analogue Ethiopian text of the Apostles’ Epistle (the mid-second century)” would be

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<sup>18</sup> I.G. Coman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 407.

<sup>19</sup> Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis*, I, 3, in P.L., II, 889.

<sup>20</sup> Idem, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 13, apud I. G. Coman, op.cit., vol. I, p. 477.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, *De virginibus velandis*, I, 3, in P.L., II, 889.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, XXXVI, 5, in P.L., II, 49-50.

<sup>24</sup> Marius Țepelea, op. cit., p. 71.

„The Dêr-Balizeh Symbol of faith”, that is thought to date from „the beginning of the III-rd century ...”<sup>25</sup>. However, in the text of this Symbol – that only has several lines – there is no mention about the Holy Virgin Mary, but only about the Holy Trinity, about „the Resurrection of the human body” and about „the Holy Ecumenical Church”<sup>26</sup>. However, in „the Apostolic Tradition” of Hippolytus of Rome<sup>27</sup> († 235) – written in Greek<sup>28</sup> – we can also identify the text of a baptismal Symbol of faith, in the form of questions, of which we find out that the one coming to Baptism having to answer every question asked by the bishop or by the priest. And, according to this „first cristalised and relatively broad Symbol (7 sentences), amidst those we know”<sup>29</sup>, among other, the neophyte was also asked if he believe „... in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was born by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary (qui natus este de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria virgine) ...”<sup>30</sup>. As such, this baptismal Symbol of faith also expressly refered to „the Virgin Mary”, Who was not yet called „Mother of Jesus”, as She was to be called in the Church of Alexandria ever since the III-rd century.

In the opinion of Western theologians, the first translation of the work of Saint Hippolytus was made in Latin<sup>31</sup>, as „the Latin version was partly known due to a palimpsest kept in the Library of Verona”<sup>32</sup>. The manuscript dates „from the end of the V-th century, but the translation is much older and dates maybe from the end of the IV-th century”<sup>33</sup>. In fact, the text of the work, „The Apostolic Tradition”, qualifies us to state that „the Roman Symbol” was written in Alexandria, and not in Rome, no later than the III-rd century, and, as such, the first translation was made in the Sahidic dialect and it is possible that this was made not shortly after the

<sup>25</sup> St. G. Papadopoulos, op. cit., vol. I, p. 312.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> The text of this work was preserved and transmitted in the languages of the Non-Chalcedonian Churches (Egyptian (the Sahidic and Bohairic dialects), Syriac, Arabian, Ethiopian) and in the latin language (See, R.H. Connolly, *The So-Called Egyptian Church Order and Derived Documents*, Cambridge, 1916; B. S. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, Cambridge, 1934; G. Dix – H. Chadwick, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of S. Hippolytus*, London, 1968).

<sup>28</sup> Except for certain fragments, the original text of the work of Saint Hippolytus – written in the Greek language – was lost and could not be reconstructed but by means of the old translations (Sahidic, Bohairic, Syriac, Arabian, Ethiopian and Latin).

<sup>29</sup> St. G. Papadopoulos, op. cit., vol. I, p. 358.

<sup>30</sup> *La Tradition apostolique d'après les anciennes versions*, 2<sup>e</sup> édition, trad. B. Botte, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1968, p. 85 (The text can also be found in Sources Chrétiennes, no. 11 bis.).

<sup>31</sup> See, E. Haller, *Didascaliae apostolorum fragmenta veronensia Latina. Accedunt canonum qui dicuntur Apostolorum et Aegyptiorum reliquiae*, Leipzig, 1900, p. 3-4.

<sup>32</sup> B. Botte, *Introduction (La Tradition apostolique ...)*, p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 19.

emergence of the work's version in the Greek language. Anyhow, as *terminus ante quaem* and *post quaem*, this version in Sahidic was written before the year 250, since, from the II-nd half of the III-rd century, the Virgin Mary had also been mentioned in the Egyptian texts under the name „Theotokos” (Mother of God).

That the original text of the work was written in Alexandria is also confirmed by the fact that even in the Latin version – found due to the discovery of the Manuscript in the Library of Verona (Italy) – “the Apostolic Tradition” is followed by some canonical rules of Egyptian (Alexandrian) origin, suggestively entitled „The Rules of the Apostles and of the Egyptian Church”<sup>34</sup>. Actually, even some patrologists of the Orthodox Church acknowledge that „it is very difficult to establish” the contribution of Saint Hippolytus (of Rome) „to the elaboration of the text ...”<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, one should specify and emphasize that „the Apostolic tradition” was written in the Greek language in the Egyptian town of Alexandria, where it was translated in the Sahidic dialect, that we only know due to a single manuscript<sup>36</sup> and to some fragments solely in the Ethiopian language version, and by means of which the „primitive Sahidic version ...”<sup>37</sup> could be written.

A first Roman Symbol of faith is in fact the one written „in the first half of the III-rd century”, and which was initially written „in the Greek language”, and then „translated very soon” in the Latin language<sup>38</sup>. However, the Latin version was to become „the prototype of all later local Western Symbols and the so-called Apostolic Symbol is – Professor Stylianos Papadopoulos noticed – a simple development of the former with Oriental influences”<sup>39</sup>.

By comparison with the Symbol of faith from Dêr-Balizeh and with the one pertaining to “the Apostolic Tradition” of Saint Hippolytus, the Roman Symbol „is more detailed and, as such, larger, as it has many addenda, especially Christological ones”<sup>40</sup>.

In this „Symbol” of faith of the Roman Church, it was confessed the faith „... in Jesus Christ, His only Son born, our Lord, Who was born by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the

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<sup>34</sup> E. Haller, *op. cit.*, p. 2-3, sq.

<sup>35</sup> St. G. Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 358.

<sup>36</sup> B. Botte, *Introduction (La Tradition apostolique ...)*, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> St. G. Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 363.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

Virgin Mary, ...” - („... τὸν γεννηθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, ...” - „... qui natus est de Spiritu sancto et Maria virgine, ...”)<sup>41</sup>. As such, in the Roman Symbol, too, only the name „the Virgin Mary”<sup>42</sup> was expressly mentioned, and not „Theotokos” yet, as we would encounter in the Church of Alexandria since the II-nd half of the III-rd century.

In the qualified opinion of some patrologists, „... the oldest and most complete version of the Symbol of faith conveyed to us is (however) the one that Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra communicated to Bishop Julius I of Rome in a letter”<sup>43</sup>, hence their conclusion that „the genuine form of the symbol comes from the East, not from the West, although one has tried to imply that the Greek version of Marcellus was the translation and the Latin version the original”<sup>44</sup>.

The Apostolic Symbol, that the Roman Church had also used in the pre-nicene age and that Rufinus expressly mentions, - however, with „the later addenda” - indeed originated in the East. But, the Roman Church had enriched this Symbol of faith, of Eastern origin, „with details or specifications considered necessary along the time, urged mainly by the heretic turmoil”<sup>45</sup>. Also, we should not ignore the fact that „the Symbols of the Eastern Churches were more varied in form than the Roman one, due to the continual struggle with heresies, but the ground of these symbols was Apostolic”<sup>46</sup>, which primary version of the latter originating in the East.

In the Apostolic Symbol, written in the Greek language in the East – which is „the oldest form of the Symbol known in the patristic age”<sup>47</sup> – they also expressly mentioned our Lord Jesus Christ, „... τὸν γεννηθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου, ...”<sup>48</sup> (Who was born by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, ...). In the Latin version, used by Rufinus in his Commentary, the Greek text was rendered through the words: „... qui natus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine, ...”<sup>49</sup>. So, the Latin version reproduced the Greek version precisely.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> See, E. Neubert, *Marie dans l'Église antenicéene*, Ed. Gabalda, Paris, 1908, p. 137.

<sup>43</sup> I.G. Coman, op. cit., vol. I, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 90.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, p. 89.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, p. 90.

As regards the concise statement, „who was born by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary”, it was right to notice that the Christology of the Symbol „is broader, more popular, less theologised than the later formulas ...”, and that „it reveals a profound faith in this fact as it is presented by the Holy Scripture”<sup>50</sup>, without speculative-theological complications that the Christology and Mariology will take on later under the impact of the contribution of some theologians of philosophical training.

The last Symbol of faith of the Pre-Nicene Church is the one written by the Bishops gathered at the Synod of Alexandria, of the year 324, chaired by the Archbishop Alexander of Alexandria and by Archbishop Hosius of Cordoba, the counsellor of emperor Constantine the Great on issues pertaining to religious life.

Among other, in this Symbol of faith it was mentioned that „... our Lord Jesus Christ was made flesh in the womb of Mary the Mother of God”<sup>51</sup>. Of course, through such a Confession of faith, both the real act of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God (Θεοτόκος) were made clear. As regards the phrase „Mother of God”, one must specify and stress the fact that it was not first circulated by the Symbol of Alexandria, of the year 324. Used in the Church of Alexandria, by the Archbishop of Alexandria<sup>52</sup> himself, this phrase had already been circulated since the II-nd to III-rd centuries. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) and Origen († 254) were actually the first christian theologians who called The Holy Virgin Mary „Θεοτόκος” (Theotokos), that is Mother of God. But, since the age of Origen (c. 185 - c. 254) and up to the third ecumenical Synod (Efes, 431), - when the above-mentioned phrase was imposed as a dogma of the Church - another two centuries of theological debates, pro and against it, were to pass.

As it could be noticed, in the Symbols of faith, written and published in the pre-nicene age, the Marian doctrine was not expressed in an article of faith distinct from the Christological one, but it only accompanied and developed the latter. This is something we encounter both in Catechisms (Orthodox Confessions of Faith), and in Treaties and Manuals of dogmatic orthodox Theology of our days. For example, in „The Orthodox Confession” of the Metropolitan Bishop

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<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p. 91.

<sup>51</sup> St. Alexander of Alexandria, *The Epistle to Alexander of Constantinople*, in P.G., XVIII, 548-572.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, XVIII, 568.

Petru Movilă (Peter Moghila) of Kiev (1596-1646), The Holy Virgin Mary was attributed no separate chapter, but only a few pages and those in the chapter „About the Son of God”<sup>53</sup>. Moreover, in his treaty of „dogmatic orthodox Theology”, the regretted Rev. Professor Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae († 1993) also made an express reference to the the Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, but only in a single subchapter (C 2c, of eight pages) in the III-rd Part of his Dogmatics, suggestively entitled „The Person of Jesus Christ and His saving work accomplished in the humanity assumed by Him”<sup>54</sup>. Hence, the observation that the doctrine of Mariology is still associated by the orthodox theologians with the doctrine of Christology, as the Fathers and theologians of Pre-Nicene Church had actually done in their baptismal Symbols, in which „the Virgin Mary” was mentioned as being the one who gave birth to „Jesus”, and, therefore, „the Mother of God” (Theotokos), a phrase launched in the theological world of Alexandria due to the two coryphaei of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, namely Clement of Alexandria († 215) and Origen († 254). In fact, the name „Theotokos” was also to be legitimised and approved by the Synod gathered in Alexandria in the year 324, that is one year before the gathering of the first ecumenical Synod (Nicaea, 325), that formulated the seven articles of the Nicene Symbol. The latter was however to be completed with other five articles by the Fathers of the second ecumenical Synod (Constantinople, 381), when the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of faith was actually approved and published, a Symbol that we also utter openly today during the eucharistic Liturgy, when we confess our Orthodox faith. „I believe ... and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only begotten of the Father before all ages ...”, and „Who, ..., descended from Heaven and incarnated by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary...”<sup>55</sup>. In this sense, the last words of this Symbol, namely „... of the Virgin Mary ...”, were also expressly mentioned in the text of the baptismal Symbols of the Pre-Nicene Church.

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<sup>53</sup> *Învățătura de credință ortodoxă (The Teaching of Orthodox Faith)*, ..., p. 68-116.

<sup>54</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, vol. II, IBMBOR Publ. House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 7-128.

<sup>55</sup> *Simbolul de credință (The Symbol of Faith)*, apud Liturghier (Liturgical book). Printed with the approval of the Holy Synod and with the Blessing of His Beatitude Father Daniel, Patriarch of BOR, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă (The Publ. House of the Bible and Orthodox Mission Institute), Bucharest, 2012, p. 170.

**Abstract.** *In the Symbols of faith of the pre-nicene age, the Marian doctrine was not expressed in an article of faith distinct from the Christological one, it had only accompanied and developed the latter. In this regard, we encounter this thing both in Catechisms (Orthodox Confessions of Faith), and in the Treaties and Manuals of orthodox dogmatic Theology of our days. Whence, the evident conclusion that the doctrine of Mariology is still associated by the orthodox theologians with the doctrine of Christology, as the Fathers of the Pre-Nicene Church had done in their baptismal Symbols, where „the Virgin Mary” was mentioned as being the one who gave birth to „Jesus”, and, therefore, „the Mother of God” (Theotokos), a phrase launched in the theological world of Alexandria due to the two coryphaei of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, namely Clement of Alexandria († 215) and Origen († 254).*



**Pastor Robert Scudieri**

**(The USA)**

## **Belief and Being**

(Orthodox and Lutheran Understandings of the Theotokos)

*“’My Soul doth magnify the Lord.’ Mary’s heart remains at all times the same; she lets God have His will with her, and draws from it all only a good comfort, joy and trust in God... she loves and praises God’s good things when they are given, nor falls away when they are removed.”* Martin Luther, Commentary on the Magnificat, 1520 AD.

In the year 325 AD Constantine the Great provided the venue for a church wide synod that ultimately gave Christians the gift of the Creed of Nicaea. This creed gave doctrinal unity to the church throughout the world for over five hundred years. However, in 1054 AD there was a division between the eastern and western churches over the way in which the Holy Spirit comes to humanity. Does He proceed from the Father, or, the Father and the Son? Since that time attempts have been made to heal that breach. The Synod of Florence in 1439 (called “The Union of Florence”) proclaimed a consensus in understanding. However, the synod’s consensus was rejected in 1484.

Over the centuries prayers have been said over and over for the unity of the church, a desire expressed by our Lord in His high priestly prayer (John 17:11, “protect them in Your name that You have given me, so that they may be one, as We are one.”). This prayer is still prayed today – even as it seems the church continues to divide itself. One estimate says that there are over 41,000 distinctly separate Christian church bodies in the world today. Several of these were the result of the Protestant Reformation of the church in the west, the tradition of which I am a part.

In 1517 Dr. Martin Luther ignited a protest against certain abuses in the church in Germany. This Augustinian monk and Bible translator had come to a heartfelt personal reformation when he heard St Paul say in Romans 1:16 and 17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also

the Greek. For in the gospel the *righteousness of God* is revealed through faith, for faith: as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’”

Up until this time Luther had tried to mimic the righteousness of God through a life of good works and attempts to humiliate the flesh. But he did not find the peace he was looking for, or the satisfaction that he could attain this “righteousness of God.” Luther “confessed” this central key to understanding the Bible and history as a whole – even to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V.

As Luther began to celebrate this insight regarding God’s undeserved love, for the sake of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross – he read the Bible in a new way. He now understood more deeply and personally Paul’s words in Romans 3:21 ff, “God’s way of putting people right with Himself has been revealed – and it has nothing to do with the law. The law and the prophets give their witness to it – but God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ.”

In some ways the church on earth is like a puzzle, or a pointillist painting – from a distance the picture appears as a whole – but getting closer you can see that it is made of separate points of paint. It is interesting that this style of painting came at a time when psychologists were talking about “gestalt therapy.” This type of human counseling focuses on “the whole.” The understanding is that the whole is greater than all of its separate parts. The joy of a sunset is more than the simple refraction of the sun’s rays. The sung liturgy is more than musical notes on a page. The soul of a human being is greater than the skin and bones that give us form in the visible world.

The insights Luther gained focused the Protestant reformers on doctrine, especially on the importance of faith – belief. It was all important to teach the doctrine of salvation by grace alone – what we Lutherans believe to be the heart of the Holy Bible. Our Lutheran Confessions (found principally in our Augsburg Confession) talk about a wide range of abuses in the church of the West in the sixteenth century, but the heart of the Lutheran protest has always been a correct division of law and gospel. While maintaining ministries of mercy and a love for liturgy, for many Lutherans this focus on doctrine has been critical. At times this has found its nadir in a religion of “head knowledge.”

It has been interesting for me as a child of the Lutheran Confessions to read Maximus the Confessor's, "The Life of the Virgin." A new translation into English by Stephen Shoemaker has made this more accessible to readers in the west. Originally written in Greek, the oldest existing manuscript is in Georgian, translated by Euthymius the Hagiorite, abbot of the Georgian monastic community at the Ivoran monastery on Mount Athos, near the end of the tenth century<sup>56</sup>.

As the earliest complete biography of the Virgin Mary, and originating in the seventh century AD, this work gives us an insight into how the earliest Christians understood Mary's life and her role in her Son's ministry. It occurred to me that comparing Maximus' treatise and Luther's and the Lutheran understanding of the Theotokos might be one brick in building a bridge back between churches of the east and the west. At least it might be a way to better understand what still separates us. It might also be a "Fool's Errand."

In 1982 Holy Cross Orthodox Press published Augsburg and Constantinople, letters between Lutheran theologians in Tübingen, Germany, and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople. These letters, written between 1573 and 1589, were an attempt to find unity between the churches of the Protestant Reformation in the West and the Orthodox Church in the East. While covering a wide range of topics, the role of the Theotokos was one part of this epistulatory dialogue. I found some of the points of agreement useful for this paper.

I see the difference between the Eastern and especially the Protestant Western churches as one between belief and being. In the west, but especially in Protestantism, the "points" of our picture of the church are colored greatly with the colors of the great teaching of salvation by grace alone. These "gospel points" have been tested over time during conversations with the other great Christian tradition in the west, Roman Catholicism. Where we have found unity has been in liturgy and in cooperation to make the love of Christ real in joint works of mercy. But the focus on doctrine has remained paramount as our perceived road to unity and not only has led nowhere; some believe it is at a dead end.

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<sup>56</sup>Maximus the Confessor, *The Life of the Virgin*, trans. William Shoemaker, (Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 2012) 2

## **The Eastern Emphasis on Being**

In the eastern churches there is more of a wholeness, a “gestalt” if you will, that sees the whole of a person – our human *being*. Again, liturgy is a place where churches of east and west could find unity. But it is more than liturgy, or works of mercy that support the Orthodox Church’s emphasis on “being.” I believe the way the church in the east sees Mary is reflective of this holistic way of being. In the western church there has been a focus on the debt Jesus paid on the cross for the sins of all human beings. In Roman Catholicism Mary even becomes a “co-redemtrix.”

In the eastern churches the emphasis is more on God’s work to restore humanity to what God originally intended humanity to be. Thus, the focus on being. This has found expression in the different relationships between church and state in the east and in the west. But more about that later.

The term “Theotokos” is unfamiliar to many in the western churches. In 431 AD the Council of Ephesus determined Mary would have the title “Theotokos.” This was in contrast to what Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, taught. For Nestorius, Mary was the “Christotokus,” the bearer of the Messiah but not of God. Jesus’ human and divine natures were separated. The Council of Ephesus condemned this teaching – holding that Jesus was both God and man and that these natures could not be separated. This was a more holistic teaching. Maximus the Confessor demonstrates this holistic understanding of Mary. I wondered if Luther the Confessor did the same.

Stephen Shoemaker in his introduction to his translation of Maximus’ Life of the Virgin says, “the Greek Fathers understood the sacrifice of the Crucifixion not as a singularly redemptive act but instead primarily as the culmination of the Incarnation, in which the Immortal God finally vanquishes death by death.”<sup>57</sup> And, Mary’s “bodily presence in heaven has, like her Son’s resurrection and ascension, again brought our nature to dwell in its restored state as an offering in the presence of the Father...as human beings ultimately offer their renewed nature to the Father through deification and final union with God.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p.32

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.31

Shoemaker's point is that the church in the west emphasizes the death and resurrection of Jesus as satisfaction, payment, for the sins of humanity – but in the east it is the restoration of humanity that is emphasized– and the Theotokos is the beginning of this return to what God intended humanity to be. This is demonstrated in the birth of her Son.

According to the ancient traditions Maximus relates to us, Jesus was born in the way all humanity was originally supposed to be born – without pain and suffering. Maximus writes, “as men and women were punished with the curse, the pain, and affliction from both Adam and Eve, so also joy and blessing were spread forth over all by You (The Theotokos) and your Son.”<sup>59</sup> Maximus tells us about a message given to Mary from the archangel, “you will experience nothing of the maternal conditions and pains, but as conception was given to you without pain, so also His birth will be without corruption and without pain...”<sup>60</sup> This tradition is foreign to churches of the Protestant Reformation – and acknowledged but not universally accepted in the Roman Catholic tradition. But it does demonstrate the understanding that Mary's role as the new Eve was to live beyond the primal curse put on human beings in Genesis 3:16.

Later on Maximus tells us, “not even the slightest desire of any passion that would be corrupting of spiritual holiness ever came upon her.”<sup>61</sup> She lives in the way that the original humans were supposed to live.

And, even though she is a female, after Christ's ascension it is Mary who sends the disciples out to preach,<sup>62</sup> and Mary was the “teacher of all the believers,” including the apostles. She helped with preaching and shared their mental anguish from beatings and imprisonment.<sup>63</sup> Mary represents what God's intention was for the relationship between women and men. Her life is one of servanthood and leadership.

The oldest traditions say that beginning with Mary, humanity was being restored to the image of God.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 52

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 52-53

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p 44

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.123

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 124

## **Lutheran and Orthodox Theologians: Belief versus Being**

Let me say up front that the dialogue between the Lutheran and Orthodox theologians that began in 1573 and ended in 1589 did not lead to a union of the church bodies involved. However, having said that, it is possible to find areas of agreement. Furthermore, in seven short pages required for my paper there is not enough space to review all of the areas that were treated in the exchange of letters. I will only summarize what was said about the Theotokos.

The dialogue began after Joasaph II, the Patriarch of Constantinople, (1555-1565) “sent Deacon Mysos to meet the leaders of the Lutheran movement so he could study their teachings...”<sup>64</sup> Melanchthon had not been aware that the Orthodox Church had been preserved in Constantinople after the tragedy of 1453. Deacon Mysos spent six months as the guest of the Wittenberg theologian Philipp Melanchthon. According to George Mastrantonis, a warm relationship developed between them. The Augsburg Confession was translated into Greek as a gift for the Deacon.

Both Lutheran and Greek theologians accepted the words of Scripture as “the first and main source of Christian belief.”<sup>65</sup> There was disagreement about the role of tradition – the Orthodox theologians giving it more weight than the Lutherans. Probably the most significant difference between the Lutheran and the Greek Orthodox theologians, besides disagreement over the “filioque” question a disagreement over the free will of human beings.<sup>66</sup>

The Lutherans taught that after the fall of Adam, humans lost their free will to choose to love God – retaining only a “passive capacity” for freedom – able to accept Christ only through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox argued for the tradition of the Church Fathers saying man had not lost his free will entirely.<sup>67</sup> There was agreement, and disagreement, over the Theotokos.

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<sup>64</sup>Mastrantonis, George, ed, *Augsburg and Constantinople*, (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1982) p. 8

<sup>65</sup> Ibid p. 20

<sup>66</sup> Ibid p. 20

<sup>67</sup> Ibid p. 20

The Lutherans agreed that the saints in general should continue to be honored, but did not agree that they could be mediators, interceding with God on behalf of humanity, nor should they be worshipped. The same was true for their view of the Virgin. They agreed that Mary was “ever virgin.” They faithfully confessed her immaculate conception and continued virginity. But their attitude is summed up in the first response to the Patriarch, “Let Mary be held in honor, but let the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be worshipped; let no one worship Mary.”<sup>68</sup> In the view of the the Lutherans, the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox had turned Mary into an idol. Only Christ could be the Mediator between God and humanity.

The Orthodox protested that they worshipped only God – but that Mary and all the saints should be honored and called upon to go to the Lord to help the faithful still on earth.

The exchange ends with a plea by Jeremiah, the new Patriarch in Constantinople: “We request you from henceforth not to cause us more grief, nor write to us on the same subject if you wish to treat these luminaries (the Theotokos and the saints) and theologians of the Church (the church fathers) in a different manner. You honor and exalt with words, but you reject them in deeds.”<sup>69</sup>

### **What was Martin Luther’s View of the Theotokos? Belief and Being.**

Those engaged today in dialogue between Orthodox and Protestant theologians may find a rich resource in Martin Luther’s “The Magnificat- Translated and Explained.”<sup>70</sup> Written shortly after Luther’s excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church, it was a gift to John Frederick, the seventeen year old nephew of Luther’s military protector, Frederick the Wise. This work is mainly instructions to the young ruler about how to rule in a Christian manner. Luther writes in his introduction to the young man that the Magnificat “ought to be learned and kept in mind by all who would rule well and be helpful lords.”<sup>71</sup> He then goes on to comment on the ten statements Mary makes through her song.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 140

<sup>69</sup> Ibid p. 306

<sup>70</sup> This copy of Luther’s commentary on the Magnificat is from the website God Rules, [http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther\\_c5.htm](http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_c5.htm).

<sup>71</sup> ibid

In the first statement, Mary sings, “My soul doth magnify the Lord.” In this Luther sees that the human being is divided into three parts: spirit, soul and body. He goes on to say in this section that, “There is no peace except where men teach that we are made pious, righteous and blessed by no work nor outward thing, but solely by faith...where there is no faith, there must needs be many works.” Luther here displays the joy he found in Romans 1:16-17. This colors everything he understands and writes about, including the Theotokos.

In his comments on Mary’s words, “For He that is mighty has done great things to me and holy is His name,” Luther again emphasizes belief: “in proportion as we ascribe merit and worthiness to her (Mary) we lower the grace of God and diminish the truth of the Magnificat....all those who heap praise and honor upon her head are not far from making an idol of her...”

When Mary sings, “He hath remembered His mercy,” Luther sees the mercy of God in redeeming His people. He says, “(Mary) does not say, ‘He hath remembered our merit and worthiness.’ We were in need, to be sure, but altogether unworthy.”

This is Luther’s primary thought – salvation is by God’s grace alone. However, the whole commentary is focused on the wisdom of Mary – to teach this young man what he must learn from the Theotokos to become a wise and godly ruler. Luther points out in his understanding of Mary’s song that Mary is exalted – she does not exalt herself – since the Lord has “exalted those of low degree.”<sup>72</sup> Luther’s point however is that this is something a ruler should remember. It is God who raises up human beings for spiritual leadership: “For they (the poor and humble) have more knowledge than all the learned and mighty.”<sup>73</sup> Here Luther is talking about the need for any Christian, but particularly those who lead, to do so with humility. He even uses aphorisms of his time to caution the young ruler: “The more men know, the worse they grow;” “A prince in heaven is a rare bird;” “Rich here, poor yonder.”<sup>74</sup>

The Theotokos becomes a template for life, not only for the life of a king or prince, but for all those who desire to serve God, as Mary did. Luther’s Commentary on the Magnificat

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid*, Comment on statement number seven.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid*

<sup>74</sup> *ibid*



certainly speaks about salvation by grace alone but the whole force is to teach us how to “be” in the world. The Magnificat is held up as a series of life lessons on being a Christian.

### **The Theotokos as an Agent to Bring Hope to the World**

There is a strong tradition in the Georgian Orthodox Church that it was Mary who sent the Apostle Andrew to bring the gospel to Iberia. Maximus reinforces the idea that Mary not only participated in bringing the gospel into the world, but that she was a leader in the mission work of the early church. Could a renewed discussion of the Theotokos bring the churches of the east and the west closer together? Could she be God’s missionary today for the purpose of the unity of the church?

She is the new Eve, the one who is God’s instrument to begin the restoration of humanity to what God intended us to be. Her presence among us is real. At an Antiochean Orthodox Church worship service I recently attended a man who had painted an icon of Mary told us with tears how, as he painted the icon and looked into the eyes of the Theotokos, how she spoke to him. She can continue to play a major role in God’s work of restoring persons to the image he intended for them.

It is encouraging to me to see the partnership between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the government of Georgia. In my Western eyes I see a partnership where the government of Georgia understands the role of the church in Georgia as a guarantor of the spiritual and moral lives of the people. In the West this is very different. An important book was written in 1984 by the theologian Richard John Neuhaus that addresses this issue. It was titled, The Naked Public Square. Neuhaus argued that democracy was being threatened in the west by removing values from discussion and affirmation in the public sphere. This has left the “public square” empty of morals – and democracy in the west open to decline.

The Lutheran Reformers gave their lives for a reformation in theology. Another reformation is needed today – a reformation of “being.” How will human beings navigate the angry waters of nuclear war, civil and religious division and hatred, racism and disregard for the poor? Maximus the Confessor and Luther the Confessor saw hope for the restoration of humanity

in Mary, the Mother of God. Could a conversation over the role of the virgin help heal at least some of the ills of this world?

The Theotokos can speak to us today – humanity desperately needs her and she did say, “All generations shall call me blessed.”

**Priest Porphyrios Georgi**

**(Lebanon)**

**The Theotokos as Prototype of Spiritual Life  
According to Saint Gregory Palamas**

***Introduction***

The Most Holy Mother of God occupies a central position in the spiritual teachings of Saint Gregory Palamas and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Hesychastic tradition. The roots of this veneration of the Theotokos can be traced back to the early spirituality of Eastern Christianity as it evolved in monastic centers like the Deserts of Egypt and Syria, the Lavra of Saint Saba in Palestine, the Monastery of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai, and the Monastery of Studion in Constantinople<sup>i</sup>. As the history of the Church proves well, some of these monasteries became major workshops of hymnographic and iconic production related to the veneration of the Ever-Virgin. This rich tradition of veneration was inherited by Mount Athos and other centers of hesychastic life in the fourteen century.

It may seem intriguing how ascetics like Saint Gregory Palamas, whose spiritual exercise is mainly concentrated on the practice of the Jesus prayer, would turn their attention to the person of the Theotokos and accentuate the importance of her contribution in enriching the Christian experience of spiritual life. In many cases, such a fact was misunderstood by many researchers.

In modern scholarship the earliest scholar who considered the status of the Mother of God in the writings and thought of Saint Gregory Palamas was Martin Jugie in an article published in 1910<sup>ii</sup>. As a matter of fact, Jugie, as well as many other scholars, had a partial perception of the theology of Palamas. Instead of considering his thought in its entirety, they shed light on fragments of his texts separating quotations from their real context and projecting on their interpretation subjective conceptions of their own. Thus, Jugie reached the result that Palamas was adherent to the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception".

Indeed, many researchers, and among them Martin Jugie, forgot the fact that there exists an important premise of the theology and spirituality of the father of hesychasm, which is the Christological definitions of the third, fourth and sixth Ecumenical Synods. Saint Gregory

Palamas bases on the traditional Orthodox Christology all his teaching on the deification of man. This permeation of the life-giving grace of God into the created human reality was prepared in the Old Testament and realized in the Incarnational act of our Lord. It is nothing other than the consequence of the hypostatic union of the two natures, the divine and the human, in the eternal person of the Logos of God.

What Jugie did not understand is how Palamas and the Hezychast tradition conceived the position of the Theotokos as the prototype of spiritual life and of spiritual perfection. He also misunderstood how this teaching is a direct consequence of Orthodox Christology as reformulated in the Hezychastic theological discourse. This article seeks to explore the importance and centrality of the Mother of God in the spiritual teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas.

### ***The Theotokos as the Aim of the Election of the People of God***

Saint Gregory Palamas follows the Orthodox line in theology according to which the Mother of God is the person towards whom the whole history of divine Economy in the Old Testament was looking. In her life, God fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament, and realizes the aim of the election of Israel.

*Turn your attention then, to where this choice began. From the sons of Adam God chose the wondrous Seth ... from whom the Virgin would blossom as the divinely fitting chariot of God. She was needed to give birth and to summon the earth-born to heavenly sonship. For this reason also all the lineage of Seth were called "sons of God," because from this lineage would be born the Son of God. The name Seth signifies a rising or resurrection, or more specifically, it signifies the Lord, Who promises and gives immortal life to all who believe in Him (Gen. 4: 25 – 26) ... In this manner, the choice of the future Mother of God, beginning with the very sons of Adam and proceeding through all the generations of time, through the Providence of God, passes to the Prophet-king David and the successors of his kingdom and lineage. When the chosen time had come, then from the house and posterity of David, Joachim and Anna are chosen by God. ... By God Himself, the Mother of God was proclaimed and given to them as a child, so that from such virtuous parents the all-virtuous child would be raised. So in this manner, chastity joined*

*with prayer came to fruition by producing the Mother of virginity, giving birth in the flesh to Him Who was born of God the Father before the ages.*<sup>iii</sup>

Thus the Virgin is represented in the teaching of Saint Gregory as the crowning of all spiritual quests and spiritual struggles of the righteous men and women in the Old Testament. This seed of adoption is already revealed in the election of Noah. The blessing and the election continue with the Patriarch Abraham, as forefather of the Mother of God, with Isaac, Jacob and all their descendance, which became the descendance of God<sup>iv</sup>. They are confirmed in the numerous manifestations of God, divine signs, and divine promises and prophecies which predicted what is related to the Mother of God and to her Son<sup>v</sup>.

Thus, this hesychastic understanding of the people of God's preparation to the coming of the "ark of holiness" (*Ps. 131:8*)<sup>vi</sup> features the importance of the Orthodox perception of purification and righteousness in the Old Testament as a mean of preparation to the spiritual perfection which was granted to humanity by Christ through His abode in the sanctified womb of His All Holy Virgin Mother.

### ***The Mediator between God and Creation***

In contrast with any scholastic approach to Mariology, a major characteristic of the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas is the possibility of expressing the Orthodox Dogma in a discourse that bridges the way between theology and life. This can be noticed in his analysis of the patristic concept of "true life" (*ἡ ὁντως ζωή*), which he identifies with the "life and communion of the Three Divine Persons".

The Hesychast theologian clarifies that in the tradition of the Holy Fathers of the Church, "true life" is identified with the gift of the deifying grace: the grace of the Holy Spirit which proceeds eternally from the Father and reposes in the Son, and is sent, in time, to the Disciples of Christ<sup>vii</sup>. This Trinitarian divine life was granted to human nature by the incarnation and redemptive act of the Logos of God; and man is called to acquire it, to be receptive of the uncreated grace of the Holy Spirit which enriches and transfigures his existence and actualizes in his being the gift of divine adoption. He is called to become a son or daughter of the heavenly Father, a partaker of the glory and the beauty of the Triune God<sup>viii</sup>.

In a remarkable text, Palamas says:

*“For the Holy Spirit possesses life in Himself, and those who participate in Him will live in a godlike manner, having attained a divine and heavenly form of life. For the Glory of the divine nature is above all divine life in the saints and their participation in every blessing”<sup>ix</sup>.*

Thus the entire Mystery of divine Economy is interpreted as the manifestation of the life of the Holy Trinity in creation through the uncreated deifying energy, which regulates and orients creation and the sum of history to its ultimate purpose and perfection<sup>x</sup>.

*So it is, and this is why she, from the beginning of time, was chosen from among the chosen. She who is manifest as the Holy of Holies, who has a body even purer than the spirits purified by virtue, is capable of receiving ... the Hypostatic Word of the Unoriginated Father”<sup>xi</sup>.*

Thus, Saint Gregory interprets the Chrystological definitions of the Fourth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils in a creative manner, clarifying to a large extent their relation with the life of man and the experience of Deification. As an explanation of the “mutation of characteristics (or exchange of characteristics)” between the two natures of Christ (ἀντίδοσις τῶν ἰδιομάτων), he elaborates the teaching according to which, the Logos of God is Life. «Πρὸς τὸ ὅτι ὁ ὦντα λέγεται ζωὴ ὁ Υἱὸς κατ’ ἐνέργειαν»<sup>xii</sup>. He is the principle of natural life (κατὰ φύσιν ζωή), of the created living beings who partake this life “in energy” (κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ζωή). He is called “life in energy”, being the one who vivifies the living beings, but he is also the life of the ones living in a divine way (“τῶν θείως ζώντων”) as a grace giver. However, this does *not* prohibit Him from being life in Himself, not in relation to anything else, but completely, independently and freely from creation<sup>xiii</sup>.

This insistence on the concept of “true life” or “divine life” granted to man is a major clue in understanding the unique role of mediation of the Mother of God in the history of Divine Economy. As Saint Gregory centers the Christian typological interpretation of the Old Testament according to which the Virgin “conceived the divine fire without being burnt” he affirms that:

*For while she alone stood between God and the whole human race, God became the Son of Man and made men sons of God; she made earth heavenly, she deified the human race, and she alone of all women was shown forth to be a mother by nature and the Mother of God transcending every law of nature, and by her ineffable childbirth-the Queen of all creation, both terrestrial and celestial. ... she only is the frontier between created and*

*uncreated nature, and there is no man that shall come to God except he be truly illumined through her, that Lamp truly radiant with divinity...<sup>xiv</sup>*

*It is through her that as many as partake of God do partake, and as many as know God understand her to be the enclosure of the Uncontainable One, and as many as hymn God praise her together with Him. She is the cause of what came before her, the champion of what came after her and the agent of things eternal. She is the substance of the prophets, the principle of the apostles, the firm foundation of the martyrs and the premise of the teachers of the Church. She is the glory of those upon earth, the joy of celestial beings, the adornment of all creation. She is the beginning and the source and root of unutterable good things; she is the summit and consummation of everything holy<sup>xv</sup>.*

The Virgin is the mediator between God and creation not as a "co-redeemer" but being the "Mother of Life", and "the Gate of Heaven" (Gen. 28:17)"<sup>xvi</sup> from which Christ the Life of the World entered into creation and transfigured it. The role of the Mother of God is not conceived as a redemptive act but as a receptive role. She receives grace from her Son and communicates it to creation.

Saint Gregory also accentuates the eschatological dimension of the role of the Mother of God as mediator in the life giving participation of creation in the divine lure and life.

*...in the endless age to come, without her mediation, every emanation of illuminating divine light, every revelation of the mysteries of the Godhead, every form of spiritual gift, will exceed the capacity of every created being. She alone has received the all-pervading fullness of Him that filleth all things, and through her all may now contain it, for she dispenses it according to the power of each, in proportion and to the degree of the purity of each<sup>xvii</sup>.*

### ***The Model of Hesychastic Life***

The Ever-Virgin Mary is represented in the writings of Saint Gregory Palamas as the model of Hesychastic life and the complete devotion to watchfulness of thoughts and the exercise of keeping the senses. Being pure and purified by her Son, she deserves the grace of conceiving the Only Begotten Son of God.

*God is born of the spotless and Holy Virgin, or better to say, of the Most Pure and All-Holy Virgin. She is beyond every fleshly defilement and every impure thought. Her*

*conceiving resulted not from fleshly lust but by the overshadowing of the Most Holy Spirit. Such desire being utterly alien to Her, it is through prayer and spiritual readiness that She declared to the angel: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto Me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38), and that She conceived and gave birth<sup>xviii</sup>.*

Her purity is not the result of a supernatural grace similar to the "Immaculate Conception" but, rather, of her exercise of virtue and unceasing prayer.

*... who can relate those things which came to pass after His ineffable birth? For, as she co-operated and suffered with that exalting condescension (kenosis) of the Word of God, she was also rightly glorified and exalted together with Him...<sup>xix</sup>*

Complete detachment from worldly worries and perfect devotion to prayer in a "Hesychastic mode of life" are best illustrated, according to Saint Gregory Palamas, in the life of the all-pure Virgin, who

*...by renouncing every earthly relationship, retracted from mankind and chose the unseen mystical life, dwelling in the holy of holies. The 'All-holy' forwent all material bonds and elevated her intellect. And through prayer, she returned to her inner self and surpassed the throng of busy thoughts, eying in heaven the new unutterable path, which is the quietude of thoughts. And as she made her way to that path, which is not subject to the senses, she rose above creation and perceived, beyond Prophet Moses, the glory of God and His divine grace. Partaking of this vision, the 'Most Holy' became truly 'the radiant cloud of the living water' and the 'dawn of the mystic day'<sup>xx</sup>.*

### ***The Ultimate Expression of Beauty***

Another focal point in the teaching of Saint Gregory is the identification of the Light of Mount Thabor with the eternal glory (Δόξα), reign (Βασιλεία) and beauty (κάλλος) of the Holy Trinity. This glory, reign and beauty which shone on the body of the Christ is manifested to the three disciples in the Transfiguration on Mount Thabor<sup>xxi</sup>. This idea is founded on the perception of the mystery of Incarnation according to which the body of the Lord contains the plenitude of glory, which the saints are called to share<sup>xxii</sup>. Palamas explains that the plenitude of life, life divine and eternal, is united in the Incarnation with human life, in order to grant it wisdom, power, freedom and light: *"the beauty of the Reign of God"*<sup>xxiii</sup>.



*Who can describe in words thy divinely resplendent beauty, O Virgin Mother of God? Thoughts and words are inadequate to define thine attributes, since they surpass mind and speech<sup>xxiv</sup>.*

The Mother of God is represented by St Gregory as the prototype of spiritual beauty, or the highest image of divine light, glory and beauty reflected in humanity.

*The King of all "hath desired a mystic beauty" of the Ever-Virgin, as David foretold (Ps. 44:11) and, "He bowed the heavens and came down" (Ps. 17:9) and overshadowed her, or rather, the enhypostatic Power of the Most High dwelt in her...Willing to set up an image of all goodness and beauty and to make clearly manifest His own therein to both angels and men, God fashioned a being supremely good and beautiful, uniting in her all good, seen and unseen, which when He made the world He distributed to each thing and thereby adorned all; or rather one might say, He showed her forth as a universal mixing bowl of all divine, angelic and human things good and beautiful and the supreme beauty which embellished both worlds...<sup>xxv</sup>*

Palamas announces also in another text that:

*... the Ever-Virgin Mary, like a Treasure of God, is stored in the Holy of Holies, so that in due time, ... she would serve for the enrichment of, and an ornament for, all the world<sup>xxvi</sup>.*

This Philocalic approach to aesthetics as expressed by Saint Gregory, should remain an inspiring theme in our presentation of Theology today as an effective tool for teaching and preaching. "Beauty will save the world" says Dostoevsky. Our contemporary Orthodox theology should be apt to demonstrate to modern and post-modern societies that beauty is not an abstract value or a fleeting impression, but a free conscious act of devotion and consecration of man to the personal God, to Jesus Christ the true Life and the Light of the world.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that Saint Gregory Palamas interprets in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox Christology in a lively language which bridges theological thought with the living experience of the Church and the salvific message of the Gospel is most important for our theological conscience today. This theological line not only liberates the Orthodox approach to the Mother of God from all the



### **On allotment of Georgia to the Mother of God**

The question on allotment of Georgia to the Mother of God is the mystery of divine providence and human mind is unable to comprehend it, however it is possible to conduct discussion on this issue and make some trustworthy conclusions.

The legend on allotment of Georgia to the Mother of God is found not only in the bosom of Georgian Church. Saint Dimitry of Rostov also writes about the fact, that Iberia, which is also called Georgia, is the appanage of the Mother of God, who, by the Lord's special will, got by lot to annunciate the gospel of Christ in this country, and information on it is still preserved in Iberian, as well as in whole Eastern Orthodox Church.

Saint Dimitry of Rostov relies on Saint Stephen of Athos, who tells us in his famous book "Mental Paradise": "At the moment of Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, his pupils were on the Mount Sioni together with his mother, Mary, and were waiting for Consoler, as they had been ordered by the Lord not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for Lord's Covenant" (Luke, 24, 49; Acts 1,4). Apostles drew lots to find out to which country each of them had to go for preaching. The Most Holy Theotokos said: "I also wish to throw lots with you in order not to be left without my appanage, which will be assigned to me by the Lord's will". Her lot fell on Iberia. The Most Holy Theotokos was ready to go to this country immediately after the Descent of Holy Spirit, but angel of the Lord told her not to leave Jerusalem."

Arrival of Saint Nino in Georgia is the expression of allotment of Georgia to the Mother of God as well, as Arsen the Monk tells us: Many years later Mother of God showed her mercy to the country fallen to her lot by the Lord's will and us, Georgians, and we are blessed, thrice blessed, as we are her allotted portion, and after the God She is our liberator from slavery and captivity of prince of darkness. She appeared before Saint Nino and told her: "Behold, I'm sending you for preaching to the unknown people, to the allotted to me country in the north, to the people of Georgia, be firm, go without fear and preach the truth"; She cut off the branch of vine and made a cross of it and gave it to Saint Nino and told her: "By this cross you will defeat

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every plot of evil, and your preaching will prevail, and I'll always help you and never leave you alone".

Although the sources unanimously testify the same, the question arises:

Is the allotment of Georgia to Mother of God is arrogant fiction of Georgians (unfortunately, this idea has gradually acquired wide spread), or is it historical reality?

In order to answer this question we should notice once more, that there are some divine reasons of such an extraordinary phenomenon, comprehension of which is impossible for us; but there are reasons which human mind is able to comprehend and they should be the issues of our discussion. Before we start discussion on concrete arguments, we will put a question:

What should have been a reason for three figures so closely connected to Georgia – the Most Holy Theotokos, Saint Andrew the First-Called and Saint Nino – to strive to this country?

The answer to this question is read in Saint Nino's address to "Miaphora" of Dvin – "Where is this northern country, or where is the clothing of Our Lord?"

As we see, **the reason of this striving for St. Nino is search and visit of the Seat of the Chiton and the country, which possesses it.**

At present we will not concern theology of the Chiton itself and begin discuss those spiritual reasons, which conditioned allotment of the Chiton of the Lord to Mtskheta (we will discuss this question briefly later)<sup>xxvi</sup>. We underline only the fact that **St. Nino's mission to Georgia is conditioned by her striving towards the vivifying holiness, the largest holiness of the Lord in the visible world.** There is no doubt, that if the Chiton had been placed in any other country, St. Nino would have gone there.

St. Nino's aspiration towards the Chiton is her aspiration towards the holiest relic of the Creator. We focus our attention on it as unlike St. Nino (and all other Saints), the Most Holy Theotokos, besides of aspiration towards the greatest divine holiness, was full of other strongest love of the Chiton – **this is an extraordinary motherly love of her Son.**

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How could we suppose, that the Mother of God, the greatest Mother of mothers, would not have had the greatest desire of finding her Son's clothing? She would have had the aspiration towards the Chiton of Jesus most of all, and how it could have been happened that country of Chiton would have been allotted to someone else by Divine Providence?

Moreover, it should be doubtless, that Mary's immeasurable love of the Chiton certainly would have been spread over the country, which got above mentioned holiness by lot, and which had been set as the custodian of "more desirable than the most desirable" (Chiton), or as the **Guard of the Chiton**, by the Divine Providence since the old times (since the Crucifixion).

That is why the Most Holy Theotokos strives so strongly to Georgia, that is why she is so fond of the country, where her Son's clothing is placed. This is the most important reason that the country, got Chiton by lot, becomes her allotted portion.

Generally (and this is the most important for grasping the essence of this phenomenon), two kinds of allotments are connected with Georgia:

- (I) **The Chiton was allotted to Georgia**, as it is stressed in all sources (compare with "Conversion of Kartli": "The Chiton of Our Lord Jesus was allotted to northerners, citizens of Mtskheta").
- (II) **Georgia was allotted to the Most Holy Theotokos**, as it is clearly seen from above mentioned sources.

**Neither Georgia, nor, generally, whole Christendom knows any other example of allotment** connected with the Mother of God or the Chiton.

It is quite obvious, that in both cases "allotment" has purely ecclesiastical, liturgical content, which bears the imprint of Divine Providence.

Correspondingly, it is absolutely obvious that **Theotokos got by lot just that country, which had got by lot the Chiton of God, Son of Mary**, that confirms the **essential inseparability of these two allotments** and actual affirmation of what we discussed earlier:

The Mother of God got Georgia by lot, precisely because the Chiton of her Most Loved Son was allotted to Georgia (due to its spiritual reasons).

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Here we should also consider the question of interconnection of activities between St. Andrew the First-Called and the Most Holy Theotokos. The fact that in earlier sources the missionary activity of St. Andrew the First-Called in Georgia and allotment of Georgia to the Mother of God are mentioned separately does not depreciate at all the idea, that the activities of St. Andrew the Apostle and the Most Holy Theotokos in respect to Georgia are inseparably interrelated, they don't exist without each other, because otherwise we would have come to the idea, that the collection of the Most Holy Theotokos and Our Lord's Apostles was something unsystematic human formation, distanced from Divine Providence and deprived of God's grace. How can we think, that on one hand Theotokos got by lot Georgia, and on the other hand Andrew the First-Called fulfilled the responsibility of allotment, and these two phenomena were accomplished independently? Wouldn't Andrew the Apostle have known which country was allotted to Mary? How could the fact have been left unknown for the Mother of God, that Andrew the Apostle was going to preach in country allotted to her, or how Andrew himself would have dared to fulfill allotted to Mary responsibility in her appanage without informing her?

So, it is obvious, that allotment of Georgia to the Mother of God and conversion of the same Georgia to Christianity by Andrew the First-Called are two united and inseparable phenomena.

But the fact that the Apostle substituted the Mother of God in accomplishment of defined by God responsibility is the mystery of Divine Providence, and what could be explained in a human language is given in "Life of Kartli":

"After the Ascension of Our Lord, when Apostles drew lots, the Most Holy Theotokos got by lot "Conversion of Georgia". Her Son appeared before her and told her, that He wouldn't neglect the noblest nation in all nations by her mediation. "Send Andrew the First-Called to the country, allotted to you, and give him your icon, as it will be depicted putting it on your face. And let your icon stay there as their protector for all times".

Mary addresses Andrew the First-Called in the following words: "My Son and God has appeared and ordered me to send you to the country, allotted to me, and take my icon and that of my Son there, and me to be the ruler of their lives, help them and defend them from enemies".

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The Most Holy Theotokos asked for some board, washed her face and put it on the board and the image of Mother of God with her Child was depicted on it and this icon is the Icon of Theotokos of Atskuri by the information of “Life of Kartli”. She gave this icon to Andrew the Apostle and said: “Let the grace and assistance of born by me God be with you, wherever you go, and I will also assist you in your preaching, and give much help to the country, allotted to me”

Above said shows, that distinctiveness of Georgia for Theotokos should have been conditioned on the one hand by the Divine reasons, hidden from us, and on the other hand, by the burial of the Most Holy Chiton here, or by **Chiton-bearing**.

Everything this, I will underline it again, means the following closest connection:

**The Chiton is allotted to Georgia, and Chiton-bearing or God-bearing Georgia is allotted to Theotokos.**

Question arises from above mentioned: what is the reason that the Chiton fall to Georgia’s share?

Divine Chiton was heavenly knitted and wasn’t like the ordinary clothing, which can be torn, worn, vanished. Though it was material, but at the same time it was saturated by the grace of God, which protected it from decaying, as the grace keeps all holiness from decomposition.

Spiritually, the Chiton is bearer of that unity, which comes from above (heaven) and from Father and couldn’t have been broken by its receiver and possessor (Saint Cyprian of Carthago).

The Chiton was brought to Georgia by Elioz, who, as it seems, used to arrive to Jerusalem. Just he was the person, who had to accomplish this great merit:

**Bringing of allotted Chiton to Georgia.**

Eliaz’s sister Sidonia pressed the Chiton to her chest and passed away.

Departure of Sidonia was preceded by the death of her and Eliaz’s mother, who had taken Crucifixion of Saviour to heart. As “Conversion of Kartli” tells us, when Our Lord was crucified and hammerer hit a nail with a hammer, **Mother of Eliaz heard the sound of hitting**. She

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uttered greatest Divine truth, almost unknown for everybody at that time, about Divine Nature of Saviour, and, writhing in pain, passed away.

This is very important spiritual phenomenon, **quite particular apparition, revelation, by means of which the greatest mystery was announced to Georgia (and from Georgia to the whole world), that not a man, but God Incarnate was crucified.**

The last words of honest mother of Elioze and Sidonia were such:

“Farewell, power of Hebrews, as you killed God Incarnate and Saviour, and became the enemies of Creator”

**This is the first full acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the true Saviour and his Divine nature in the history of mankind.**

Mother of Elioze, who was killed suffering bodily pain of the Lord **on the day of Friday**, was honoured to be martyred together with the Lord and **appeared as the first martyr in the history of Church.**

Hebrews of Mtskheta, as the only and real heirs and rulers of faultless religious direction of righteous and God-seeing clergy of Old Testament at that time (time of the Crucifixion), comprehend divinity of Jesus Christ as completely as possible, apprehend the reality, that the Old Testament should be changed into New one, and **that the greatest mystery – Harrowing of Hell – is accomplished.**

**Thus, at the time of Saviour’s Crucifixion the church of the Old Testament appears as the true heir of foretold knowledge.**

This spiritual, anticipative knowledge of the New Testament turned out to be the power, keeping the Hebrews of Georgia from taking part in Saviour’s Crucifixion. Exactly that conditioned the fact that the Lord bestowed the Chiton upon them, Christians in their souls.

Possession of the Chiton by the Church of Georgia does not express its qualitative superiority, but the fact, that God charged it a mission to serve Him in front of all Orthodox Christianity.



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Mystery implied in the **Chiton** is **indivisibility and inseparability of absolute unity and uniqueness (singleness) of the Orthodox Apostolic Church similar to the Chiton.**

The local church of Georgia should protect just this – **natural and Chiton-like, eternally indivisible one ecclesiasticism**, for this it should struggle constantly in front of all the Orthodox Christendom and the whole world.

Divine Chiton, as the holiest load, has fallen to our share for activity, and the holiness requires great respect, holiness received as esteem is a spiritual load. From everyone who was given much, much is required. The owner of this holiness shouldn't be arrogant, but modest, as modesty is the only power, which makes the man bear this holiness with dignity.

Burial place of the Chiton is generally known, but the Chiton itself is hidden from human eyes, as divine holiness. Holy relics can be appeared only by the Lord's will. If the Lord wishes, the Chiton will appear, as well as the seat of St. Elias' mantle. That is why all those histories, created and told during the centuries about being of the Chiton here or there, or its giving as a gift to Russia or other country, are absolutely groundless.

The Chiton is buried in Mtskheta. Its seat is inaccessible for human mind and this place could not be determined in any way, if not by the grace of God. And this will happen only according to messages, at the period of the Second Coming.

The Chiton, as the symbol of church, is, correspondingly, the symbol of the head of church, i.e. the Saviour. It is obvious, to whom the Chiton was allotted, he got the Christ by lot. Georgia, which got the Chiton by lot, becomes allotted portion of the Chiton, becomes Chiton-bearing, or Church-bearing, Christ-bearing, indivisible as the Chiton.

Why the Chiton was allotted to Georgia by the Divine Providence?

**During the bodily activity of Saviour that special sacrament, which had to be done in Jerusalem** if not spiritual blindness of clerics of this city, **was performed exactly in Georgia.** Those clerics had to accept the incarnated Saviour and by it, according to words of St. Cyril of Alexandria, priests of the Old Testament Church of Jerusalem would rise up to the degree of priests of the New Testament Church, be transformed into Christ-bearing, spiritual body of

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Christ, become a big part of the New Testament Church and lead the pagans towards the salvation. Because of above mentioned spiritual blindness it didn't happen so.

**The Chiton settled on the place where the priests of the Old Testament first opened their hearts to the Lord, where the first “undecaying” bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament was laid, where Hebrew temple was first transformed into church and Saint Nino elevated the cross on it.**

Saviour's religious rite towards Mtskheta means transformation of the capital of Georgia into Jerusalem, the holy capital of Orthodoxy. This activity begins with bringing of the Chiton and is crowned with Elevation of invincible cross of Mtskheta.

The Cross of Mtskheta is filled, in the direct sense, with the Cross of Calvary itself (Chelishi: “The cross of Jesus the God”), and it is the world (and not private, national) holiness as well, as the Chiton itself. That is why the Cross of Mtskheta (more exactly, the **Calvary Cross of Jerusalem appeared in Mtskheta**) was elevated, according to inscription on its pedestal, as the **“protector of the whole world”**.

As for transformation of Mtskheta into Jerusalem, evidence of this is the fact that conversion to Christianity of released instead of Jesus Barabbas' heirs takes place exactly in Mtskheta, which is a unique historical fact and spiritual reality of extraordinary depth as well.

As we have mentioned, the Cross of Mtskheta is the same as the Calvary Cross elevated in Mtskheta. Correspondingly, transformation of Mtskheta into Jerusalem, its transformation into capital of Orthodoxy, is Divine hierurgy, started in Jerusalem on the Calvary Cross (when the Chiton of Our Lord was allotted to Mtskheta) and completed in Mtskheta on the same Calvary Cross.

The Chiton of the crucified Savior and the Cross of Mtskheta are spiritually inseparable. The legend of Elevation of Cross in Mtskheta and afterwards its miraculous apparition is known in Georgian ecclesiastic tradition. These events were marked with special holidays: Elevation of the Cross was celebrated on the third Sunday after Easter, and the miraculous Appearance of the Cross – on the first Wednesday after the Pentecost. Both these events, as one whole, with their grace are equal of greatest holidays of Elevation of the Cross on the 14<sup>th</sup> September and

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Apparition of the Cross over Jerusalem, happened on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 351 (“Conversion of Kartli”, chapters 23 and 24; Leonti Mroveli “Life of Kartli”, Arsen the Monk “The Life of Saint Nino”, Anonymous author “The Life of Saint Nino”).

As we have already mentioned, for the Church of Georgia the Cross of Mtskheta, in the direct sense, is perceived as the Cross of Saviour, or Jerusalem Cross, and Calvary of Mtskheta, where the cross was elevated, spiritually is the same as Calvary of Jerusalem, which testifies that Chiton-bearing and allotted to Theotokos Georgia, similar to owner of the Chiton, God Incarnate and bodily Son of the Mother of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, wends his way to salvatory Easter via Calvary invincibly.

**The modulation of the term *THEOTOKOS* from the fathers of 2<sup>nd</sup> century to Cyril of Alexandria**

**ABSTRACT**

Christians believe God the Son is begotten of God the Father pre - eternally but is born "in time" of Holy Mary. Theotokos thus refers to the Incarnation, when the Second Person of the Holy Trinity took on human nature in addition to his pre-existing divine nature, this being made possible through the cooperation of Holy Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human, so His mother should be called and She is Theotokos. This Virgin Mother of God is called "Theotokos" [God-bearer] not only by the Ecumenical Synods, but countless God-bearing Fathers, who indeed anathematize those who refuse to attribute this title to her.

**1. The use of the term *Theotokos* through the text of fathers before the Cyril of Alexandria**

Through the disobedience of Eve, death and sin were introduced to the world, but through the obedience of the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, the Theotokos, the Son of God overthrew the power of the devil and liberated us from sin. *Theotokos* is a powerfully evocative term which belonged to the "language of devotion". The word "Theotokos" is Greek and literally means "God-bearer", although in more general terms it can be taken to mean "Mother of God". Mary is the *Theotokos*, the one who gave birth to God. This single word sums up the meaning of Luke's phrase: "Mother of the Lord"<sup>xxvi</sup> and represents a counterpoint to John's teaching that the "Word was made flesh"<sup>xxvi</sup> Usually the term *theotokos* is translated into English as "Mother of God". However, Greek-speaking Christians also used the equivalent *Meter Theou*. The latter form offers a more comprehensive vision of Mary's motherhood in line with a personalist point

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of view. The Fathers of the Church saw in this name, Theotokos, a compendium of the Church's faith in the Incarnation<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In the 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries we find the term Theotokos for the Holy Mother in the texts of Ignatius of Antioch. He had created the concept of Mary as God-bearer when he wrote in his second epistle to John that the Mother of Jesus was honorable, affable, and aroused wonder in all people who came in Jerusalem, and all wished to see her. The Virgin bore the true God. Also in his letter to Ephesians, he underlined that Mary is glorified as the Mother of God and the Virgin is full of grace and virtue. She is joyful in troubles and persecutions, does not grieve in poverty and want, and not only does not get angry with those who offend her but does good to them still more... because our enfleshed God (sesarkomenos), Jesus Christ, was carried in Mary's womb<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Some years later another patristic writer of the Church, Origen used the term Theotokos. According to the early Church historian Socrates Scholasticus, Origen defended the term Theotokos -God-bearer or Mother of God- in a commentary on Romans a full two centuries before the Council of Ephesus defined the term<sup>xxvi</sup>. Origen underlines that the name Mariam is the name of Mary, who will be called Theotokos<sup>xxvi</sup>. In another passage of the Homily on Luke's gospel, Origen supports that the seeds of David are the ancestors of Mary, Theotokos, and of Christ<sup>xxvi</sup>. Origen also in the first volume of his Commentaries on the apostle's epistle to the Romans, gives an ample exposition of the sense in which the term Theotokos is used<sup>xxvi</sup>.

More problematic seems to be the evidence of the use of the term Theotokos by Gregory the Wonderworker (213-270), the most disciple of Origen. Indeed, it is not known who wrote the oration for Annunciation. This text which uses the specific term is attributed to either Apollinaris (310-390) or an unknown writer of the 5th century., But in no case in a Cappadocian Fathers<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Some years later the term Theotokos is used by Alexander of Alexandria underlines that «our Lord Jesus Christ assumed flesh in reality (not by illusion) from Mary the Theotokos unto the end of the ages and came unto the race of men to destroy sin». The way that the term is used declares that it was a common word for the mother of Christ that period of time<sup>xxvi</sup>. Alexander tried to defend the teaching of Arians with the use of the term Theotokos, and with his whole theology.

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His successor in the throne of Alexandria, Athanasius the great uses the word *Theotokos* in his teaching against Arianism too. This characterization for Virgin Mary always arises in his Christological context declares that Christ was truly man, homoousios to God and coeternal to Father<sup>xxvi</sup>. Athanasius used this term only a few times to show that Arius' falsehood for the Christ. The latter was the only real and coeternal God with the Father.

On the other hand a Cappadocian Father, the Basilios the Great uses the noun Theotokos for Mary a lot of times in his writings to show that Mary gave birth truly God and truly man<sup>xxvi</sup>. Through his works, Theotokos is presented as an honorable temple of God and a shrine made pure, and a golden altar of whole burnt offerings. By reason of her surpassing purity [she is] the Divine incense of oblation, and oil of the holy grace, and a precious vase bearing in itself the true nard; [yea and] the priestly diadem revealing the good pleasure of God, whom she alone approach the holy in body and soul.

Basilios' favorite friend, Gregory the Theologian in his Letter to Cledonius says the following: "Whoever does not accept Mary as the Theotokos is godless. And whoever asserts that God the Word passed through the Virgin as one passes through a tube, and, consequently, He was not formed inside her simultaneously in a divine and human manner - in a divine because there was no mediation of a man, and in a human manner because He was no subjected to the law of gestation - is equally godless".<sup>xxvi</sup>

Epiphanius of Cyprus, in his attempt to exalt the Theotokos who is above all exaltation, underlines with emphasis the following: "How can I call blessed the glory which is the root of all glory, given that she is above all, except God, and that she is better than the Cherubim and the Seraphim and every other Angelic order? No language is sufficient for this, neither in heaven nor on the earth, and not among the Angels, since they, too, offered hymns and praise, honor and glory, but did not succeed to speak commensurable with her worth."<sup>xxvi</sup>

Another Cappadocian Father Gregory of Nyssa uses the term Theotokos to distinguish the holy Virgin from other women. In his Epistle 3, 19-24, he explains that the word of *theotokos* is incompatible with that of *anthropotokos*. The explanation of the differences between the terms *theotokos* and *anthropotokos*, we can say, that there is an early response to the falsehoods of Nestorius in the fifth century.

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## 2. The introduction to the whole Christianity the term theotokos by Cyril of Alexandria

In the time of St. Cyril of Alexandria, Nestorius of Constantinople refused to accept that Christ is real God –the eternal Son of God – and at the same time is real man (with body, soul and mind –*vous*). Nestorius' fear of confusing the two natures of Christ led him to be very reluctant to call Mary as Theotokos. The disallowance of the term Theotokos and its suppression only with Christotokos created problems with the salvation of human race. If Mary bore only human Christ, in an indirect way there was a denial that Christ was God too<sup>xxvi</sup>. In this point Christ would be one more of the saint people of Israel<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Cyril explained to Nestorius that anything that was taught distorted the truth of the Christian faith, and he urged him to accept the term Theotokos for the Holy Virgin Mary<sup>xxvi</sup>. This holy doctor emphasized that the rejection of the term Theotokos was tantamount to a refutation of Christ's divinity and a falsification of the Divine Incarnation. Then, Christ would not be true and simultaneously “perfect” God and “perfect” man; he would be a mere tool of the Deity, a God-bearing man.<sup>xxvi</sup>. He passionately emphasized that Christ was not a God-clad man, nor did the Word of God merely dwell in a man, but rather that He was made flesh, or perfect man, according to the Scriptures. Cyril supported the fact that “the holy Virgin is able to be called the Mother of God. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is God”, he wondered, “how should the holy Virgin who bore Him not be the Mother of God”, adding:

"They say that God the Word hath taken a perfect man from out the seed of Abraham and David according to the declaration of the Scriptures, who is by nature what they were of whose seed he was, a man perfect in nature, consisting of intellectual soul and human flesh: whom, man as we by nature, fashioned by the might of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin and made of a woman, made under the law, in order that he might buy us all from the bondage of the law, receiving the sonship marked out long before, He in new way connected to Himself, preparing him to make trial of death according to the law of men, raising him from the dead, taking him up into Heaven and setting him on the Right Hand of God"<sup>xxvi</sup>.

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Cyril stressed that the Only-begotten Word of God was incarnate and made man: That was, taking flesh of the holy Virgin, and having made it his own from the womb, he subjected himself to birth for us, and came forth man from a woman, without casting off that which he was; butal though he assumed flesh and blood, he remained what he was, God in essence and in truth<sup>xxvi</sup>.

He was a perfect man with a body (sarx) and a soul ( nous ), and he was borne by the Virgin Mary. It was obvious that the holy Virgin Mary did not give birth to a common man in whom the Word of God dwelt<sup>xxvi</sup>, lest Christ be thought of as a God-bearing man. For all this, the holy Virgin should be called Theotokos and She is Theotokos<sup>xxvi</sup>.

### **3. The Theotokos in the Orthodox Christianity**

Theotokos is not only the mother of God, but the mother of every Christian. The Orthodox think that the Holy Virgin is a very significant part of their religion, of their life. We write down two hymns from the liturgy of Saint Chrysostom and Saint Basilus, to show the Orthodoxs' respect for the Mother of Christ.

"It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!<sup>xxvii</sup>".

Also From the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great: " All of creation rejoices in you, O full of grace, the ranks of Angels and the human race; hallowed Temple and spiritual Paradise, glory of Virgins; from you God was incarnate, and He, who is our God before the ages, became a little child. for He made your body a throne and made your womb more spacious than the heavens. All of creation rejoices in you, O full of grace; glory to you!".

In Greece, there are many churches in every city, village, island and mountain which are devoted to Theotokos. There are many celebrations for the Holy Mother as her Birth, her



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Dormition, her Assumption, her Annunciation etc. There are not only the many celebrations for Virgin Mary who show the importance of her presence to the Greeks' life but many different adjectives that are given to Holy Mother by people in every place of Greece. Some of them are: Chozoviotissa, Glykofiloussa, Grigoroussa, Malevi, Evagelistria, Gorgoepikoos, Galaktotrofousa, Parigoritria, Akathi, Partaitissa, Varnakova, Soumela and many others. The whole numbers of the adjectives for our Panagia is over 600 in all Greece.

In the end it should be underlined that Panagia is a holy figure for Greeks not only because she gave birth to Jesus but because worshipers have connected Her with the Greek nation's freedom during some hard times, apart from the miracles recorded in many personal cases as well. So Greeks thank the Virgin Mary for her aid in some of the woes they faced. The best known and most significant historic event occurred in 626, when Constantinople was besieged by the Avars while Emperor Heraclius and his troops were campaigning against the Persians in Asia Minor. The icon of the Virgin Blachernitissa was carried along the battlements in a procession headed by the son of the absent Emperor and Patriarch Sergius (610-638). The Avars raised the siege and the saving of the City was attributed to the direct intervention of the Mother of God. The entire population gathered at the church with the famous icon and in an all-night vigil they sang standing the Akathistos Hymn in praise of the Virgin Mary.

In modern times, Panagia helped Greeks to defend the enemies successfully during the two world wars. Every Greek mother pray to Her and ask health and happiness of her Child. Theotokos is the mother of All, so everyone trusts her, his dreams, his prayers, his sadness, his happiness. She listens carefully to everyone's prayer and she begs her son for us.

"To God and the Savior you've given birth; I ask you, O Virgin, From the dangers deliver me; For now I run to you for refuge, With both my soul and my reasoning. Now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen".

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## Conclusions

The Fathers of the Church have written at length on the virginity of Holy Maria and the her important role in the mystery of the Incarnation of World. Suffice it to say that ancient Christian tradition supported the idea that the Mother of God was ever-virgin, just as Church Fathers and Councils condemned heretics in the early Church who questioned the spiritual eminence of the *Theotokos*. Orthodox do not "worship" the Virgin Mary. They "venerate" her and show her great honor. Her life told by the Tradition of the Orthodox Church through the major feasts dedicated to her. She has the all-merciful power of driving away from us, at her sign, the sub-celestial spirits of evil—those ever-vigilant and ardent sowers of enmity and malice among men. She is the highest of all creatures, the Mediatrix for the whole race of mankind. Strive to train everyone in the spirit of humility, for she herself was more humble than any mortal, and only looks lovingly upon the humble. Recall what she said to her cousin Elizabeth, 'He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden'. No mediation is greater than that made in our behalf by the Theotokos, the Mother of all the saint, living and dead.

In Greece the Virgin Mary is the most favorite person for kids, young people and old. She is thought as the best alliance in every difficult moment. For all these, we say: "The heavens were astonished and stood in awe, and the ends of the earth, O maiden, were sore amazed, for God appeared bodily to mankind as very man. And lo, thy womb hath proved to be vaster and more spacious than heaven's heights. for this, O Theotokos, the choirs and assemblies of men and angels magnify thy name".

**The Mariology of the Pre-Nicene Church.**

**The Testimonies of Some Fathers and Theologians of Greek and Latin Language**

In the first part of this theological study, we will bring as testimonies some of the statements of some Fathers of the Pre-Nicene Church about the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, namely of those Fathers who had been „protoses?”<sup>xxvi</sup> of some Apostolic Bishop`s Sees<sup>xxvi</sup>, such as, for example, Saint Ignatius Theophorus, the Bishop of Antioch, Saint Clement of Rome, who „had Tradition before his eyes”<sup>xxvi</sup>, Saint Irenaeus of Lugdunum, Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, - who had always preached only the things he learnt from the Apostles<sup>xxvi</sup> - etc. Then, in the II-nd part, we will present the Mariological doctrine as it was expressed and formulated by some pioneers of Christian Theology, such as, for example, Saint Justin (the Martyr and Philosopher) († 165), Tertullian († 240), Origen († 254) etc.

About Saint Ignatius Theophorus († 107), „the second Bishop of Antioch”, it had been said that he was „the first Father and teacher of the Church”, „the first great theologian after the Apostles” and „the first church writer who had made his theology, his teaching, dependant on the illumination and on the word of God”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In this sense, this very thing made his theology be taken as a reference and ground for the Theology of the Pre-Nicene Church.

Among others, from „The Confession of faith of Saint Ignatius Theophorus” († 107), we find out that „our Lord Jesus Christ, ..., was born by Mary, who is of the seed of David, and by the power of the Holy Ghost ...”, and that the „three Sacraments”, that is „the Virginité of Mary, the Birth and Sufferings of Jesus Christ, was hidden from the prince of this world”, being „completed in sheer silence by God”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Later, Saint Basil the Great († 379) would also confirm that „some of the dogmas and preachings kept by the Church are derived from the written teaching, while others are derived from the Apostles` Tradition, being conveyed in secret. Both of these categories have the same authority for piety”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In this regard, one of the teachings and preachings that the Church received from the Apostles` Tradition and that it kept „secretly”, that is with piety, was the Perpetual Virginité of the Mother of God. Finally, Saint Ignatius

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Theophorus, the Bishop of Antioch, wrote that „Lord Jesus Christ, our God, ... was truly born of (ἐκ) Mary ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>, „...according to the willingness of God, ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>.

Saint Irenaeus (c. 130-202), Bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon/France), tells us that „... Jesus Christ, the Son of God, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the Virgin, ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>. The same Father of the Church of ancient Gallia – rightfully called „the great theologian of the Holy Tradition”<sup>»xxvi</sup> – expressly refers to „... the birth by a Virgin, ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>, adding afterwards that „... the Son of God our Father ... was born of the Virgin Mary, ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>, this testifying the fact that She was the Mother of the incarnated Word, Whom she had truly born. At the same time, St. Irenaeus wanted to specify that „the Gospel knows no other Son of man but Him, Who was (born) of Mary, ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>, and that „... the Virgin substituted for the Church”<sup>»xxvi</sup>, as She contributed to the people’s salvation. In this regard, it was this awareness that determined Saint Irenaeus to say that „Mary shouted in a prophetic voice in the name of the Church: My soul doth magnify the Lord (Luke I, 46)”<sup>»xxvi</sup>.

Bishop Meliton of Sardes (c. † 180), the one who took over his Confession of faith from an old liturgical text – that had the character of a Symbol of faith – also wrote that „... The One who created the heaven and the earth, ..., was made flesh of a Virgin ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>.

Saint Gregory (Thaumaturgus), Bishop of Neocaesarea (c. 213 - c. 275) – the former student of Origen at the School from Caesarea of Palestine and „the first Greek church writer who studied the Latin language”<sup>»xxvi</sup> – also left us a „Symbol of faith”<sup>»xxvi</sup> in the form of a Confession of faith, suggestively entitled „Ἐκθεσις πίστεως”<sup>»xxvi</sup>, in which the faith in the Holy Trinity is expressed, however without „any reference to incarnation”<sup>»xxvi</sup>, hence the lack of any testimony regarding the Holy Virgin Mary.

The text of this Symbol of faith – published in the year 264 – was preserved „in the biography of Saint Gregory of Nyssa by many manuscripts. It was also preserved in the Latin version of Rufinus (The history of the church, 7, 26) and in a Syriac translation”<sup>»xxvi</sup>. In this Symbol, which presents – in a concise manner – the faith in the Holy Trinity, it was mentioned however that this had been revealed to the author through the medium of „the Mother of God”. It is yet not known if this reference to „the Mother of God” belongs to the initial text of this

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Symbol of faith or if it is the product of a later addendum in the corpus of this text. Nonetheless, it is certain that, in the time of Saint Gregory of Nyssa († 395), the phrase „the Mother of God” was often used in the theological language.

With regard to Marcianus Aristides, a philosopher of Athens, who embraced the Christian religion<sup>xxvi</sup>, Saint Jerome mentioned that he wrote „... volumen nostris dogmatis continens rationem, ..., i.e. apologeticum pro christianis ...”<sup>xxvi</sup> (“a Book containing a systematic statement of our teaching, that is an Apology for Christians, ...”), in which – among others – he stated that Jesus Christ, „the Son of God, of the All-Mighty One, was born without seed and untouched of a Virgin”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Aristides does not convey the name of the Virgin to us, but some patrologists assure us that „... in a manuscript it is stated that the Son of God was born of a Hebrew virgin”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Indeed, in a manuscript of his Apology, - written around the year 140 - Marcianus Aristides of Athens stated that „... Jesus, the Messiah ..., was born of a Hebrew Virgin, embodied himself and became a Man, He Who was the Son of God”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In the opinion of some competent researchers, „the avoidance of the name of Mary and of the statement that Jesus was of Hebrew origin places His origin on a more general scale, as it can be noticed in another formula: „The Son of God lived in a daughter of man”<sup>xxvi</sup>. That for Aristides of Athens the Virgin represented the entire feminine part of humanity and not only that of her people, as the body is concerned, is certified just by his statement in the same Apology, by which he emphasized the fact that Lord Jesus Christ „... incarnated of a Hebrew Virgin ...”, and „... was made flesh in a daughter of man”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In other words, this „Hebrew Virgin” was the daughter of the entire humanity, through which came the redemption of the whole mankind from the slavery of the original sin.

Saint Justin (the Philosopher and the Martyr † 165) tells us that the birth of Jesus „... from a virgin bosom”, through which „The First-Born among all the creatures truly became a body, ...”, is „... truly a sign, and which was to be made trustworthy to mankind, ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>, and that Lord Jesus Christ had to be born of a Virgin, as He was „the First-begotten of all creations”<sup>xxvi</sup>, and that is why „(the Son of God) became a man by a Virgin. As such, the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent had to receive its correction in the same manner through which Eve had started, who was a virgin and undefiled; nonetheless, by listening to the words of the snake,

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Eve brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy and she replied (to Archangel Gabriel, n.n.): „Be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke I, 38). That One was born of her ...”, and through „Him God killed the serpent, the one who had deceived so many angels and people”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Finally, in his First Apology, Saint Justin (the Martyr and the Philosopher) wanted to specify that both the Birth of Jesus and Her Perpetual Virginité were due to the divine power. „... Although She was a Virgin, the power of God, having come upon Her, overshadowed Her and caused Her to conceive while She was a virgin”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Then, he adds the specification that „... the Holy Ghost (Πνέυμα), when it came upon the Virgin and overshadowed Her, caused Her to conceive in Her womb only by the power of God”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Clement of Alexandria († 215), „the first great theologian of Egypt and the first active (Christian, n.n.) writer in the III-rd century”<sup>xxvi</sup>, calls the Virgin Mary „Mother of God”<sup>xxvi</sup>, and he specified that „She gave birth, but not like all other women, ..., as she conceived alone, not by intercourse with a man”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In fact, Clement of Alexandria wrote that „there is only a Virgin-Mother, whom I love to call Church. She, alone, – he specified – had not milk, because alone She was not a woman. But she is once virgin and mother”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

It was said that „the Roman church” had known in the person of „Hippolytus the presbyterian” (approx. 235) „its first great writer..., its first orthodox theologian, the best witness of its liturgical tradition and its last writer of Greek language”<sup>xxvi</sup>, although, in his time „... at least the daily language of the Roman Church had become Latin, ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In his works, Saint Hippolytus of Rome, „theologian” of Greek language, who represented „by and large the tradition of Asia Minor and of Syria”<sup>xxvi</sup>, also refers to „... the One Who by His Birth by the power of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin showed himself as Son of God ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Saint Hippolytus, too, said about „the Word of God” that „he took upon Himself the holy flesh from the Holy Virgin; ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>, however He did not only „take the Flesh from her”, but „a rational soul, and becoming thus all that a man is with the exception of sin, ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

The first „great theologian” of Latin language, that is Tertullian († 240), who belongs to the age when „regula fidei” (the rule of the right faith) was to take shape and when the Christian doctrine cristallised<sup>xxvi</sup>, said that „the flesh of Christ” was „... of Mary’s flesh, because Christ is of Mary’s bosom; ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>, and that, „... upon Eve, still a virgin, came a word of death and in the

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same manner a virgin had to receive the word of life from God; and it was by the same gender that we acquired the salvation and through which the man fell into sin. Eve believed the snake, Mary believed the angel ...<sup>»xxvi</sup>.

Tertullian identified also „Mary”, that is the Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, with „the Church”<sup>»xxvi</sup>.

With regard to Christians, that common „Credo quia absurdum” was often repeated, a phrase that some wanted to attribute to Tertullian, and that he actually „... never formulated in precise terms”, as he never wanted „to state anything else than that faith involves an unintelligible reality and that is why you have to believe, and not to reason”<sup>»xxvi</sup>. In this regard, it was this faith itself, involving an unintelligible reality, with which Tertullian also confessed about the Virgin Mary, although he avoided to talk about the Perpetual Virginity of the Mother of God. Indeed, among the Christian writers and theologians of the pre-nicene age, who did not advocate „the Perpetual Virginity of the Mother of God”, there was also Tertullian, for whom she was: „a Virgin, so far as the intercourse with a husband, and yet not a virgin, as regards her bearing a child; and although she was a virgin when she conceived, she was a wife when she brought forth her son”<sup>»xxvi</sup> (sic).

In the opinion of some theologians of the Orthodox Church, „the advocacy of the perpetual virginity of Mary seemed to Tertullian to confirm the false faith of heretics that Christ had had no real human body, but was created and born in an apparent manner ...”. Also to counteract the Docetist heretics, Tertullian refers to „the brothers of Jesus” as to children of the flesh of the Mother of God (Adversus Marcionem, IV, 19; De carne Christi, 7; De monogamia, 8; De virginibus velandis, 6), which made Saint Jerome consider Tertulian “... not to be a man of the Church (Adversus Haereses ... 17)”<sup>»xxvi</sup>.

About Origen († 254) it was said that „he carried in his chest the religious pathos of the East, the ceaseless search of the Greek philosopher, the interest for the hidden truths of the Jew and the essential faith of the Christian”<sup>»xxvi</sup>. In this sense, this essential faith of the Orthodox Christian itself had determined Origen to write that nobody can understand the meaning of the Gospel of John „... if he did not lay his front on the chest of Jesus and if he did not recognise Mary as His Mother”<sup>»xxvi</sup>. Then, Origen adds that „... the ones with a sound judgement say that

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Mary had no other sons than Jesus, as Jesus himself confessed when he told Her while crucified on the cross: here is your son”, but he didn’t say: „Here is, this is one of yours sons ...”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Therefore, it is of no surprise that Origen also advocates the „Perpetual Virginity” of the Mother of God. „There is no other Child of Mary – he wrote – than Jesus, as all those people confess who believe rightly about her”<sup>xxvi</sup>. And, afterwards, he added the specification that the ones who „...preserve the honour of Mary” confess that she „... was a virgin up to Her death ...”, because „... She had lived with no man”, and that „...Jesus was the first-fruit among men” who lived in „purity”, that is „in chastity”, just as „Mary was the first among women ...”, and therefore - Origen concluded - we can’t “... to ascribe to any other than to Her the first-fruit of virginity”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Finally, Origen stated that God decided that the new-born baby Jesus „... be born of a virgin who did not want to get married”, but that she be engaged with the righteous Joseph, „to deter any shame from her even when she was to be seen with an enlarged womb due to pregnancy”, and, thus, her Virginity – Origen concluded – had been guarded because she was believed to be married”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In fact, it should not be ignored that, in the Judeo-Christian world during the life of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, „the term woman (mulier) does not exclude virginity, but includes it”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Indeed, the Book of Genesis tells us that Eve was still a virgin (cf. Gen. 2) and the New Testament mentions „the virginal maternity of Mary” (cf. Gal. IV, 4 and Luke I, 28).

Regarding the term Theotokos (Θεοτόκος), some Western theologians said that it „... has its source in Alexandria”, and that „it appeared for the first time in an encyclic of Bishop Alexander of Alexandria against Arianism, in 324”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In fact, the above-mentioned term was launched for the first time by Clement of Alexandria († 215), and then reiterated by Origen († 254). Indeed, according to the testimony of the historian Socrates<sup>xxvi</sup>, Origen had presented the Holy Virgin Mary as „Theotokos” (Mother of God) in a fragment of Book I of the Commentary to the Epistle to Romans<sup>xxvi</sup>. Although this fragment „we do not find in the version of Rufinus”, Eastern theologians though did not challenge the statement of the historian Socrates, because „Theotokos truly falls into the Christological vision of Origen”, and the representatives of the School of Alexandria – that Origen also came from – were the ones who „strongly defended this title of the Holy Virgin during the Nestorian controversies and settled it definitely at the Third ecumenical Synod of Efes (431)”<sup>xxvi</sup>.



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As it could also be noticed from this brief presentation – in fact required in this format by the organisers of the Conference – Mariology had been perceived and expressed by the Fathers of the Pre-Nicene Church and by its famous theologians according to the teaching of the texts of the New and of the Old Testament and on the testimonies provided by the Apostolic Tradition, which were, in fact, for them, sources and references for any theological statement and argument, hence the Orthodoxy of their Mariology. In fact, this is what explains why, in their writings, we don't encounter the so-called „apparent aporias” and „the paradox of Mariology”<sup>xxvi</sup>, to which some orthodox contemporary theologians refer, who are followers of the Theology of a neo-patristical origin and of the Western scholastic one. Whence, the qualified observation that any theological approach about the Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, should take into consideration the entire evolutionary process of the cristalization and formulation of the Marian doctrine, whose doctrinary beginnings and grounds necessarily point to the Mariology of the Pre-Nicene Church.

***Abstract.** The research and evaluation of the testimonies left by some Fathers and theologians of the Pre-Nicene Church have helped us notice that, also as Mariology is concerned, they appealed first of all to the biblical texts (of the Old and of the New Testament) and to the information provided by the Apostolic Tradition of the Church, which for them had actually been sources and references for any theological statement and argument, hence the orthodox character of the Mariology of the former. In fact, that explains why in their works we neither find the so-called „apparent aporias”, nor „the paradox of Mariology”, to which some orthodox contemporary theologians refer, which are followers of the Theology of a neo-patristical origin and of the Western scholastic one. Whence, the qualified observation that any theological approach about The Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, should take into consideration the entire evolutionary cristalisation and formulation process of the Marian doctrine, whose doctrinary beginnings and grounds necessarily point to the Mariology of the Pre-Nicene Church.*

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**His Eminence, Metropolitan of Senaki,**

**Chkhorotku and Australia,**

**Shio (Mujiri)**

**For the worship of the Holy Mother of God in Senaki Cloisters:**

**Teklati Nunnery and in the Monks' Cloister of the Archangels' Island**

The first group of the Teklati Holy Virgin's monastery of nuns was founded in 1865 in the village of Zeda (Upper) Teklati of Senaki District on the mountain which was known to people as "the Archangels' island." In 1873 the nuns moved to a new place where the Teklati Nunnery is situated now. Later on worthy Alexi of Senaki (Shushania) Founded his own cloister there.

On "the Archangels' island" of Zeda Teklati, In the place where the nuns had worked worthy Alexi of Senaki began building a monastery of monks in 1851. In this monastery Father Alexi worked from 1892 till his death (January 21, 1923).

The mothers superior of the Teklati monastery from the day of its foundation and till the death of worthy Alexi were the nun Salome (Tavdgiridze) (1815 – 1887), Hegumenia Athanasia (Salaqaya) (1878 – 1903), Hegumenia Ekaterine (Apakidze) (1903 -1910), Hegumenia Nino (Vachnadze) (1910 -1917) and Hegumenia Eleonora (Dadiani) (1918 - 1933).

Eminent hierarchs took part in the formation of the spiritual and educational life of the monastery. Their service coincided with about a hundred year-long period of the history of Georgia's church (the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Among them we must single out the bishop of Samegrelo Tarasi (Eliava) (1796- 1871), the Imereti bishop St. Gabriel (Kikodze) (1860- 1896), Guria- samegrelo bishop: Grigol (Dadiani) (1886- 1898), St. Aleksandre (Okropiridze) (1898 – 1903), Leonide (Okropiridze, later the catholicos –patriarch of all Georgia) (1908 – 1917), Dimitri

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(Abashidze) (1903 -1905), Giorgi (Aladashvili) (1905 -1908). Chqondideli metropolitan St. Ambrosi Believer (Khelaya) (Later all Georgia's catholicos patriarch 1902 -1927), Batum-Shemokmedi metropolitan Efrem (Sidamonidze) (1953 -1960) (later all –Georgia's patriarch) and others.

Although, the history of Teklati monastery is particularly connected with the name of worthy Alexi (Shushania).

Father Alexi's share is significant because he was the father superior of the monastery and he spiritually developed Teklati nuns for decades. Even after the period when he took an oath in 1898 to live in seclusion and to stay in his cell, not to leave it, the exception was only Teklati monastery. Monk Alexi often visited Teklati nuns for many years and conducted a correspondence with some of them.

The paternal care of worthy Alexi of Teklati nuns and the spiritual closeness with them was reflected in his verse – “From 1870 when he was a novice, said about the Teklati nunnery by Father Alexi” (1903) and supposedly in his work “Mother Athanasia and Teklati nunnery,” in which the history of the monastery is partially presented, Father Alexi's direct participation in building the monastery and of its spiritual care is presented.

At this period Teklati monastery was the only nuns' cloister in Samegrelo. On October 21, 1883 it was asserted as a hostel –type institution (a cloister), the number of nuns reached 40 at that time.

In 1897 this cloister was awarded the status of a monastery, the number of nuns had reached 80 by that time, and in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of nuns was more than 90.

At the monastery a two –year girls' school was established. It was mainly built with the donations, collected by the nuns. Also a girls' school of handicraft was organized where the nuns taught various professions and needlework.

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Teklati monastery became especially important for the 20<sup>th</sup> century (modern) history of Georgia, for it is a unique example of the preservation of monastery traditions and parish life in the period of the persecution of the church in Western Georgia by the Soviet power. The nuns bore the hard period of the persecution of the church heroically, they did not leave the monastery and saved it from destruction.

One of the decisive factors that conditioned such selfless activities of the nuns was the personal spiritual work of the spiritual leader of the majority of the inhabitants of the cloister, worthy Alexi of Senaki (Shushania).

These public figures preserved the continuity of the spiritual heritage, they passed the spirit of their holy fathers to their disciples. The new generation, on their part, were able to receive this treasure and to share it. Later their martyrdom and persecution became the guarantee of rescuing the church.

In 1880-s the number of the nuns reached 40. Due to the nuns' industry a new church of the Holy Virgin's Birth was built in the cloister. It speaks of a special belief and trust in the Holy Virgin in Teklati.

The new church of the Holy Virgin's Birth was consecrated by the Guria-Samegrelo bishop Grigol (Dadiani) in 1889.

According to the information of Worthy Alexi, Many ecclesiastics assisted the bishop at the service.

After the festive service his Eminence Grigol addressed the congregation with a sermon. In his sermon he appealed to the nuns to take care of the bringing up of the local young girls, to teach them prayers, the Bible and also needle – work –sewing, embroidering etc.

The chief editor of the ecclesiastic newspaper "Shepherd", archpriest David Gambashidze, attended the consecration of the Church. He promised to donate new iconostasis icons to the new church. He intended to order them in Russia. It was also

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he who donated a Holy Gospel and other ecclesiastic books to it. Soon Father David kept his promise.

After the Soviet power was established and the persecution of the church began the Teklati monastery was closed in 1923, and the church of the monastery was first robbed and insulted and then closed too.

At one of the first attacks a group of young communist league members rushed into the Teklati monastery. It was on a Sunday service. They rushed into the church of the Holy Virgin's Birth, dragged out the nuns and believers; they smashed everything around, riddled icons and church utensils with their guns, trod upon the sanctities and threw everything into the ravine, put on the priests' clothes and jumped up and down like devils. They broke the gilded iconostasis, donated by David Gambashidze, destroyed the belfry, threw down the bells, removed the cross from the church and dropped it down, took off the roof and began to demolish the walls. But as the witness nuns and believers recall a miracle happened while this barbarian destruction was taking place – suddenly the building of the church was struck with lightning and the building caught fire. The destroyers got frightened and fled. This was the way the church was saved.

The young communist league members having left, the nuns found the icons and the vessels of the church, thrown into the ravine, and returned them to the monastery. But they had been afraid to take them out openly and did such a thing: they hid the sanctities under blankets in a bullock-cart, they put a nun inside as if she was seriously ill. She moaned loudly and brought them to the village for all the village to see in order that they should bring them to the monastery without any obstacles. As the church was half destroyed they hid the sanctities in the refectory.

The nuns continued looking for the lost sanctities and managed to redeem some of them with the help of other people.

The nuns managed to save the main sanctities of the church – the large miracle – working icon – “Unfading Flower” and the icon of the Holy Virgin's birth, donated by Emperor Alexander III.

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In 1930 a farm of breeding hares was arranged on the territory of Teklati Monastery. They placed the hares in the building of the church, but for some unknown reason they died. The death-rate being very high, the farm did not prosper and it was closed in 1934 or 1935.

In 1948 thanks to two remarkable fighters Archimandrite Constantine (Kvaraya) and Hegumenia Ketevan's (Akhvlediani) endeavours the Teklati church of the Holy Virgin's Birth was opened again.

Another Senaki public man whose 20-year-long activities are connected with Teklati Monastery was Archimandrite Shio (Dzidzava). Father Shio had begun to take spiritual care of Teklati nuns long before the monastery church was opened, in 1940-s. Among his particular merits the following must be noted: later he became the father confessor of the catholicos-patriarch of all-Georgia his holiness and beatitude Ilia II and had a great influence on the spiritual formation of the future patriarch.

The particular adoration of the Holy Mother of God by the Teklati nuns is seen in the fact of their having two valuable icons of the Mother of God in the cloister.

The icon of the Holy Virgin's birth which the emperor donated to the monastery in 1898 during his visit in Georgia, later became the main icon of the church. The date of its appearance in the church is unknown. A silver plate, with a carved memorable inscription was attached to it. In 1923 this plate was carried away by the bandit group that had raided the church. Their attack was encouraged by the Bolshevik government. The icon is in the church of the Holy Virgin's Birth of the Teklati Monastery up to the present day.

The copy of the Holy Virgin's well-known miracle-working icon "the Unfading Flower" which was particularly adored in the cloister, was brought to this cloister from Athos on May 20, 1904. The icon was created for Teklati Monastery by the order of the priest schema monk Ioane (Khoshtaria), working in the Georgian monastery of St. John Theologian in the period of hegumenia Ekaterine's (Apakidze) being the Mother Superior.

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On the day of the icon's arrival, after a festive liturgy Worthy Alexi (Shushania) made a speech.

At the beginning of the sermon he spoke about the hard times for the church and the degradation of the morals of the society. Then he addressed the nuns with advice, and finally he looked at the icon of the Mother of God and said, "The icon of the Mother of God, come from mount Athos in God's name, to her lot Iveria"... asks Her: "Bless our fatherland, Your lot Georgia"... elevate the name of Georgians in the whole world and take possession of the country You have chosen with the name of "Iveria, the lot of the Mother of God."

Then Father Alexi spoke about Our Savior's seamless coat which was given to Georgia as the evidence of its being distinguished as the country –the Mother of God's lot and remarked: " how it happened that we, miserable Iverians, were considered to be worthy of such care of the Lord. Then he concluded: "Make your coat a comfort and a token of love for Georgia, the coat that is preserved in the Khobi Monastery in Samegrelo... The hope of the Georgian nation... bless our fatherland..."

Finally the worthy father asked the Holy Virgin to bless the monastery nuns and finished his speech so humbly: "Finally I, monk Alexi, loaded with such deadly sins, being not worthy of Your icon's care, entreat you weeping and implore you and Your Son, Jesus Christ to save me from disgrace, for ever and ever, Amen."

After this event a tradition was established in the monastery every 20<sup>th</sup> of May, the day of the arrival of the icon, to celebrate it with a festive liturgy. The icon was put in the church of the Holy Mother's Birth at the column where the grave of the Mother superior, hegumenia Athanasia (Salaqaya) is. The icon is still in that place and is considered to be the main icon of the church.

The following information is the example of Worthy Alexi's particular worship of the Mother of God; the only icon he had in his cell was the icon of the Holy Virgin, brought from Mount Athos. Behind the Holy Virgin on both sides St. John the Baptist and St. Alex the God's man are standing. This icon was sent to him by one of his

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spiritual sons, Makari, serving on Mount Athos. The icon is still placed in the cloister of Archangels' Island today. His great belief in the Mother of God is also revealed in Worthy Alexi's poetry. In one of his verses whose title is "Another general request of the Mother of God" Father Alexi writes:

I am obliged to present this request to you

It is the will of my ancestors,

Let Our Saviour listen to me with your help

And mountains and valleys say Amen to it.

Mother of Ivers, they are Yours, Yours

The Georgian people, chosen by You

That's why You got them for Your lot

The nation, destined to be sheltered by You.

Take care, Mother of Iveria

Winter is a great trouble for her,

It looks miserably at her orphanhood

Winter is hard for her to spend.

It is You who has rescued her

The angel of help and protection

Consecrate her old bread and wine,

Send away her enemies and torturers.

Our relative, Virgin Nina

Came to Kartli, sent by You, to comfort us

Covered with light to help us.

Now, Mother, what is worrying You?



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Make us worthy of hearing about Your help,  
Tell the nation of immortality,  
Let people speak of peaceful times,  
Send heresies far away.

Listen to our entreaties, Mother!  
Hearing about bad things worries us badly,  
Give their share to those who condemn  
And leave us protected well.

Protect the flock your lot  
From the beasts, surrounding her  
That they should not find us helpless,  
Save us, save us from debaucher wolves.

His particular love for the Mother of God and the hope of her help Worthy Alexi expresses in his other works too, among them the poem “Praising the Mother of God” is noteworthy, etc.

**“The worship of the Mother of God in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century”**

The worship of the Mother of God in Russia, as well as in Georgia, lasts from the earliest times, and the mayor Russian cities in the annals were called “houses of the Most Holy Mother of God”. The most important churches were often dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God (the main church in the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, the biggest churches in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius and in the Pochayiv Lavra, the cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin, and others). The most ancient and important relic in Moscow has been and still remains the miracle-working icon of Vladimir, while in the XVII century the Kazan icon of the Mother of God was brought to Moscow, and was hosted in a Church on the Red Square specifically built on that occasion. While building the new capital city of Russia, St. Petersburg, the emperor Peter I brought there the Kazan icon, and built for it the Cathedral church of the Kazan icon. In Veliky Novgorod, the Church of St. Sophia keeps the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God “of the sign”.

In the Church history of the XX century this worship is still present.

On the 2/15 March 1917, the day of the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, in Moscow appeared the icon of Our Lady Derzhavnaya (“Sovereign”).

The Local Council, whose task was to reestablish the Patriarchate and discuss ecclesiastical questions of major importance, started its work on the holy day of the Dormition of the Mother of God – 15/28 August 1917. The most important act of the Council – the election by lot of the new Patriarch – was accomplished in front of the image of Vladimir icon of the Mother of God. The enthronement of the new Patriarch, St. Tikhon (Bellavin), took place in the holy day of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God, in the cathedral of the Dormition inside the Moscow Kremlin. After seven years of valiant service during the cruelest persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, St. Patriarch Tikhon reposed in the Lord on the holy day of the Annunciation. Now his relics lie in the Donskoy Monastery, near the image of Our Lady of the Don.

The flock of the Russian Church that remained faithful to the Orthodox faith during the difficult years of persecution sought consolation and defense by praying the Mother of God.

Many ancient images of the Mother of God were withdrawn, destroyed by the persecutors or taken away by the emigrants, including Our Lady of Tikhvin, Our Lady of Kursk-Root, and others.

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The Russian people still worship ancient and late icons of the Mother of God, as well as their copies (“Smolensk”, “Pledge for sinners”, “Iversk”, “Kazan”, “Joy of all who sorrow”, “Seeker of the lost”, “Unexpected joy”, “Quench my sorrows”, “Tenderness”, and many others).

### **The Eager Protectress of Christian People**

According to the ancient Russian Lavrentian and Hypatian Chronicles, the icon was translated to Rus' from Constantinople. As it was mentioned in Nikon Chronicle, this great event took place in the time of Knyaz (Grand Duke) Yury Dolgoruky. Knyaz of Suzdal Andrei Yuryevich, Yury Dolgoruky's son, transferred icon to Vladimir on river Klyazma, adorned in precious framework and set it up in Dormition Cathedral, which was built in 1158-1161. After that it was called the Virgin of Vladimir.

After the great victory of Andrey Yuryevich's army over bulgars in 1164, miraculous icon became the protector of all The Vladimir-Suzdal Principality.

The glory of the Virgin of Vladimir increased in 1395 year during Tamerlan's invasion and on pain of Moscow extinction. In the day when icon was met by Metropolitan of Moscow Cyprian (September, 8), Moscow Knyaz Vasily I Dmitriyevich (1371-1425) was holding out on the borders of principality, and Tamerlan's hordes suddenly left into steppe without fight.

There are three icon feast days during the year: presentation of the icon in 1395 and salvation of Moscow and Russian lands from Tamerlan's invasion (September, 8): escape from the destruction of Moscow by Mahmet-Giray and his army in 1521 (June, 3), liberation of Rus' from Mongol invasion in 1480, when Khan Ahmet turned his back (July, 6).

Our Queen of Heaven had been helping our country many times since that events. Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1917 year was the last significant event in it's history before start of hard trials for Church and all people. Hieromonk Aleksy, who was the St. Zosimus Poustina's recluse, prayed near the Virgin of Vladimir on November 5-18<sup>th</sup> in 1917, and had chosen lot of Patriarchate for Bishop Tikhon. The latter was enthroned as Patriarch on November 20<sup>th</sup> (on December 4<sup>th</sup>) the same year. The Virgin of Vladimir was transferred from the Cathedral of Dormition to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour for the sake of this great event.

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New political forces began the struggle against the Orthodox Church. This struggle was going on within people's hearts; another attitude to sacred objects was introduced. Many were destroyed, other, having cultural and historical value, were treated only as works of art, isolated from the Church.

Commission on conservation and revealing of ancient Russian painting objects, generated by People's Commissariat for Education in 1918, took the Virgin of Vladimir icon under its protection. It had been decided to restore the icon and on December 14<sup>th</sup> in 1918 it was taken from its case. After examination and taking down the framework it was clear that icon must be restored immediately. On 20<sup>th</sup> of December it was transferred from Cathedral of Dormition to the patriarch's library room for restoration. Paint-layer clearing and strengthening works were made by G. O. Tchirikov, hereditary icon-painter and restorer.

In 1926 icon was transferred to the State Historical Museum, where it had been kept till the year 1930, when it had been transmitted to State Tretyakov Gallery. The great miracle is that the icon has been always accessible for all people, being exhibited in Gallery chambers.

During Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) the Tretyakov Gallery funds were evacuated to Novosibirsk. Miracle-working Vladimirskaya and Donskaya icons of Mother of God were also transported there. Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre had been a refuge for many relics from Tretyakov Gallery till the year 1944. The Divine Providence kept sacred objects safe for future generations, since some halls of the exposition in Moscow were damaged by nazi bombs shortly after evacuation of the relics.

The 1000th Anniversary of the Christianization of Rus' turned cultural and political life of Russia towards the Church. It became clear during autumn tragic days of 1993 year, when our country was passing through one of the most strong political crises, standing on the brink of civil war. Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' Aleksy II appealed to both opposing sides and all countryman: «Russia is on the edge of the abyss. Today Russian Empire can break up. Tearfully beg all of you, don't permit a bloodshed. One bullet can lead to the disaster, echoing through all the country. I ask all Christian to pray for the salvation of Russia. Let those, who have never referred to God before, turn to Him now. God has shown Russia His Wrath. I beg all, holding the weapons – be merciful to your neighbor! Do not permit the spirit of hatred to deprive you of

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mind! ». In the times of the hardest crisis Patriarch Aleksy II asked to transfer icon of Virgin of Vladimir from Tretyakov gallery to Epiphany Cathedral. After Liturgy Patriarch with the Holy Synod of Russian Orthodox Church held the service in front of the miracle-working icon: «Oh Dear Mother! Our Defender! You have never left Russia. You always save our people. Do not leave us now. We humbly beg You: Please, do implore Our God and Your Son to have mercy and save Rus'! ». The day after this event fighting near White House took place. But it was the end of the crisis, and by the protection of Queen of Heaven it didn't become the civil war.

After this events authorities permitted to have service near the miracle-working icon. On icon feast days it was removed to the Dormition Cathedral for Patriarchs service.

On 600-th anniversary of transmission of miracle-working icon to Moscow, solemn procession through Moscow streets from Dormition Cathedral to Sretensky Monastery with the specially painted copy of the icon, painted by archimandrite Zenon (Theodor) after Patriarch Aleksiy's blessing, took place.

Reconstruction of Church of St. Nicolas in Tolmachy gave the opportunity to return the icon to orthodox people. Museum Church has the special systems, keeping fixed climatic conditions, necessary for the ancient icon's safety. On September 8<sup>th</sup> , 1998, the day when Meeting of Vladimirskaya icon by Metropolitan of Moscow Cyprian in 1395 was celebrated, Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' Aleksy II sanctified the Church. For a time of service the icon was transmitted to the Church. In December 1998 final decision to remove icon to the Church, which was the home church of Tretyakov gallery, was made, For the safety of the relic special icon-case on Moscow polymetal factory was made, which kept special climatic conditions. The icon has been finally transported to the Church of St. Nicolas in Tolmachy, where it is kept till this moment, and where all the religious can worship this great relic and ask for the prayers and help of Our Mother of God.

There are new events in the history of Virgin of Vladimir icon in the XXI century.

The year 2008 became the year of Patriarch Aleksy's II death. On the burial of Patriarch there was delegation of The Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church, headed by Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Elijah II. Last day of his stay in Moscow he wanted to pray in front of Virgin of Vladimir Icon and visited Church of St. Nicolas in Tolmachy

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with all his delegation. After the service near the holy icon, Patriarch blessed the painting of the copy of miracle-working icon and removing it to Tbilisi.

After the end of Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, which have chosen new Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' Kirill (who, being the Locum, prayed near the icon before the beginning of the Council at the Epiphany day in 2009), Patriarch blessed the painting of the copy. The copy was made by the icon-painter-deacon Aleksy (Trunin) for the day of Meeting of the icon celebrated on September 8<sup>th</sup> in 2009. That day Patriarch Kirill had Liturgy in the Church of St. Nicolas in Tolmachy, sanctified copy of the icon and blessed metropolitan Nicolas (Pachuashvili), Ahalkalasky metropolitan and Kumurdoisky metropolitan to deliver icon to Tbilisi.

The icon reached Tbilisi the same day at the evening and was solemnly received at the airport by priesthood and public of Georgia. Procession transferred it to the Patriarch Cathedral of St. Trinity in Tbilisi.

Patriarch Elijah with assembly of bishops and priesthood had all night Vigil and moleben near the image of Holy Mother, and told heartfelt speech about the significance of the existence of great relic – icon of the Virgin of Vladimir - for the Orthodox Church and the whole world. All night people of Tbilisi were coming to pray and to praise the Mother of God.

In commemoration of this event beautiful icon-lamp was brought from Tbilisi to the Museum Church of St Nicholas in Tolmachy, where it has been inextinguishably burning before the miracle-working image, giving an opportunity for Christian from all over the world to light candles before the image of Vladimirskaia.

In the 2011 and 2012 two more copies of Virgin of Vladimir icon were made and sent to the Ahalkalaskaya ecclesiastical province and Montenegro.

This is the short narration about miraculous protection of Mother of God for our country and people by way of holy icon Vladimirskaia. Mother of God saved our native land wit her veil for many times. Through her miraculous icons She took care about us, helped to free our country from invasions of Tatar, Sweden, Poles, French, German, who had been destroying our Motherland. There were always many people in every Church praying, many candles burning. Believing people prayed Queen of Heaven for their relatives, for the quick end of endurances, for the beginning of peaceful life.

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What do these memories about the beneficial help of our Mother of God bound us to do? First of all, to have a trembling attitude towards our Orthodox Faith and Holy Church. There were nations, which felt clear, miraculous help of God, had been led by Holy Spirit, wonderfully liberated from enemies, but perished because of their deviation from true Faith. Let us remember it and keep our Orthodox Church, which is the security of our welfare and peaceful life of Orthodox nations.



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**Natalia Chugreeva**

**(Russia)**

**On the Worship of the Kazan Mother of  
God in Russia and in the Modern World**

We know about the appearance of the icon of the Mother of God in Kazan in 1579 and obtaining it from the work, written by Ermogen, the first metropolitan of Kazan, later the martyr patriarch (died in 1612). The first copy of the icon that appeared like that was sent to Moscow, to the king Ivan the Terrible who ordered to build a nunnery in the place of its appearance, and assigned finances from the royal exchequer for it. King Fyodor, son of Ivan ordered to build a stone church instead of a wooden one, existing in the monastery. The church was consecrated in 1595. The Mother of God's icon was adorned with a setting, beautified with precious stones and pearls. The local holiday was celebrated in Kazan on the day of the appearance of the icon on July 8.

The divine service, dedicated to the Kazan icon was the first Russian printed text of the service, dedicated to the icon of the Mother of God in Russia. It was printed in Kazan in about 1589, in one of the prints, brought to Kazan from the "anonymous" printing house of Moscow that was the predecessor of Ivan Fyodorov's "printing department". Later on the service was spread. It begins with short vespers, supposedly written very soon after the icon had appeared. The well-known troparion, dedicated to the Mother of God "Tireless patron" and the kontakion "I have come, people..." comprise the words from the Holy Virgin's prayer, taken from the preface to metropolitan Ermogen's work. Apart from the canon, dedicated to the Kazan icon (there was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> canon in the service, printed first, the Odigitria canon (the 1<sup>st</sup> canon) of the priest-monk Egnate, later on Nicaea metropolitan, taken from the service of the oldest Russian icon dedicated to the Smolensk Mother of God and also parts from the service, dedicated to the icon of Vladimir Mother of God. This emphasized the exceptional significance of the appearance of the new sanctity. Comparing the icon that

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appeared in Kazan with the veronica image of the oldest Lid icon during the divine service means accentuating the great significance of this sanctity. The Lid icon as well as the Kazan icon belongs to the Odigitria type (the third chant of the acathisto of the third canon, the eighth voice), the icon of Lid in Constantinople by its appearance proved the victory of the icon worship in the epoch of iconoclasm. In 1579 as well the icon that appeared in Kazan strengthened Orthodox Christian faith and worship of icons in the newly converted country of Kazan.

The royal dynasty of Romanovs worshipped the icon of Kazan, considering it to be the new state sanctity. In 1613 king Mikhail, son of Fyodor ordered to celebrate the day of the icon twice a year on July 8, the day of its appearance in Kazan, and on October 22 (on this day, accompanied by the icon, to be more exact, its copy) Kitai–Gorod was liberated by means of a direct attack and Moscow was freed from the Poles. At the first celebration of the “autumn” Kazan icon a service was held in Moscow in the parish church of Prince Dmitry Pozharski on Sretenka (Lubyanka). There a great litany took place from the great Uspenski church of the Kremlin. The description of the litany is given in “the Presentation of Actual Titles”, compiled in 1621/1622 at the time of Patriarch Filaret. The litany on the holiday of the Kazan icon was conducted according to the same rule as on the holiday of the well known icon of the Vladimir Mother of God. The adoration of the Kazan icon was great as early as in the reign of the first king of the Romanov dynasty.

On the eve of the holiday while the new big bell “Reut” was ringing fast on the big, Uspenski belfry, king Mikhail, son of Fyodor was going to the Vespers at Vedenski church on the Sretenka. There everybody was praying before the Moscow miracle – working Kazan icon (its copy) with whose help Moscow was liberated in 1612. Great Vespers were served at the Moscow Kremlin Uspenski church, attended by Patriarch Filaret as usual. Great Vespers with Litia were served, then midnight service was conducted. Not only the ecclesiastics, but also monastery archimandrites and priests, priests and deacons preached. They had come to Moscow from different cities and towns, also the clergy of Moscow and its outskirts. The Vespers having ended, a thanksgiving service was held before the Kazan icon, laid on analogia in the middle of

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the church. The matins were conducted by putting oil to the foreheads of the congregation, patriarch came out to glorify, candles for glorifying were sent from the royal palace. The matins ending, the shaft bell began ringing. (the lower shaft bell of the tier of Ivan the Great's belfry) to announce great litany in which a great part of Muscovites participated, carrying large miracle –working icons. Everything being ready in the Uspenski church for the litany, the king came out of the Blagoveshchensk church together with miracle –working icons. The festively dressed patriarch met them at the Granovitaya Palata, he consecrated their icons, kissed and blessed the king. Everybody followed the icons to the Uspenski church. The king's singers sang to him, wishing him "a long life," he kissed the icons and the sacred relics of saints and stopped beside the patriarch. The patriarch consecrated the miracle –working Vladimir icon and kissed it. The Priests, taking care of the church property, took the icon and placed it on a tripod. After the thanksgiving service they came with the church flags, lanterns, crosses and icons out of the western gate of the church, two priests carried the Vladimir icon, preceding the Patriarch. The king went out of the southern gate. Accompanied by the ringing of the bells, the procession was going towards the Frolov (Spaski) gate. From the Voznesenski monastery the Holy Virgin's Odigitria icon was brought out. They slowly walked towards the place of execution where they put the icons on an elevated place according to a definite succession. It was the patriarch who conducted the service in the Vvedenski church, the procession went back to the Kremlin Uspenski church in the same succession. The King came out of the Nikolski gate. From 1632 litany took place in the Kazan wooden church, at the "wall" of Kitai –Gorod, and then in the main church of Kitai –Gorod.

The well –known Golstein scholar, Adam Olearius made sketches of the great litany of October 22, 1634 from the Moscow Kremlin Uspenski church, to "Zlatoverkhoe" church. He left us the description of his travelling about the Moscow kingdom. The sketch is very interesting. The procession is preceded by the sellers of candles and the sweepers of the wooden cover, specially prepared from logs for the litany and spread along the whole route of the festive procession. There are three standard –bearers at the head of the procession, then (according to Olearius' description), come 61 clergymen, king's and

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patriarch's choir –men, deacons. Then 40 priests come, they are followed by 8 men (they usually were parish priests), carrying the great Cross from the Uspenski church, erected on its basis. The cross is followed by a hundred priests and monks, each of them is carrying an icon, two men are carrying an icon, covered with a cloth, seemingly the Vladimir Mother of God's icon, then 40 more priests come, three more people are carrying a large icon (with a full –length image). Then a man is carrying a small icon (of a Petrovski Mother of God?) a deacon is carrying a cross to be erected on a dish, then four priests "singing" are preceding a small icon, seemingly of the Kazan Mother of God, carried by one man; he is followed by two deacons with candles. The patriarch is coming (as Olearius describes) under a blue canopy. He as usual is walking, helped by deacons from both sides. Then the king comes under a red canopy, followed by boyars and princes, and then a red throne is brought. A man leads a horse, holding its bridle. Then a sledge, harnessed with two white horses, is seen. A great number of people participated in the procession, carrying miracle –working icons from the Kremlin and Moscow churches.

Patriarch Ioasafat having festively consecrated Kazan stone church on October 16, 1636, the first litany took place in the Red Square on October 22, from the Moscow Kremlin Uspenski church to the Kazan church. Here the Moscow Kazan icon was laid (it belonged either to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and later was twice renewed in 1687/88 and 1754).

In 1649 king Alexei, son of Mikhail established a common to all Russia holiday of the Kazan icon. In the period of Alexei's reign in Moscow, considered to be the centre of Orthodox Christianity, the Orthodox, Christian peoples, found themselves under the domination of Turkey, thought the venerable Kazan icon to be the main icon of the Mother of God's Odigitria. This icon as once the icon of Odigitria in Constantinople became the protector of Moscow. By the decree of King Alexei, son of Mikhail, from 1660/1661 the litany to the Kazan church took place on October 22 and July 8, by walking round Moscow along the walls of the Kremlin, the towns of Kitai, Beli and Zemlyanoi.

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People went to the Kremlin or Kitai –Gorod from the “holiday,” i.e. from the Kazan church to the Red Square after the liturgy (later as the procession lasted a long time the litany began before the liturgy. Walking along the Kremlin walls they went towards the Spasski gates, climbed up the wall, then went to the Tainitski gate. The patriarch ordered to consecrate water in three places: on the Kremlin wall –on the Spasski gate (it was done by the archimandrite of the Chudove Monastery) on the Tainitski gate (the archimandrite of the Kirilo Belozerski monastery rival) and at the Troitski gate on the stone bridge, stretched across the river Neglinka (the archimandrite of the Troitski – Sergievski Monastery rival). They climbed the Kitai –Gorod wall at the Neglomenski (Voskresensk) wall, walked towards the tower which was the first to be taken on the day of the attack on Kitai –Gorod on October 22, 1612, and water was consecrated there. The litany began in Kitai –Gorod, also from the Moskvoretsk gate. In Beli Gorod and Zemlyanoi gorod (Skorodom) the patriarchs sent litany from the central place. They took the main “initial” icons to the Kazan church, and the other icons were singled out for the litany. The Beli Gorod wall was climbed at the Sretenka gate and from there people went in different directions. People went to Skorodom also from the Petrovka gate. The kings and patriarchs also went from town to town. Monastery archimandrites and representatives of the high hierarchy participated in this process. The ecclesiastics from the nearest monasteries and their rivals consecrated water on the walls till the cross was immersed in water. This process was performed by the bishops that had come through litany. There was a special painting with detailed instructions which of the white and black clergy was to go in which direction and should pour the consecrated water. They moved from town to town quite fast in order that they should be in time to join the patriarch at the Kremlin Nikolski gate and to go to the Kazan church together first to the Kazan church and then Uspenski church as soon as the liturgy was over. Sometimes litany ended at 1.30. a.m. On October 22, in 1667 and in 1668 the Antioch patriarch Makarios participated in the litany together with patriarch Ioasaf II. At the place of execution the Gospel was read in the Greek and Slav languages, both patriarchs consecrated people on all four sides with two Kazan icons, taken out of the church of

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the royal court. Three patriarchs recited the liturgy in the Kazan church –Alexandria's patriarch Pais met the people at the Kazan church.

In 1798 while the foundation for the new stone church at the Kazan nunnery was being laid, due to the fact that all the people adored the Kazan icon Emperor Pavel I issued a decree that the holiday of October 22 was declared to be an annual festive day. In 1800 by "the decree about litany" which the Moscow metropolitan Platon (Levshin) compiled, litany on the holiday of the Kazan icon (on July 8 and October 22) all the same number of people was appointed as on the day of the Lord's baptism when people went to the Moskva river.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century according to the date of the statistics the number of churches bearing the name of the Kazan Mother of God prevailed all the others. In 1904 Russia was dismayed by a terrible sacrilege done to the Mother of God's icon, the icon which appeared in Kazan in 1579 was stolen from the Kazan nunnery, the all Russian sanctity. It predicted the setting in of a new era of condemning God. The thieves were arrested, the trial took place in the November of 1904, but it was not found out what the fate of the well-known miracle-working Kazan icon of the Mother of God was. The trace of its valuable setting, because of which it was stolen (the pearl setting of the icon was adorned with a great number of precious stones under which an old gold frame, donated by king Fyodor, son of Ivan, was), was found but the icon had disappeared. The employees of the police department of special tasks of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were busy looking for it for many years, but in vain. They hoped to get it back for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the royal house of the Romanovs.

In 1912 the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Patriarch Ermogen's death as a martyr was marked. The Kazan miracle-working icon was taken to the Uspensk church from the Kazan church via Red Square and laid on the Patriarch's tomb. In 1913 after the celebration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romanovs the martyr Patriarch Ermogen's glorifying took place, the relic of his body was taken out next year, in 1914 on the day when the world war was declared litany took place in St. Petersburg, next to the Kazan church on July 19, 1914. It was headed by Vladimir Bogoyavlenski, metropolitan of St. Petersburg.

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In 1915 July 8, the holiday of the Kazan icon was chosen for the day of the prayer of the whole population for the victory in the war. The most grandiose litany that lasted two days and two nights and which was headed by St. Petersburg Metropolitan Venyamin (Kazanski) went from St. Petersburg to Schlisselburg where Schlisselburg Kazan icon was laid.

After the revolution many sanctities were lost. In 1918 the Kazan miracle –working icon was stolen from the Kazan church, situated in the Red Square. The aim of stealing it was also the valuable setting, adorned with precious stones. In 1922 removing precious things from the Petrograd Kazan church began. Fearing that the miracle –working Kazan icon would be taken, the main priest of the church Nikolai Chulkov said that the old icon that had appeared in Kazan was stolen, but Petersburg copy was not very interesting from the point of view of the iconpainting. The icon was left in the church. In 1932, the Kazan church having been closed, the Kazan icon was laid in one of the central churches of the city, in the church of Dormition in Sennaya Square, situated next to the Guest-house, and which became the cathedral of those having new rules in 1932 -1938. (It was pulled down in 1961, at the time of persecution, declared by Khrushchev). The icon was taken from there in the 1930-s and laid in the main church of Vladimir in Petrograd District.

Before the Kazan church in the Red Square was closed the museum of History asked to give it to them as early as in 1924. The church was given to the Museum, under its subordination, and closed in 1930. In 1925 -1933 in spite of the restoration works carried out by architect P. D. Baranovski the church was destroyed. P.D. Baranovski who had returned from the camp in May, 1936 and who was ordered to live in Aleksandrovska was obliged to appear before a militia employee and prove by his signature that he was there every day. He arrived in Moscow every morning by the very first suburban train and took measures of the church which was being pulled down and made its sketches.

The icon of the Kazan Mother of God became especially important during the great patriotic war. The Commander Zhukov who was always appointed at the places that

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were most significant carried the icon of the Kazan Mother of God everywhere. This fact is still remembered by people. As Marshal Zhukov's daughter Maria said this story was corroborated by the archimandrite of the Troitsk–Sergievsk Lavra, Kiril (Pavlov). The Kazan icon before which the partisans of the Pskov Region prayed is preserved. The divine service before the Kazan icon was conducted in Leningrad, Stalingrad (the icon was laid on the right bank of the Volga, thanksgiving and funeral services were held). According to the evidence of the nun Sophia (Oparina), a participant of the war, before the attack on Königsberg began the Kazan Mother of God's icon had been taken out at the thanksgiving service, like the worthy Seraphim of Sarova the hiero schim monk Seraphim of Viritsa prayed day and night, kneeling, the priest of the Kazan church in Viritsa, near Petersburg (consecrated as a saint in 2000). Very many people prayed during the Great Patriotic War before the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century icon of the Moscow Kazan Mother of God (a copy of Moscow Kazan icon) in the Elokhovski Bogoyavlenski church.

Decades had passed and the Kazan church in the Red Square was the first to be restored among the restored churches. It was consecrated in 1993, on October 22/November 4. The movement, demanding the restoration of the church began in 1985, and on October 22/November 4, 1990 the Moscow and all Russia's patriarch, his holiness Alexi II put a stone in the foundation of the new church. Thanks to P.D. Baranovski's old draughts which the 88 year–old scholar gave to his pupil architect–restorer O.I. Gurin, a very interesting monument of the Russian architecture, the temple of the Russian military glory was restored in the 1990-s. Offering bloodless sacrifice–divine liturgy was resumed. In 1990 the Kazan church in St. Petersburg was given to Russia's Orthodox Christian church (the museum of the History of Religion moved to the building in Pochtamt Street, specially built for it). In 2001 the 18<sup>th</sup> century Petersburg Kazan icon was taken to its initial place the Kazan church in Nevski Avenue from Prince Vladimir's church.

The Kazan Church, founded in the place where the Holy Virgin's miracle–working icon first appeared in 1579 today expects restoration. Kazan monastery church must be restored. It was exploded in the 1930-s. The Patriarch of all Russia his holiness Alexi



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II gave them the Kazan icon of the middle years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It has a valuable setting, it is made at the boundary of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was kept in the residence of the Roman pope Ioan –Pavel II. In 2004 the icon returned to its native country. On August 15/28, 2004, on the day of the Holy Virgin's dormition the Kazan icon, adorned with a valuable setting, was laid in the Uspenski church of the Moscow Kremlin. It having been returned to Kazan, construction works to restore the Kazan Bogorodnitski monastery began.

In modern Russia the Kazan icon of the Mother of God retains its significance as an ecclesiastic, state, military sanctity. It plays a particular part in strengthening the spiritual norms of the Orthodox Christianity at the borders of Russia where new churches and monasteries of Kazan are built. Nowadays people worship many, among them well – known in Russia copies of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God. The following icons of the Mother of God are included in the church calendar at present. These are the following icons: of Bogorodsko –Efimski, Nizhnelomovsk, Penza, Peschanski, Tambov, Tobolsk, Chimeevski and Yaroslavski. They received their names according to the places where they are worshipped.

**A Wall Painting of the Deësis from the Abbey of the Virgin Mary,  
Gethsemane, Jerusalem**

The original church of the Virgin Mary in the Gethsemane area of the Kidron Valley (Jehosaphat Valley) in Jerusalem (Map 1), at the traditional burial site of the Virgin, though ascribed to Constantine (Bagatti, Piccirillo and Prodomo 1975: 15), was actually founded in the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. (Pringle 2007: 287), and much of the monumental surviving crypt dates to this time (Vincent and Abel 1926: 826, Pl. LXXXI). The date of the original identification of the tomb is far from clear: literary tradition associating the crypt with the Assumption of the Virgin to heaven only appears in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century (Shoemaker 2002: 98-107, 140, 175-176, 259-260). A Second Temple period burial cave, believed to be Mary's tomb, was isolated from the surrounding bedrock and enclosed within a cruciform crypt partly cut into the bedrock and partly built (Bagatti, Piccirillo and Prodomo 1975: 19, 27-35).

Though the church was damaged by the Persians in 614 CE it was rebuilt by Modestus in ca. 616 (*Antiochus, Epistula ad Eustathium*, PG 89: col. 1428; Sophronius, *Anacreontica* XX, 95-100, PG 87: cols. 3823-3824 = Baldi 1955: 756, No. 1056; transl. Wilkinson 1977: 92). Thus reconstructed church did not survive to Crusader times. The exact process of its disintegration requires further study, though it may be credited to earthquakes or even to Caliph al-Hâkim's destruction of Christian monuments in 1009.

Pringle has provided an exhaustive list of all the sources relating to the Crusader history of the church (2007: 288-295, 304-306), leaving us the task of providing an outline in the context of the physical remains. A small church existed at the site at the time of the taking of Jerusalem in 1099. Reconstruction of the upper structures did not take place immediately, as intimated by Abbot Daniel in his description of the site from his visit in 1106-1108, when he noted only the existence of the crypt and the tomb (*Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel* XXII, transl. Wilson 1895: 23-24). The Benedictines entrusted Godfrey of Bouillon with the task of establishing a monastic institution beside the Tomb of the Virgin Mary of the Jehoshaphat

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Valley. Godfrey conferred upon the new monastery extensive estates (William of Tyre, *Chronicon* IX.9.431), and the monastery became one of the great abbeys of the Latin Kingdom. Patriarch Arnulfus provided donations for the commencement of the construction (Bagatti, Piccirillo and Prodomo 1976: 60; Delaborde 1880: 21-22, No. 1) and by 1115 CE we learn of the appointment of the first abbot, Hugh (Delaborde 1880: 27-28, No. 5). By 1120 he had been replaced by Gilduin, from the Clunaic house at Lurcy le-Bourg (William of Tyre, *Chronicon* XII.13.536), so establishing the direct and enduring relationship with Cluny (Constable 1967: II, 291-292), though independent of its jurisdiction (Johns 1939: 119). Previous research shows the Abbey to have received considerable funding from land endowments in Jerusalem, Transjordan, Edessa and Cilicia, but especially from the Norman King of Sicily in Sicily and southern Italy (Delaborde 1880; Pringle 2007: 289-290). Within Jerusalem itself these included, beyond the valuable church itself, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Siloam spring with a mill and gardens, vineyards, a bakery, houses inside the walls, a bathhouse, lands, cisterns and more (Pringle 2007: 289). In 1161 CE the Abbey received the patronage of Queen Melisende, the widow of Fulk of Anjou, third King of Jerusalem (1131-1143) (Mayer 1972: 99, 168-170), and on her death her tomb was located in a niche on the staircase leading down to the crypt containing the tomb of the Virgin. The size of these endowments and the contribution the Abbey made to the army of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in time of emergency were second only to those provided by the Augustine Priory of the Holy Sepulchre (Johns 1939: 119, note 4). Special favour was afforded the Abbey due to the association of the early abbots with Cluny, the abbey that had provided the popes who had inspired the First Crusade. Indeed,

in 1162, the abbot of St. Mary became the first ecclesiastical leader in the Kingdom of Jerusalem to be granted the right to wear pontifical insignia and regalia (Kohler 1899: 142-145, Nos. 33, 35; Johns 1939: 120, note 1).

The building and the splendor of its decoration were clearly described in itineraries of the time (John of Würzburg, Baldi 1955: 764-766, No. 1068; transl. Stewart 1890: 51; Theoderich, Baldi 1955: 766-767, No. 1069; transl. Stewart 1891: 37-38; John Phocas, Baldi 1955: 767-768, No. 1071; transl. Stewart 1889: 21). The extant porch (Fig.1) and stairs leading down to the

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Byzantine crypt and aedicule were probably added during the initial period of Crusader occupation (Johns 1939: 120). By 1150 the completed Church is clearly shown on the Cambrai map (Röhricht 1891: Pl. 4). From analysis of charters (Röhricht 1887: 38-39) we are informed that the staff of the Abbey included an abbot, prior, sub-abbot, *magister hospitalis*, *cellararius* and *elemosynarius*. The mention of these functionaries confirms what we learn from the study of maps and illustrations, namely, that the Abbey included – beyond a new façade and a wide staircase to the crypt richly decorated with paintings, mosaics and marble paneling – a huge upper basilical Romanesque church with an eastern apse and twin towers on the western façade, a cloister and a *curia* containing an almshouse (*hospitalis*), a chapter house, a refectory, monks' dormitories, a sacristy, parlour, treasury, cellarer's store, almonry, kitchen, abbot's lodge and possible also an infirmary. The almshouse provided care for the poor sick and refreshment to passing pilgrims and the charters specifically referred to its receiving the patronage both of Patriarch William and Baldwin I (Delaborde 1880: 47-49, No. 19). Thus the considerable size of the Abbey complex and indeed the magnificence of its decoration should not surprise us. The strength of the building is further emphasised by Theoderich, who describes the monastery as being fortified with walls, towers and battlements (Baldi 1955: 766-767, No. 1069; transl. Stewart 1891: 37-38), probably entered through a gateway on the Jericho road to the south. In common with many buildings of its type it was dismantled by order of Salah ed-Din after the Ayyubid conquest and its stones were plundered for the reconstruction of the city walls (Ernoul: XVII.4 = Baldi 1955: 768, No. 1072; transl. Conder 1888: 27). This destruction was so complete that Burchard of Mt. Zion, during his visit around 1283, found only the crypt we see today (Baldi 1955: 769, No. 1074; transl. Stewart 1896: 68-72).

Burchard and later itineraries refer to the inundation of the crypt during heavy winter rains, a recurring problem throughout the history of the monument (Pringle 2007: 293-294), and eventually the reason for our own excavation. Flooding of the crypt because of insufficient drainage led to the discoveries recorded here, the outcome of urgent sewage works conducted by the Municipality of Jerusalem between 1998 to 2000 in the Gethsemane area of the Kidron Valley (Jehosaphat Valley), that revealed part of the Abbey of the Virgin Mary (Plan 1). This project continued previous excavations of the Abbey, in 1937 and 1973, that also resulted from salvage excavations at the site (Johns 1939; Katsimbini 1939). While a series of interesting

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finds relating to the Abbey were discovered (Seligman and Re'em 2000; Seligman 2012: 189-201, 217), this paper will concentrate on the magnificent wall painting dated to the 12<sup>th</sup> century exposed during the excavation.

### **The Wall Painting (Fig. 2)**

During the search for a suitable place for a drainage ditch a colourful wall paintings that lines the walls of a room in the north-western corner of the complex was found on two cornering walls. From analysis of the paintings it is clear that only the bottom part of the wall was extant and that it had originally been part of a hall of considerable, but now unknown, height. Because of the perilous location of the painting it was stabilised on site, detached from the wall and moved to the laboratory of the Conservation Department of the IAA for preservation (Negeur 2012). Scientific analysis of the painting (Tagliapietra: 2012; Rosanò & Pellizzarro 2012) shows it to utilise a combination of both fresco and tempera techniques in three to seven layers covering a calcium carbonate plaster base. The rendering plaster contained straw inclusions, a practice characteristic of eastern Byzantine workshops. The main pigments employed by the artist were red and yellow ochre, green *terra verde*, black charcoal, blue lapis lazuli and even gilding, using gold and tin leaf held to the wall with a plant-based adhesive. The quality of the painting is high, employing flowing brush strokes in a steady hand. The wall painting is divided into three registers set between horizontal borders. The bottom register, to the height of 1.05 m, comprises a central image of an embroidery set between two draperies; the second is a 0.52 m high painted acanthus vine flanked by two Latin inscriptions, while the upper portion seemingly displays the scene of the Intercession before Christ known as the *Deësis*. The total surviving section measures 9.09 m in length and is 2.68 m high. In addition a short section of the side left wall was found, comprising coloured paneling.

### **The Lower Register – Embroidery, Draperies and Disciples/Donors**

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The lower panel consists of the likeness of three draperies between two figures painted on the edges of the field, close to the corners of the room.

In the centre of the wall is a representation of an embroidered drapery. It is decorated with twenty-one heraldic roundels enclosing two addorsed birds, in three rows of seven. Unlike the draperies either side, there is no depiction of folds and this piece is displayed as attached directly to the wall. The background of the drapery is brown with ochre spirals embellishing the field. In the space between the medallions are eight green pointed foliate motifs with white edging and beige central squares. The points of the motifs are arrow-shaped. In the gaps between the roundels and the edges of the embroidery the motifs are cut in half and into quarters on the corners. The roundels interlace with a narrow beige border that strings around them, crossing over from circle to circle. The interior of each roundel includes a wide brown band decorated with fourteen white pearled rings. Inside this band is an emerald green edge. In the centre of the roundels are heraldic addorsed pairs of standing birds with hawked beaks, their talons facing outwards, while their heads are turned to stare at each other. Each bird is 15 cm tall. The raptors, probably eagles or hawks, are beige in colour; the margin and the wings, tail and eyes are detailed in white. The background of the central circle is a darker brown than the perimeter band and is decorated with lighter brown swirls.

Paired addorsed animals and birds, usually birds of prey, set in interlaced pearled roundels decorate prestige Sassanian samite silks dated to the 10th to 13<sup>th</sup> century (Geijer 1979: 131-136; Bornstein and Soucek 1981: 24, No. 24). The decoration of these textiles is characterised by heraldically posed creatures, usually in symmetrical pairs and often in

pearled roundels that frame the design (Geijer 1979: 123-124). Eagles, a symbol of strength, also adorn imperial Byzantine silks from the 10th century, commonly standing within circles (Weibel 1952: 41). Fabrics very similar to that painted in Jerusalem exist in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art and in the David Collection in Copenhagen (von Folsach and Keblow 1993: 100, No. 11).

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On either side of the central image of the embroidery are two almost identical painted embroidered draperies. The heading of both are painted as attached with white curtain rings to an light brown rod at a number of points, eleven on the right and eight on the left. The fastening of the curtain to its rod produces typical folds where gravity pulls the cloth down from the rings. These are shown as black and grey lines that radiate diagonally down from the curtain rings. The white colour of the drapery contrasts with the black of the wall behind, hints of which can be seen in the curved spaces above the heading. The decoration of the draperies is almost identical, the differences, though noted here, insignificant. The background is white, the field coloured with a series of parallel horizontal bands. The beige heading is bejeweled with numerous white pearls and ten oval rubies set on an emerald base that interspace each ring on the left, while on the right oval emeralds and rubies alternate. The edge of the heading is marked by a single dark brown border on the top and a double border on the bottom. Below this, covering most of the likeness of the drapery, is a field decorated with a brown line close to its top, a green band between two brown lines at the centre and three lines on the hem, one brown and the lower two grey. Interspersed in the upper white field of the left representation of a drapery are applications of arrows and compass-like motifs. The black arrows have wide heads, short shafts, some with beads at the centre and fletching. The compass-like motifs consist of red-brown circles with the four cardinal points emphasised and a central green dot in each circle. The lower white field of the left drapery is decorated only with arrows. The right drapery is a little different. The upper and lower fields display interspersed black and red-brown arrows and green compass-like motifs without central dots. In the narrow band below the three lines at the hem are four large green compass-like motifs.

Draperies covered walls in medieval public buildings and homes, and wall paintings that display them are not uncommon. Comparable examples are found below a wall painting of the *Deësis* in the Church of San Zeno Maggiore in Verona, on an early 13<sup>th</sup> century wall painting from the crypt of the Cathedral of Aquileia and from the Abbey at Pomposa (Anthony 1951: 109-110, Figs. 187, 190; Grabar and Nordenfalk 1958: 49-51 and Fig. 190).

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Flanking the illustrations of draperies, on both sides, are kneeling figures facing towards the centre of the composition. The right figure kneels with his back to the viewer, while the figure on the left kneels side on to the scene. Their poor state of preservation makes a full description challenging. Short inscriptions, that proved difficult to interpret, are inscribed in front of each figure at chest height. Both figures are outlined in dark brown. The figure on the left is cloaked in an ochre-red tunic, the folds emphasised by the use of shades of red and white. The arms are stretched forward, beseeching Christ in the upper register. The figure on the right is better preserved, though the head and limbs are absent. The tunic flows down the back of the figure highlighting the form of the back, and buttocks, dropping down to cover the legs. Most of the letters of the inscription before the figure are clear:

S

DS

IENV[N?]

P\_ \_ \_ \_

While the letters DS represent an abbreviation of Deus, the rest is still undeciphered. The figures are probably pilgrims, donors or disciples, their hands raised in supplication to the

*Deësis* in the main scene above. Similar figures of kneeling donors are painted on the column of the *Glykophilusa* in the Church of the Nativity (Kühnel 1988: 16-17, Pl. VI.8-9).

### **The Central Register – The Vine scroll and Inscription**

The central register is illustrated with a vine scroll trailed across the whole length of the wall. This panel is divided into three sections: two bands with Latin inscriptions set either side of the central vine scroll. The free-flowing vine scroll consists of two vines that spring from the edges of the painting, meeting at the centre where they interlace. The



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length of each vine is not exactly equal. Each vine undulates in a uniform wave a total of eight times, the vine tendrils spiraling to form volutes. Painted with a reddish-brown stem, set against a blue background covered with a white wash, the vine roundels alternate between simple volutes, often with plain tendrils; and volutes terminating with elaborate multicoloured floral motifs composed of acanthus leaves, buds, pine cones and tendrils decorated with acanthus leaves. Each motif is different, the floral image stylised and not identifiable botanically. The motifs use a variety of colours, green for the exterior of the acanthus leaves and red for the interior. Details, such as veins, are highlighted with brush strokes of white paint; the leaves are bordered with black lines. New leaves are painted in beige with red detail, white dots and a dark brown edge. The buds and pine cones use a beige colour, detailed in red with spots of white and outlined in reddish-brown. The latter, it has been suggested, represent the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden (Rahmani 1976: 122). Painted over the top of each of the non-floral spirals of the vine scroll is a geometric decoration in white that drops down from the upper margin to the base of the roundel. Each of these geometric designs is unique, forming lines, angles and spirals. The composition is arabesque but no clear form is visible.

Above and below the vine scroll are two reddish-brown bands lettered in white with Latin inscriptions (Shagrir 2012) in a display uncial script common during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with some letters in *capitalis quadrata*. The words are clearly separated, often divided by dots.

The upper inscription reads:

[QU]ISQ[U]IS AMAT [D]ICTIS ABSENT[UM]

[RODE]RE VITAM HANC [ME]NSAM INDI[G]

NAM NOVERIT ESSE SUAM

This is a quote from the Life of St. Augustine translated as:

Whoever likes to gnaw at the lives of those absent, will know that there is no place for him at this table.

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Of the lower inscription the only words clearly identified are FRATRES TACITO. The content relates directly to the silence demanded of the brothers and those visiting during dining, a requirement associated with the proposed function of the hall decorated with the painting as a refectory.

Similar vine scrolls exist in Romanesque sculpture. The superb eastern lintel over the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a peopled vine scroll of intricate detail (Kühnel 1987; Folda 1995: 225-227). It too shows a vine decorated with floral motifs composed from acanthus leaves, some of them almost identical to those found on the wall

painting from the Abbey of the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Jehoshaphat. While the execution of the Holy Sepulchre lintel comes from the realm of high art, dated to the mid to late 12th century, the free flowing hand of the painted vine would seem to indicate a slightly later date. Another 12<sup>th</sup> century sculpted example, showing both a vine scroll and

acanthus leaf floral motifs, decorated pieces from a cornice from the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth (Enlart 1926-1928, Album II: Pls. 130.411, 136.430; Viaud 1910: 48-49, Figs. 19, 21; Bagatti and Alliata 1984: Pl. 50.2). Similar Romanesque vine scrolls from the 12th and 13th centuries have been identified in Abruzzo (Italy), specifically the portal of San Salvatore di Paterno, now in the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Celano, and the portal of the Church of SS. Rufino e Cesidio in Trasacco (Kühnel 1987: 105-112). Still, the proposal that these examples influenced the styling of the Holy Sepulchre lintel has been challenged due to their late dating (Folda 1995: 227) though Kühnel does attempt to drop the dates of both sculpted portals. Another western parallel with a vine scroll, and very similar acanthus leaf motifs, decorates a Romanesque capital from Toulouse, now located in the city museum. In contrast with the conclusion that we should look to Italy or France for the home of the sculpture, Kenaan views the artistic programme and execution as a local oriental interpretation of western iconography (1973: 226-227).

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Vine scrolls are also common in 12<sup>th</sup> century illuminated manuscripts. We can note in particular Queen Melisende's Psalter, dated before 1149, that presents a number of examples of inhabited vine scrolls (Buchthal 1957: 12, Pl. 13a). Given Melisende's association with the Abbey this circumstantial connection is pleasing. Rahmani suggested

that the vine scroll peopled with centaurs, sirens, dragons, naked men and birds found at the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre is a representation of the Tree of Knowledge or Tree of Vice (1976: 127), while Kühnel reached a diametrically opposite conclusion, seeing the vine scroll as an allegory of Paradise and the Redemption (1987: 98-100). Our painting shows the vine scroll free of any demonic figures and connecting it with either association may be a step to a conclusion too far.

### **The Upper Register – The *Deësis***

Even though the upper register is very poorly preserved there is enough information to enable us to tentatively identify the iconography as that of the *Deësis*, the intercession of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist before Christ on behalf of mankind. Still the very fragmentary state of the scene, and our proposed association of the room as a refectory rather than a chapel, where scenes of the *Deësis* are ordinarily displayed, can make this proposal controversial (see below).

Only the central part of the wall is extant, the figures existing only to the height of the knees. This requires us to use comparative data to interpret the painting. The background of the painting is coloured in dark green with unclear lines and flecks of blue. In the centre of the field are what seem to be built structural blocks but are in fact part of a throne, the base protruding on both sides. The furniture is decorated with arcaded niche-like insets using shades of brown and bordered in black lines. In each niche is an ornamental molding outlined in white. Each side of the throne shows two columns of arcaded niches, possibly a weak attempt to present in perspective the two legs of the throne on each flank. Seated on the throne would have been the figure of Christ. All that survives is the 53 cm high light beige slipper with a black outline on his right foot. Multiplied up, using ratios from comparative examples, the original oversized painted figure would have been between 3.90 to 4.45 m high. The foot rests on a reddish-brown pillow.

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In addition a small section of the left slipper, close to the ankle, is set upon a dark reddish-brown embroidered cloth that probably adorned the throne. The cloth is detailed with a beige balled trimming and black margins. Little remains of the clothing beyond a small piece of the hem of Christ's red tunic, analysis showing the painting to also include the use of gilding. The tunic folds are exemplified with shades of red with black outlines. Over the tunic Christ wore a light-green *himation* decorated with red and white bands, and fringed in light brown. A section of the *himation* is painted inside the right side of the throne, with another piece on the left. This is the same colour scheme as that of the figure of Christ in the *Deësis* at Abu Ghosh (Kühnel 1988: 158, Pl. L.87).

To Christ's left stands a figure we interpret to be the Virgin Mary. She is cloaked in a blue chemise, the folds picked out in black. She seems to be covered also with a reddish-brown *maphorion*, the folds and hem marked by dark brown lines. This typical colour scheme is the same as contemporary representations of Mary as the Madonna of the *Glykophilusa*, the *Galaktotrophusa* and the *Nikopoia* in the Church of the Nativity (Kühnel 1988: 15, 22, 29; Pls. IV, VII, IX). Under the chemise her two red-slipped feet are visible, the colour an attribute of royalty.

On the right of the throne is the bare footed or sandaled figure of John the Baptist, covered in a heavily pleated light brown tunic or *chiton* detailed in beige and black lines and covered with a grey *himation* with black hemming. From the direction of the feet we can ascertain that the figures were half turned towards the enthroned figure of Christ at the centre, their original heights, by comparative ratios, reaching between 2.90 to 3.90 m.

Little remains of the scene beyond these two figures, though we can suggest that at least another figure was painted between them and the edge of the composition. Just to the left of Mary were the very fragmentary remains of a further pair of brown slippers, the only vestiges of an unidentified figure that could be an apostle, an archangel or a saint. To the right of John the Baptist a small part of black slippers can be seen, also pointing to the centre. We also have a tiny hint of the decoration that surrounded the probable scene of the *Deësis*. On the left side is a short section of a branch of a reddish-brown vine scroll that climbed up and over the painting. From the limited evidence it was probably of similar dimensions to the vine scroll beneath the scene

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and also may have had alternating foliated and plain volutes. We can even be bold enough to suggest that two vine scrolls grew up both sides of the room, meeting directly above the head of Christ. Another interesting band coloured the space between this vine scroll and the corner of the room. This band starts above the drapery, flanking the vine scroll with a light green background, set between two reddish-brown lines. The green band is decorated with a further vine scroll in dark green, it too embellished with acanthus leaf adornment. And just beyond this, on the wall beyond the corner of the room are the first traces of the decoration of the next panels. A section survives coloured in stripes of different hues. From the corner these are red, dark green on a blue background with two white lines, red and beige separated by a black line, and finally reddish-brown.

### **Depictions of the *Deësis***

The enthroned figure of Christ flanked by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist in supplication is the traditional iconic representation of the *Deësis*. Often other figures accompany them, whether saints, apostles or angels. A very similar representation of the *Deësis* from the Church of San Zeno Maggiore from Verona shows the archangels Michael and Gabriel standing beside Mary and John. In the Holy Land the *Deësis* was used for iconographic decoration in a number of holy sites of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. These include a now absent mosaic that had once decorated the Calvary Chapel in the Holy Sepulchre (Folda 1995: 234-235, 239); an over restored wall painting of the *Deësis* from a small chapel below the belfry on the northwest corner of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (Bagatti 1952: 75-79, Pls. 29-30; Folda 1995: 165, Pls. 615a-b), dated to around 1130 and associated with the activities of King Fulk and Queen Melisende in the church; and the Hospitaler Church of St. Jeremiah at Abu Ghosh where a wall painting of the *Deësis*, dated to the third-quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, shows Christ seated on a high-backed throne flanked by Mary and John the Baptist (Kühnel 1988: 157-159, 180, Pls. XLVIII.84, XLIX.85, L.87; Folda 1995: 383, Pls. 9.34c, 9.34h). The iconographic representation is also found in other art forms that have direct relevance. The illuminated manuscript of the *Deësis* from the Psalter of Queen Melisende, dated between 1135 to 1143, shows a very similar style of arcaded throne, decorated with inset niches, to that we have presented (Buchthal 1957: 2,

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Pl. 12b; Folda 1995: 155, Pl. 6.8x), as does the 11<sup>th</sup> century scene of the *Deësis* carved in ivory that forms the central field of the Harbaville Triptych from Constantinople (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1934: 34-35, No. 33a-b, Pl. XIII; Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1977: 320, Fig. 16). The plasticity of the medium gives depth to the separation of the legs of the throne that are shown as double legs on our wall painting. The icon of the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century of the *Deësis* from the Templon beam from the St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai is also of the same artistic model (Sotiriou and Sotiriou 1956: Figs. 95-96; 1958: 105-106; Weitzmann 1984: 75-80, Figs. 8-14; Mouriki 1990: 106-107, Pls. 31-33) showing very similar stance, colouring and proportions to our example.

Kühnel states that the *Deësis* is the central scene of Byzantine representations from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, entering western iconography only in the 13<sup>th</sup> century as a representation of the Last Judgment (1988: 158, 174-175). Still, we can note that this iconographic programme already appears in the mosaic of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Andreescu 1976: 248-256, Figs. 8, 11, 42), showing its penetration to the West to be earlier, at least at the hands of Byzantine artists. Buchthal calls the *Deësis* “the most Byzantine of Byzantine themes” (1957: 2), stating that the illuminated miniature of the scene in the Melisende Psalter, which he dates between 1131-1143, is probably a copy of a Byzantine Psalter such as that dated to 1100 in the collection of the University of Berlin. Though the program and iconography are Byzantine, the Psalter certainly (Buchthal 1957: 9), the Sinai icon (Weitzmann 1982: 293-296), and we would suggest also the wall painting from the Abbey of the Virgin Mary, have the freedom of line and humanisation of the figures that show the execution to be western in concept – an artistic fusion of eastern iconography and western artistic freedom that is a feature of the Frankish art of Jerusalem of the Crusader period of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **The Abbey, the Refectory and the Place of the Painting**

The Church of St. Mary and the associated Abbey, but especially the extant 12th-century façade (Fig.1) leading to a cruciform crypt with the traditional tomb of the Virgin at its base, has been extensively documented (Vincent and Abel 1926: 808-831; Johns 1939; Bagatti, Piccirillo and Prodomo 1975; Katsimbinis 1976; Pringle 2007 and Seligman 2012).

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The sturdy construction and low elevation show the surviving structure to have been conceived as a magnificent crypt to a huge church above it. Beside the church Johns (1939: 126-131) proposes a functional division of the adjacent monastery he excavated including a cloister to the south and a refectory vaulted by arches springing from a huge pier he uncovered, that was probably one of a series of piers marking the centre line of an elongated gallery, similar to contemporary refectories at Belmont in Tripoli (Enlart 1926-1928: Album I: Pl. 60), the Convent of the Order of St. John in Acre (Goldmann 1995: 8-13) and at a number of sites in France (Lenoir 1856: 333-335). The identification as a refectory is strengthened by the discovery of fragments of wall paintings, the architecture and the location of the room to the side of the cloister. However, the extent of the new finds (Seligman 2012: 189-201, 217) may indicate a more spacious distribution of the parts of the Abbey, though any final definition of the division would be premature.

We have identified the painting as coming from the refectory of the Abbey based on analysis of the limited archaeological remains exposed, the literary sources, and from the content of the inscriptions that flank the vine scroll. Can we assimilate the iconographic content of the wall painting, identified by us the *Deësis*, with the function of the space? Surely the *Deësis* would be more at home as the central image in the apse of a church or chapel, such as that in Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Pisa for example, or as part of the iconographic programme decorating its walls; the southern gallery of the Hagia Sofia also springs to mind. Iconographic programs of the refectory in monasteries are more easily associated with the Last Supper or Christ's breaking of the bread at Emmaus. However, both these iconographic scenes are not easily identifiable from the limited information available to us. Noteworthy is the knowledge that the use of the *Deësis*, or at least its western derivate, to decorate the walls of a refectory is not unique. While the monastery of Cluny did not survive the French Revolution, we do have careful descriptions of the decoration of the refectory authored by the Grand Prior of the Monastery, François de Rivo, in the 15th century (Fishof 2008: 114). The paintings were dated by Evans to the time of Abbot Hugh in the late eleventh to early 12th century (1950: 63):

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*Ista domus refectorii habetur gloriosa in picturis*

*tam novi quam veteris Testamenti, principum, fundatorum*

*et benefactorum coenobii Cluniacensis cum*

*immensa imagine Christi, et representatione magni*

*ipsius iudicii in quo scribuntur versus qui sequuntur*

(François de Rivo, *Chronicum Cluniacense*, ed. Marrier and Duchesne 1915: col. 1640).

So it was the Last Judgment, with Christ in majesty at its centre, that provided the main scene in the refectory of Cluny, this iconographic scheme being a western adaptation of the Byzantine *Deësis* (Kühnel 1988: 158, 174-175). A similar representation adorned the refectory wall in the Monastery of Charlieu (Dechelette and Brassart 1900: 4; Evans 1950: 63, Fig. 107). Thus the placing of the *Deësis* in the context of dining is feasible as a western, even Clunaic, practice, which utilised the mix of eastern and western iconography that so characterised the Frankish art of Jerusalem. In our view, the wall painting from Jerusalem ornamented the northern short wall of the *refectory*. The central line of the composition, emphasised by the supplication of Mary and John to the enthroned figure of Christ between them; the point of contact of the two interlaced vine scrolls and the position of the image of the prestige samite embroidery of the addorsed birds between two symmetrical draperies; all direct us to the spot in the hall where the Abbot or Grand Prior of the Monastery was seated, that is, immediately in front of the image of Christ. Refectory architecture would indicate this to have been the short wall of an elongated gallery, similar to other dining halls of the period at the Cistercian Abbey at Belmont near Tripoli (Enlart 1926-1928 II: 60-66, Album I: Pl. 60), the Abbey of Bellapais in Cyprus (Enlart 1987: 192-194) and at various sites in France (Lenoir 1856: 333-335).

We should also address the issue of the content of the inscription requiring silence during meals. A monk would not need to be reminded of this basic requirement, but we should remember that this monastery provided hospitality to lay pilgrims during their sojourn in Jerusalem. Laymen, less familiar with the stringent rules of monastic life, may not have maintained silence during



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meals, and a written reminder on the wall of the refectory, especially through a well-known dictum of St. Augustine, may well have been added for their benefit.

The new finds presented here almost certainly identify the room with the wall painting as a refectory, an identification given heavy credence from the content of the inscription. As we have noted above, this was a pilgrimage monastery that gave hospitality to many passing pilgrims during their visit to Jerusalem. It is quite conceivable that the monastery included two refectories, one for the clergy to the side of the cloister, and another for the pilgrims on the northern side of the institution.

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## **Acknowledgments**

The excavation and documentation of the wall painting was conducted between May to October 2000 in a 104 m long trench in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem and to the west of the Tomb of St. Mary (permit No. 3240) by Jon Seligman and Zubair 'Adawi, under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority, assisted by Boaz Ziso, Amit Re'em, Daniel Weiss and Khaled Abu Taha; Vadim Esman, Avraham Hajian, Tanya Kornfeld and Varoslav Pirski (surveyors), Tsila Sagiv, Carla Amit, Mariana Salzberg and Nicky Davidov (photography). We especially thank Jacques Negeur and Ghaleb Abu Diab for their patient effort to remove the wall painting from the site and to conserve it for future presentation. We thank the East Jerusalem Development Company and the Gihon Water and Sewage Company of the Jerusalem Municipality for their help in

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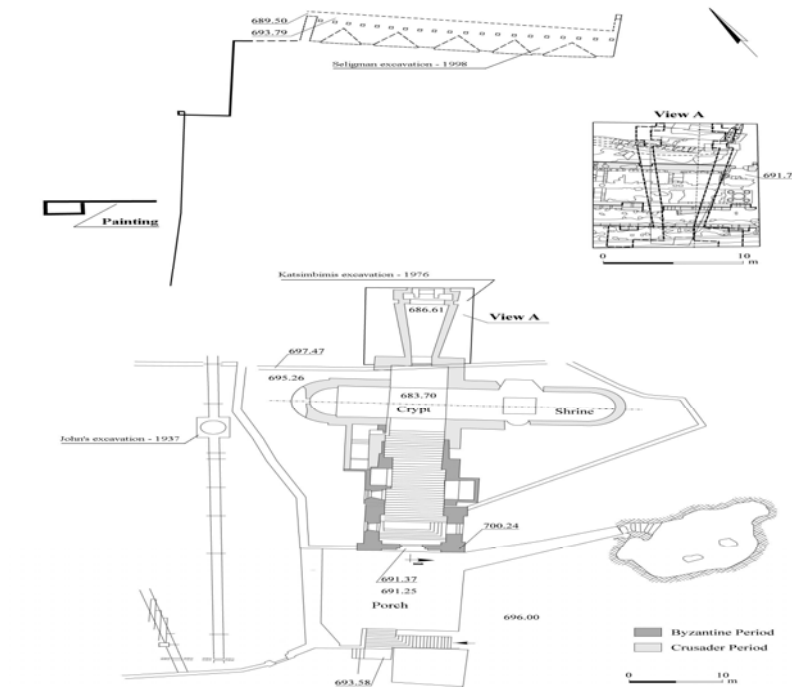
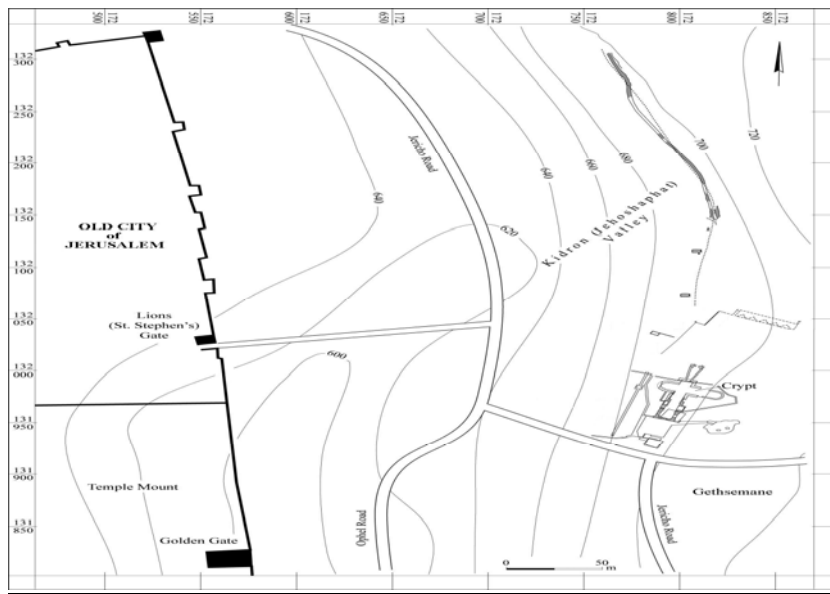
## **Figures**

Map 1. – Map of the Abbey of the Virgin Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the Old City of Jerusalem

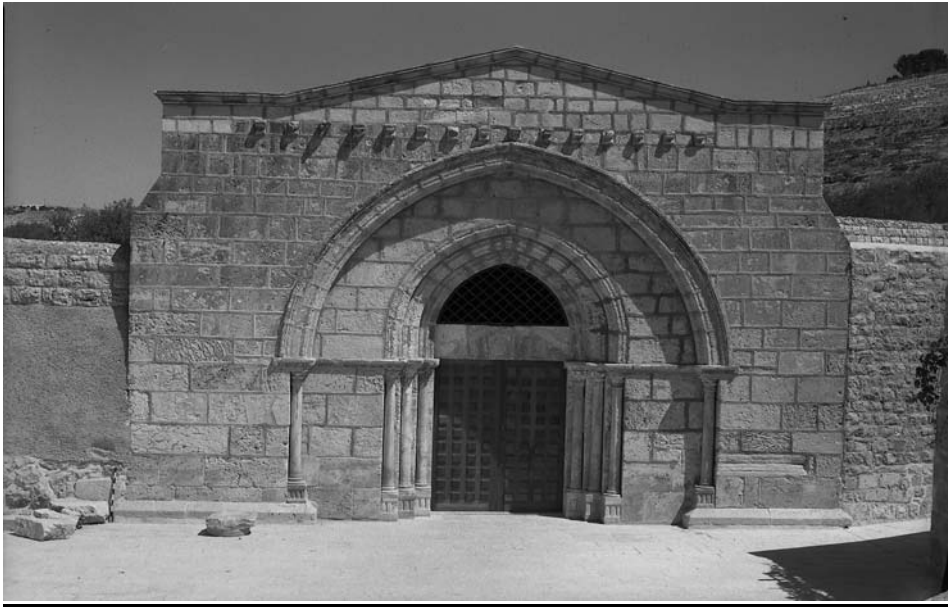
Plan 1. – Plan of the Remains of the Abbey of the Virgin Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, Showing the Location of the Wall Painting

Fig. 1. - Façade of the Crypt of the Virgin Mary

Fig. 2. – The Wall painting of the *Deësis*







**Giorgi Kalandia**

## **The Palace of the Dadianis and the**

### **Holy Virgin's Vesture.**

Of all the museums of southern Caucasus one of the most significant places is occupied by the historical-architectural museum of the Dadianis' palaces, which was founded by the ruler of Samegrelo David Dadiani as early as the 1840s by displaying the archaeological finds discovered at the antique town of Archeopolis (Nokalakevi) and ethnographic materials, medieval European armament, armour and his own collection of pictures in his palace. In the west the Queen's palace is ended by a massive English-type tower attached to the wall, it was used as a refuge and also to protect the family treasure from the enemy, therefore the walls are the thickest and the windows are the narrowest here. As the tradition has it here the Dadianis kept one of the most valuable treasures of Christendom the Holy Virgin's vesture, which could not be seen without the Ruler's permission. In the Holy Virgin's honour the tower was called the Virgin's tower.

The Holy Virgin's vesture and other relics are preserved in a small sepulchre with silver fittings, which are very badly damaged. It is set with stones, bears the Holy Virgin's representation and an inscription, which reads "I, King Dadiani Levan, its owner, adorned it with pearls for the remission of my sins, for You, the most holy, higher than the cherubim and more reverend than the seraphim, You, the Holy Virgin, the hymn and happiness of all the Christians, heed our prayers and save and forgive the sins of Queen Nestan-Darejan, may she rest in peace and be exalted, Amen. "This sepulchre was adorned with silver fittings in the Koronikon three hundred and twenty eight" (Koronikon equals to 1640).

There are different suggestions as to how this relic found its way to Georgia: according to one conjecture it was brought to Georgia from Jerusalem at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The information provided by Vakhushti Bagrationi about this question is meagre: "...In the church of Khopa there is the vesture of the Holy Virgin, which works miracles..." But the information about this and other relics preserved at the Zugdidi Museum is abundant in the works of foreign authors. Interesting material was left by the Russian ambassadors Fedot Elchin and Pavel Zakharyev. They visited Levan II Dadiani in the spring of 1640. During their tenure as

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ambassadors they also visited the Khobi Monastery. The archimandrite Nicholas Irubakidze-Choloqashvili showed them about the church, he also showed them the Holy Virgin's vesture and the relics of St. Quiricus and St Marine. When asked by the guests who had brought these relics and when, the archimandrite explained, "I have not been here and occupied this post for a long time and do not know who brought them here and when." Archangelo Lamberti directly speaks about the presence of the holy relics at the monastery in Khobi, but says nothing who had brought them there and when. This means that at the Khobi Monastery "the Holy Virgin's vesture was shown, which was revered greatly by the local population." Very important information about the relics is furnished by the Patriarch of Antioch Macarios, who saw the Holy Virgin's vesture in the seventeenth century. He and his companions wroshipped and offered prayers to her and then cut out a new veslture according to its pattern, which after its consecration was transferred with great honour and reverence to their motherland. Juzeppe Maria Zampy, the Prefect of the Theatene Mission in the Samegrelo province, in one of his reports sent to Rome gives a very interesting description of the relics preservied in the Khobi Monastery: "These people have many relics, which, first of all, they received at the time where Chistianity was flourishing here, in Georgia and their rulers maintained relations with the Emperors of Constantinople and who sent them many relics as gifts. Subsequently they received these relics also from the clergymen of the same city, who tried to strengthen them in their devotion. And finally they received the relics from the holy fathers, who, after the seizure of Constantinople by the Turks to escape the Moslem tyranny fled to Samegrelo and scattered in the negihbouring countries. It is said that at that time an archbshop came to Colchis bringing with him a piece of the pillar of life (somewhat bigger than eight inches of the French foot) and the vesture, which, as they said had belonged to the Holy Virgin; our fathers saw the linen of which it had been made, it is yellow, with flowers here and there and is embroidered with a needle, it is eight Roman inches long, and four inches wide. Its short sleeves are four inches long and the collar is narrow. I have also seen it at the Khobi Monastery, where it is preserved." Of special interest is the information given in the report of the Russian ambassadors Alexey Yevlev and Nikifor Tolshanov, who were at the Royal court of Imereti in the yaers 1650-1652. The monks, who had been sent to Nikifor Tolchanov and Alexey Yevlev from the monastery of Mt Athos, told them that at the Khobi Monastery in Sadadiano, which was dedicated to the Assumption of the Holy

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Virgin and was built of marble, in the ancient times by the king of Greece Heracleios, the vesture of the Holy Virgin was preserved, which had been brought from Constantinople by some curator of the books, during the rule of Theophanes, when iconoclasm was raging in Greece. The Holy Virgin's vesture was preserved in a silver chest and placed near the church chancel and stamped with the seals of the ruler of Samegrelo Levan Dadiani and the Catholicos.

The Russian diplomats Alexcey Yevlev, Fedot Elchin, Pavel Zakharev and even King Ivan the Terrible himself made numerous attempts to somehow take the vesture from Samegrelo to Russia. The Russian ambassadors had direct orders to do their best but they never succeeded. Alexey Yevlev notes that he asked the Metropolitan Zacharias if he had really seen the Holy Virgin's vesture. He said he had seen it many times and noted that it had been brought by the curator of the books at the time when the holy icons were persecuted in Greece. "It is truly the Holy Virgin's vesture and it was the vesture that cured the sick." It is said that a piece of the Pillar of Life and relics of other saints were preserved here, too.

No less interesting is the information given by don Christophoro de Castelli, an Italian missionary. He says, "The great mother of Our Lord is in the Khopi Monastery, where the Greeks had brought it when the Saracens captured Constantinople."

In his archaeological journeys Ekvtime Taqaishvili among the relics preserved in the Khobi Church, describes a sepulchre (a repository for relics) where the Holy Virgin's vesture and other relics were preserved. He notes that "the inscription belongs to Great Levan Dadiani, whose spouse Nestan-Darejan, daughter of Tchiladze died in 1639, therefore the inscription was made in the years 1639-1657."

Historical sources and oral tradition provide various pieces of information about the history of transferring these relics to Georgia. Among them there is one very interesting conjecture (the author, a well-known folklorist and public figure, now deceased, Christophore Samushia). Unfortunately I do not know what sources his conjecture was based on. According to this assumption after the fall of Constantinople the relics of the Vlakerna church appeared in the Holy Cross Monastery of Georgians in Jerusalem. When the Ruler of Samegrelo Levan II Dadiani renovated the Holy Cross Monastery he offered Nikoloz Choloqashvili, who was active there, to come to Samegrelo, to Georgia and become the father-superior of the Kortskheli

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Monastery. The Kortskheli Monastery became the Metiochion of the Holy Cross Monastery. Nikoloz came to Georgia and in the years 1632-1657 he served and lived there. Georgia, weakened and divided as a result of internecine wars and enemy invasions, could no longer take care of the Jvari Monastery and therefore it sounds quite convincing that the holy relics, preserved at Jvari should have been transferred to Georgia.

It is evident that the information, provided above, was given to the Russian ambassadors by the local informants; it is especially interesting due to the fact that there are two versions of how the Holy Virgin's vesture came to be preserved in Georgia: according to the first one it was brought to Georgia in the eighth century from the Byzantine city of Constantinople; the other says that the vesture was brought to this country in the fifteenth century after the Turks captured Constantinople in 1453. Further research will determine which of the two is true.

The middle part of the girdle of the Holy Virgin's vesture on which St Mary had embroidered her own image with her hand, was preserved in Georgia as well. According to one of the historical sources, it was brought to Georgia from Byzantium by Hellene, the spouse of King Bagrat III and placed at the Bedia Monastery. Later it appeared in the Dadianis' palace, from where it was transferred to the Khobi Monastery...

The Holy Virgin's vesture is associated with many miracles. The first one was attested in 632. It is known that it saved the capital of Byzantium Constantinople twice from the invasions of Saracens and Egyptians. Once, Constantinople was under siege for six days by the famous commander of the Saracens Moavia. The Patriarch Photios took out the vesture and touched the sea with it, the ships were devoured by the raging waves.

One miracle was attested in Georgia, too. Robbers took the vesture from the Khobi Monastery. Historical sources say that the people of Khobi and Samegrelo in general rallied in search of it, but all was in vain. Finally, three days later the vesture was found in a place illuminated by the morning star. The relic was returned to the monastery.

**The Myrrh-Streaming Iveron Icons of The Theotokos & Br. Joseph Munoz-Cortes**

I have come to this symposium to introduce you to one of the most sacred contemporary wonder-working icons of the Russian Church - the Myrrh-Streaming Iveron Icon of the Mother of God of Hawaii.

The Hawaiian Icon is sometimes referred to as the Icon of Unity because it was providentially revealed to the faithful in 2007, on October 6th (on the Feast day of the Conception of St. John the Baptist), - the same momentous year when His Holiness Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, First-Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, both of blessed memory, signed the historic Act of Reconciliation and thus brought about unity in the Russian Orthodox Church in the Homeland and in the Diaspora.

This joyous event which took place on May 17, 2007 in Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow, is significant as a sign of God's Providence. Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow was destroyed by the Soviets and after 80-years of godless Communism, was rebuilt by the Will of God and it was in this holy temple that our rebuilt ecclesiastical unity was sealed with the signatures of these two great hierarchs.<sup>xxvi</sup>

For seven years this precious Icon has been travelling to parishes of the Orthodox Churches spread throughout numerous cities in America and Canada, exuding copious amounts of heavenly Myrrh, converting many to a life in Christ and drawing thousands more to repentance and uniting us in common prayer.

The sacred Hawaiian Icon is inextricably joined to the Holy Montreal Myrrh-Streaming Iveron Icon and its faithful custodian, Brother Joseph Munoz-Cortes. Indeed, the Hawaiian Icon is a smaller Russian-made paper reproduction of the Montreal Icon and its guardian reader Nectary Yangson is a member of our ROCOR parish in Honolulu dedicated to the original Montreal Iveron Icon of the Mother of God.

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In 1982 the Lord called Joseph, this Orthodox Spaniard chosen one of the Mother God, to take on a special kind of podvig. In truth, Joseph's unique podvig began when he was entrusted by elder Clement of the Holy Nativity scete on Mt. Athos with a copy of the renowned "Portaitissa [Keeper of the Portal]" Icon of the Mother of God, a copy which, by means unfathomable to the human mind, began to exude Myrrh on the night of November 24, 1982... Seventeen years ago, on October 31, 1997, Joseph sealed his 15-year service to the Theotokos and our Church with a martyr's death.

Joseph strongly believed that the appearance of the Montreal Icon was inextricably tied to Russian Orthodoxy, for it was namely the Russian people over the course of a thousand years that surrounded the Mother of God with such great reverence and love that Russia became known as "The House of the Mother of God."

Joseph was also certain that the miracle of flow of myrrh had everything to do with the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. He also believed that it was not by accident that the icon appeared in the bosom of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, as it was this very Church that in 1981, - one year before the revelation of the Montreal Icon, glorified the holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. Their precious blood brought into motion the spiritual forces of revival that in turn finally brought down the Soviet system, which wrought so much destruction on the peoples of that land and eventually brought about unity in the Russian Church.

Joseph spoke plainly: "Undoubtedly, this icon appeared in our Church Abroad not because the Lord was especially pleased with us, but because of the blood of the New Martyrs of Russia... Unfortunately, it often seems to me that, when we talk of repentance of the Russian people, we distinguish those who remained in Russia from those who live outside its borders. As if only they should repent, while we have everything in order. Acting accordingly, we destroy our spiritual unity. It is equally unfortunate that many completely misunderstand the significance of the miraculous icon's appearance in the Russian Church Abroad. They think that she appeared in order to show the Moscow Patriarchate that the Lord is here, with us... No, the icon appeared in a free country, so that the entire world might learn of this miracle... Here is how a quite pious young lady explained this to me, continues Joseph: 'The Myrrh-bearing

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Women came to anoint the Body of Christ before His Resurrection. In like manner, the Mother of God today is anointing the Russian people in anticipation of the resurrection of Russia.' "

In the late 1980's and 1990's we all witnessed an amazing revival of Church life in Russia. Houses of worship and relics of the saints and historic icons were being returned to the Church, hundreds of thousands flocked to the newly opened temples seeking baptism for themselves and their children, and the process of the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia began. On July 18, 1993 the Moscow Patriarchate published a striking penitential epistle concerning the murder of the Royal family. In 1991 His Holiness Patriarch Alexey II had publicly repented regarding Metropolitan Sergius' Declaration of 1927 and for many of its consequences.

At the same time life in ROCOR was going in a different direction, until finally stagnation set in. In 1986, soon after the repose Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky), Archbishop Vitaly (Ustinov) of Montreal and Canada, known for his extreme intolerance toward the Moscow Patriarchate, was elected as First Hierarch.

Soon ROCOR began opening its parishes in Russia, disregarding the opinion and even protests of astute observers of church life in Russia, both in the Homeland and in the Diaspora. Metropolitan Vitaly ignored Patriarch Alexey's open invitations to join in mutual discussions to address and overcome the differences which for too long prevented the two branches of the Russian Church from achieving blessed Eucharistic unity. Metropolitan Vitaly went so far as to deny the presence of God's grace in the Moscow Patriarchate. In his Paschal Epistle of 1998, as well as in his encyclical of the same year "The Russian Orthodox Church (Her Contemporary Significance)" Metropolitan Vitaly stated: "The administration of the Moscow Patriarchate is simply a state institution, without Grace, and its members simply civil servants in cassocks."

In 1997, within the span of seven months the Lord, in His ineffable mercy, sent the faithful in ROCOR a number of startling signs in order for us to change our direction from confrontation to unification.

The first was the loss of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Hebron, an event of an unmistakably mystical nature. Having raised a siege to prevent the Patriarch of Moscow, (who at that time was on pilgrimage in the Holy Land) from coming there, one of our bishops forbade the serving of the Holy Liturgy on the Day of the Holy Spirit - the feast day of the monastery. In all



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the previous decades that this holy site had been in ROCOR's charge, such a terrible omission had never occurred. As a result ROCOR lost a holy site it had been safeguarding for eight decades.

The second sign was the martyric death of the chosen one of the Mother of God, Joseph Muñoz-Cortes, and the concealing of the Myrrh-Streaming Montreal Iveron Icon, exactly 15 years after it was revealed.

At first Metropolitan Vitaly refused to give his blessing to serve panikhidas for Brother Joseph. Metropolitan Vitaly even called my home and stated, "Do not hurry to glorify Joseph." He even went so far as to say, "Joseph's death was a punishment from the Mother God for his lack of obedience to me." Two months later, in January, 1998 Metropolitan Vitaly's cathedral in Montreal burned down to the ground. Everything in the church was destroyed, save an icon of St. Nicholas, which hung over the entrance to the cathedral. This was a third sign.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The fourth came on November 24, 1998, on the feast day of the Montreal Myrrh-Streaming Icon of the Mother of God. On that day on a sidewalk outside the ROCOR Synod building in New York, Metropolitan Vitaly took a bad fall on his back. After this spill he was never able to regain control of his faculties and was never again able to serve Liturgy on his own.

At the IV All-Diaspora Council, a perceptive Fr. Nicholas Karipoff (of Melbourne, Australia), summed up the state of affairs in ROCOR thus:

"The best of the émigrés at first saw their exile as God's punishment for their sins. After the Second World War, however, we see a different perception. Thanksgiving to God for deliverance from the communist hell changes to a sense of chosen-ness: we were saved because we have a special mission. By the second half of the 1960's and further this caused the leadership of the Russian Church Abroad to decide on a change of direction...

The loss of the spirit of repentance of the first decades led to a loss of clarity in self-assessment. Hence we began to perceive ourselves as not only intercessors for the Church of Russia but as having the right to teach others and meddle in the affairs of other Local Churches and to think that perhaps we even constitute the One Catholic Church: we have everything and have no need of anything from without... we are unique."<sup>xxvi</sup>

Herein lies one of the major causes of the concealment from us of the Montreal Myrrh-streaming icon. This false sense of "chosen-ness" made us in ROCOR unworthy of having the

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Montreal Icon in our presence. We became too complacent, perhaps even indifferent to the presence of the Icon in our midst.

Brother Joseph addressed this in the last interview before his death<sup>xxvi</sup>:

"We ought never to become accustomed to miracles. If this happens, the miracle will cease to be a miracle. The man who understands what holiness and a holy object are can never become accustomed to a miracle. His attitude towards the mystery will be not as towards a magician's box of tricks, but as towards something incomprehensible, which evokes fear and love towards the Creator."

In 2001, after the election of Metropolitan Laurus, ROCOR's course took a drastic change for the better. Talks on unification were soon opened between the Moscow Patriarchate and ROCOR.

In 2002, two years after the election of Metropolitan Laurus as First-Hierarch, the ROCOR Synod of Bishops issued an important appeal to the flock on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the "Iveron Myrrh-Streaming Montreal" Icon of the Mother of God. It stated in part:

"For 15 years, this Icon, which poured forth miraculous Myrrh in abundance, comforted our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia by being a visible and palpable sign of the kind and merciful intercession of the Mother of God on behalf of us sinners... Did we use this visitation by the Mother of our Lord for the good of our souls? Is it not our common sin, the cooling of zeal toward the Holy Icon toward prayer, toward acts of piety and witnessing to the faith that became the reason that God allowed the Holy Icon to be taken from us?

...Brothers and Sisters! With thanks and trepidation let us prayerfully remember the presence of this marvelous Myrrh-streaming Icon in our Church, and with repentance let us pray to the Most-holy Theotokos that our sins be forgiven, and that peace enter into our Orthodox Church..."

That appeal of the Bishops of ROCOR remains relevant for us to this day...

After the violent death of Brother Joseph and the disappearance of the Montreal Icon many began asking, - will the icon ever return? The simple answer to this question is - it has returned, in the place of the Hawaiian Icon!

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Soon after this icon was revealed, reader Nectary Yangson, the custodian of the Icon of Hawaii, stated the following:

"The Most Holy Mother of God has not forgotten us. She has not abandoned us. She will not abandon us! (...) God has shown us that He has not forgotten us! And that's all that is needed. God is telling us that He is real! Dare we ignore this revelation? Dare we turn our backs on this great miracle? Dare we forget Christ? May God forgive us if we do!"

Nectary often comments that he firmly believes that the appearance of the Hawaiian Icon is meant by the Mother of God to glorify the memory and *podvig* of her chosen one, Brother Joseph.

I would like to devote the remainder of my allotted time to Brother Joseph, and especially to the meaning of his martyric death and what it means to all of us in the Russian Church.

In his first interview ["Orthodox Russia", 1983, Nos. 17, 18, 20], Br. Joseph responded to the question, "Why did the Lord choose you for this miracle?" Joseph answered:

"...I recognize my shortcomings and confess my insignificance, but I think God nonetheless is using me for His purposes. God often makes Himself known through the least of men. I am but one of the least in the Orthodox Church: I am not Russian, but a convert who God once called to the True Faith. And according to His mercy, He has now chosen me a second time. But the Lord allows me to feel that I am nothing. More and more, each day I am conscious of my insignificance. I am only an instrument, and an unclean and sinful one, in the hands of God. I have noticed that some people pose this same question to me: Why is it that you have been chosen by God? Why did this happen to you? I reply that I have always prayed to the Most-holy Virgin and have never asked for a miracle; I have never asked of the Most-holy Virgin that She give me some proof of herself. I believe in the Mother of God, as I was taught by my mother when I was a child. I believe that the Most-holy Virgin reveals herself to whomever she wishes."

It is next to impossible to comprehend the cross of obedience to the Mother of God that Joseph bore. How many people in endless streams and from everywhere came to him with the most diverse requests, prayers, demands.

In the Summer of 1996, Joseph travelled to Mt. Athos, in order to bid farewell to his spiritual father, the dying schema-abbot Clement, who in 1982 had entrusted the Miraculous Icon

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to him. It was then that Fr. Clement predicted to Joseph that 1997 would be a fateful year for the curator of the Icon, that awful events would take place, and that “you will be the subject of terrible slander.”

On October 29, 1997, literally on the eve of his martyric death, Joseph and Fr. Alexander Iwascewicz (a priest from Argentina), while on pilgrimage in Greece, visited the ancient monastery of St. Nicholas on the island of Andros, so that they might venerate its holy treasures. Upon entering the narthex of the main church, a monk was quite amazed to see that a 17th century wall fresco of the Mother of God had begun to weep. Archimandrite Dorotheus, abbot of the monastery, explained that the Icon weeps only when awful events are about to happen, or during such events. Those who witnessed this sign, including Joseph, took it as having some significance to our Church Abroad. This sign from the Mother of God made such a profound impression upon Joseph, that he repeatedly told Fr. Alexander: “Father, I sense that very soon something awful will happen. I do not know what exactly, but I feel something.” On the very day of his death, during breakfast, Joseph again shared with Fr. Alexander and his Greek friend Manolis Argiris his feeling that something terrible was about to happen.

"This something terrible" happened in Athens, on the night of October 31, 1997... Jose was tortured and brutally murdered in a hotel room in Athens, by several individuals. He had planned to return to Canada on November 5th to be present with the Icon for the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the appearance of the miraculous appearance of myrrh on the Icon. The case was never solved, though several individuals were suspected in the crime. A group of us from Washington attended the trial. A description of the court proceedings with the medical examiner's report and other materials can be found on my parish's website in a special section devoted to brother Joseph.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The curator of the Myrrh-streaming Montreal Iveron Icon was buried thirteen days after he was tortured and murdered. His funeral service was to be held at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, NY before a closed casket, with Joseph's remains in a sealed plastic body bag. However, God determined otherwise. The coffin was opened, the body bag torn asunder, and everyone present at the funeral service could see the many signs of torture which he endured on that fateful night in Athens, alone, bringing to a close his 15-year service on earth to the Mother God and the Church.

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When his coffin was opened, there was no stench or evidence of corruption. The late Mr. Peter Murianka (father of Jordanville's abbot Archimandrite Luke), a professional funeral director, confirmed this fact when, by God's providence and with the blessing of Archbishop Laurus, he opened the coffin and revealed Joseph's body. Later, we learned that Joseph's body was not even embalmed...<sup>xxvi</sup>

Sensing his coming death, Joseph once said:

"...Believers must be ready to die for the truth, and not to forget that in acquiring enemies here, we acquire the Heavenly Kingdom. One who is faithful in little things, will be faithful in great things, when that is required of him. Given the opportunity to become confessors, we should not lose that opportunity. In losing earthly life, we acquire the heavenly one. We should not fear death for the sake of Christ."

After Brother Joseph's death, a handwritten note in French was found among his papers. Written in 1985, the note sheds light on the condition of his soul and shows us how difficult it was for him to bear his obedience of guardian of the Wonder-working Icon of the Mother of God and that, long before his martyric death, he forefelt how he would die.

"O Lord Jesus Christ, Who came into the world for the sake of our salvation and voluntarily nailed to the Cross, and suffered the passions for our sins, let me also bear my sufferings, which I receive not from my enemies, but from my brother. O Lord! Impute this not to him in sin!"<sup>xxvi</sup>

One person from Russia who "coincidentally" happened to attend brother Joseph's funeral, commented, "...I had the sensation that I was attending not a funeral and burial services, but the rite of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. I realized, clearly and distinctly, that even if during those minutes we were to have been led out of the church to be executed by a firing squad, we would nonetheless have been victorious!"

There were a number of heavenly signs following the martyric death of the Guardian of the Montreal Icon which I would like relate to you.

The faithful in Russia answered Joseph's martyrdom with an amazing outpouring of love, veneration and prayer. Books and films have been produced about him and deeply moving akathists have been written in praise of the Montreal Icon and Joseph. The faithful in Russia continuously ask, "When he will be canonized?"

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In the summer of 1999 my Matushka made a pilgrimage to the Optina Hermitage. Hieromonk Michael, one of the monks in charge of the outer scete of the monastery, where the elders of Optina resided, was apparently waiting for her. Fr. Michael greeted Matushka, then suddenly disappeared into his cell, saying, "Wait here, please. I'll be right back."

Soon he returned, beaming with joy, carrying a glittering gold icon. "This is the first icon written of the martyr Joseph!" He triumphantly proclaimed. And later, having blessed Matushka with the icon, he said, "My dear, this icon is a gift to your parish for your love towards Brother Joseph!"

Matushka was dumbfounded...

Father Michael explained:

"Joseph, of course is one of ours - of Optina. He took the monastic name of Ambrose, in honor of our elder. And so we wrote this icon. He is the fourth of our contemporary martyrs."<sup>xxvi</sup>

Joseph is depicted on a gold background, in the snow-white garb of a martyr, with a cross in his right hand and the Montreal icon in his left.

In March, 2002, we undertook another pilgrimage to Optina. Matushka and I were accompanied by three other ROCOR clergy: Archpriest Stefan Pawlenko (California), Priest Vladimir Boikov (New Zealand), and Protodeacon Nikolai Triantifilidis (California).

Upon arrival at the monastery, we venerated the relics of the Elders, and then, accompanied by Fr. Tikhon, one of the directors of the scete, walked along the picturesque footpath beyond the monastery walls, to the scete in which the Optina Elders had dwelt. There, we were first escorted into the small church of St. John the Baptist. An hour later, Hegumen Michael (the same monk who in 1999 presented our parish with the aforementioned icon of brother Joseph), came to fulfill his obedience, the reading of the Psalter. After greeting us quite hospitably, he told us that an exact copy of the Montreal Iveron Icon of the Mother of God had been written on one of the two icon boards which had belonged to murdered brother Joseph and which was later given to the iconographers of Optina. Fr. Michael further related to us that in his cell, the icon written on brother Joseph's board had already been streaming myrrh for three months. After providing a detailed account of the miracle of myrrh-streaming, Fr. Michael brought the icon itself out of his cell so that we might venerate it. With feelings of joy and tenderness, we prayed before the icon, thanked kind Fr. Michael for sharing this wonderful story,

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and warmly bade him farewell. Fr. Michael took the icon with him to the scete church and prepared to continue with the reading of the Psalter, while we, together with Fr. Tikhon, went to see St. Ambrose's cottage.

The cottage, is near the Southern border of the scete, and has been restored to its original appearance. In Elder Ambrose's cell, we prayed. Then we set out to go have tea and fellowship with the brethren in the iconography studio, where a group of monks and novices awaited us. However, we spent a few more minutes on the footpath, sharing with Fr. Tikhon our impressions of what we had seen at the scete. It was then that a certain worker or pilgrim hurriedly approached, and said to us "Fr. Michael urgently requests that Fr. Victor and his Matushka come to the church." In considerable confusion, we returned to the scete. Coming toward us, Fr. Michael carried the myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God, which he had shown us an hour earlier in the church of St. John the Forerunner. On coming up face to face, Fr. Michael signed me crosswise with the icon, and gave it to me. He said, "While reading the Psalter, I got the sensation that the icon must return with you to Washington!" After making a prostration, he quickly walked off toward the scete. I was at a loss for words, and did not know what to think - a feeling shared by the rest of the pilgrims in our group.

When we returned to Moscow, the Icon was no longer streaming myrrh; however, many tracks made by the streams of myrrh are visible on its surface.

The lower border of the icon bears the inscription: "This icon was written on a board [belonging to] Martyr Joseph Munoz-Cortes."

And so the monks of Optina and others in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria and Greece have laid the foundation for the glorification of Brother Joseph. I pray that the faithful of Georgia will join in this effort.

To his very death, Joseph remained faithful to the One Whom he had encountered in 1982 in that scete in Her Precious Garden of Mt. Athos. He was truly a chosen one, a soul predestined for a special mission. Let us take care to fully spiritually appreciate the continuation of the Myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon given not only to the Russian Orthodox Church, but also to the fullness of the Orthodox Church.

### Theotokos Adoration in the Holy City of Jerusalem in the Early Byzantine period

Interestingly, all of the known sites that are connected to the adoration of Maria Theotokos, and were built prior to the sixth century AD are located in the outskirts of the Holy City of Jerusalem, or alternatively, in the margins of the city – close to its walls. None of these sites, are located in the center of the city, nor in one of its prominent plazas (Figs. 1, 2).

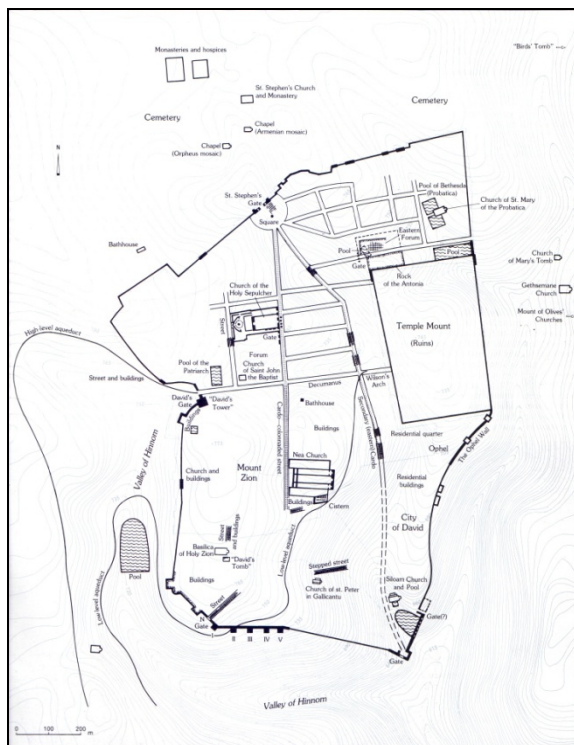




Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The church of the Kathisma, built in the mid fifth century, is situated along the road to Bethlehem, ca. 4.5 km south of Jerusalem. The church of Mary's tomb, in the complex of Gethsemani, is placed in the Qidron Valley, at the footsteps of the Mount of Olives, outside the city walls, ca. 300 meters away from the eastern city gate, while the church of St. Mary of the Probatica, is placed ca. 150 meters inside the same, eastern city gate. It was only in the mid sixth century, that Justinian had built the Nea Church along the *cardo maximus* in the center of the Holy City, and dedicated it to the worship of Theotokos. The construction of the church was culminated and celebrated in the year 543 (Prokopius, *De Aedificiis* V.6-9). The tradition that

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related the church of Holy Sion to the place where Mary, the mother of Jesus died appeared for the first time in the account of Arculf, in the late 7<sup>th</sup> C and was clearly a late addition to the traditions that were previously identified at the site (Finegan 1969:148).

The absence of Theotokos cult places in the central plazas of Jerusalem, prior to the mid 6<sup>th</sup> C, should however be examined in the context of the urban development of the city in the Early Byzantine period. It is from this point of view, I think, that we can better understand the reasons that placed the Mariology tradition in the so called, margins.

#### Sites of Theotokos adoration in Jerusalem:

##### 1. Church of Mary's Tomb

The veneration of the tomb of Mary in the Valley of Jehoshafat is attested in the *Transitus Mariae*, an apocryphal work, found in many versions and usually dated to around 400 (Hennecke 1963:429). A church in the site of Gethsemani is first mentioned by Theodosius around the year 530: "... there is a church to my Lady Mary, the mother of the Lord..." (Wilkinson 2002: 109 (10)) and later also by the Piacenza pilgrim: "... There is also a basilica of Saint Mary in the valley, which people say was her house, and the place at which she was taken up from this life" (Wilkinson 2002: 138 (17)). The remains of a cruciform rock cut church, with two apses, one towards the east and the other towards the west are known (Fig. 3). The vaulted church was reached by a flight of steps descending from the south, and the tomb, considered to be that of Virgin Mary, is found in the center of the church, cut from the surrounding rock. The church was probably built in the reign of Theodosius I, in the late fourth century (Geva 1993: 784, and references there). It is located next to Gethsemani, at the footsteps of the Mount of Olives, ca. 300 meters outside the eastern city gate of Jerusalem, probably along a way that climbed the Mt. of Olives.

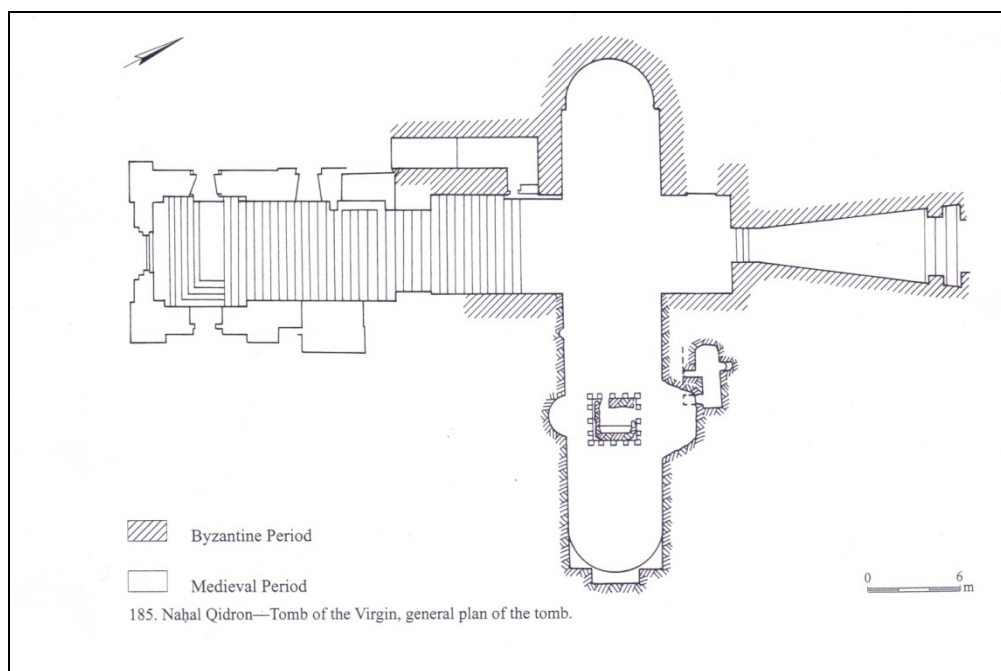
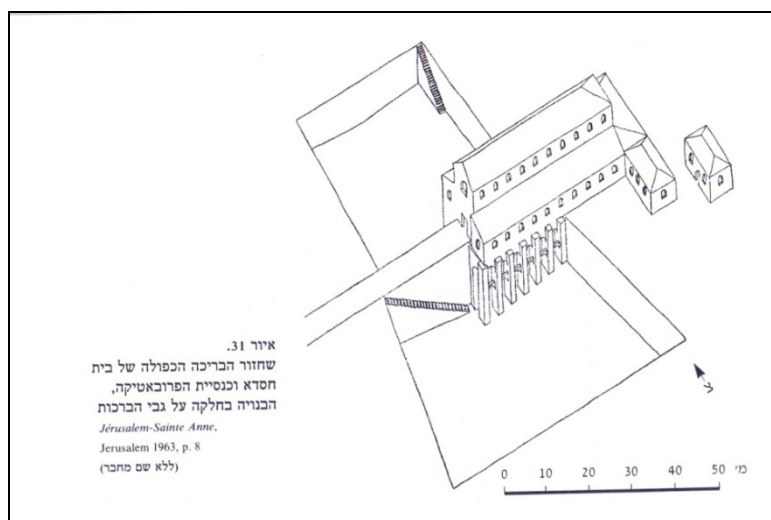


Fig. 3

## 2. Church of Saint Mary of the Probatika

This church is located inside the walls of the city, north-east of the Temple Mount, some 150 meters west of the eastern gate of the city (Fig. 1). The church was built in the early 5<sup>th</sup> C in a basilical plan (c. 20X50 m) and oriented to the east (Fig. 4). Its western part

was founded on the two ancient pools of Bethesda of the Second Temple period (also known as probatica), and its eastern part (still partly preserved) – lay to the east of the pools (Geva 1993:781). The church commemorated the healing of the paralytic man next to the Bethesda pools by Jesus (Jn. 5:1-9), and 'the church of the paralytic' is mentioned around the year 451 in the journey of Peter the Iberian, on his way from the church of Pilates (the *praetorium*) to Gethsemani (Wilkinson 2002: 100, Extract 2). However, later traditions associated the pool of Bethesda with the birthplace of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Finegan 1992:229). Theodosius (ca. 530) mentions : "Beside the Sheep-Pool is the church of my Lady Mary" (Wilkinson 2002: 109 (8b), and the Anonymus pilgrim of Piacenza (570) locates the church too: "Returning up to the city we came to a pool which has five porticoes, and to one of them is attached the basilica of Saint Mary, in which many miracles take place" (Wilkinson 2002: 142 (27). The connection between the Sheep Pool and Virgin Mary is explained in the writings of Eutychius of Alexandria (in the early 10<sup>th</sup> C), that the church bears witness to the birth of Mary, the mother of Christ, there ( Finegan 1992:230).



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Fig. 4

3. The Kathisma Church (Fig. 5)

The church is said to have been built in c. 456 by the widow Ikalea and dedicated to Mary Theotokos. The Anonymus pilgrim of Piacenza (570) visited the church and wrote: "... on the way to Bethlehem, at the third milestone from Jerusalem... there I saw standing water which came from the rock.... People say that Saint Mary became thirsty on the flight into Egypt... Nowadays there is also a church building here" (Wilkinson 2002: 142 (28)). The church that was uncovered in archaeological excavations is an octagonal structure (41 X 38 m). The plan consists of three concentric octagons and a main apse oriented to the east. The original phase of construction is dated to the mid fifth century (Avner 2005:1831).

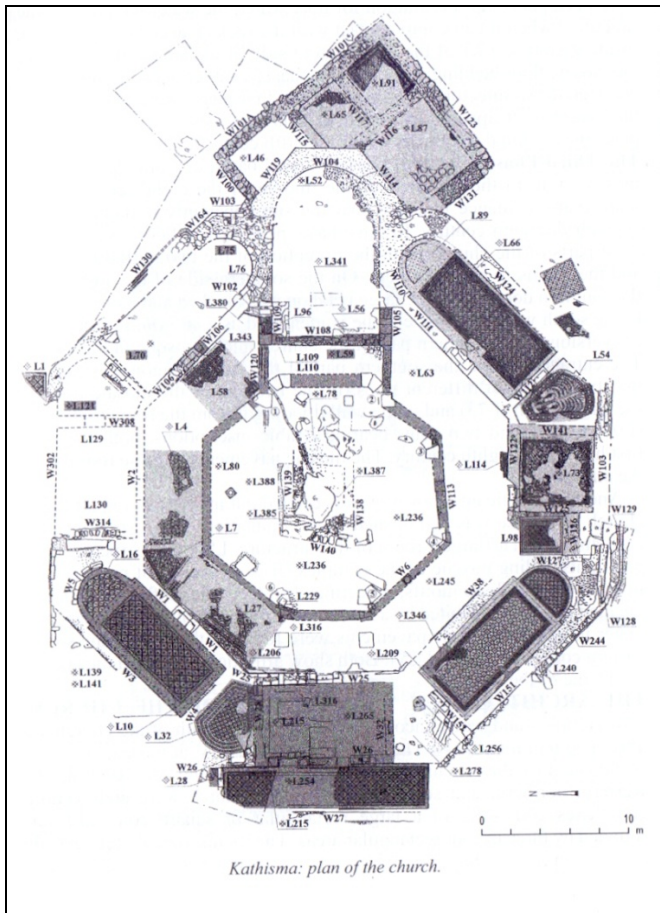


Fig. 5

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4. The Nea Church : the New church to Mary-Mother of God.

The Nea church was built by Justinian and dedicated in 543. Cyril of Scythopolis accounts that the construction of the church begun in the late fifth or early sixth century under Elias, the Patriarch of Jerusalem (Cyril Scyth. *Vita Sabae* 72-73); and Procopius reports that "in Jerusalem he [Justinian] dedicated to the Mother of God a shrine with which no other can be compared." (Procopius, *De Aedificiis* V.6-9). The remains of the church were unearthed in the southern part of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem (Avigad 1980:229-246, Avigad 1993, [fig. 6](#)). The church of a basilical plan was entered from the *cardo maximus* of the Byzantine city. Its estimated measurements were 100 m long (according to Avigad), or c 75 m long, having an atrium and a narthex in its front (Gutfeld 2012: 222-245) by 52 m wide. The roof was probably supported on 4 rows of columns, according to Avigad's suggestion (Geva 1993:777), or on two rows, according to Gutfeld . On the slope, to the south of the church – a huge underground vaulted structure, divided into six parts and roofed by series of vaults was unearthed. A Greek inscription in a molded, red-painted plaster relief inside a *tabula ansata* mentions the builder – Emperor Justinian, and the year of its dedication. The Nea church was part of a big complex of buildings, that aside from the church, included also a hospital, a hostel, a monastery and a library. It is the first Theotokos church that was built to commemorate the name of Mary, mother of the Lord, not an event of any kind. It was located in the center of the city, along the route of the *cardo maximus*, that was extended to the south concurrently with the construction of the church (Avigad 1980:212-229, Gutfeld 2012:9-10, 97-100).

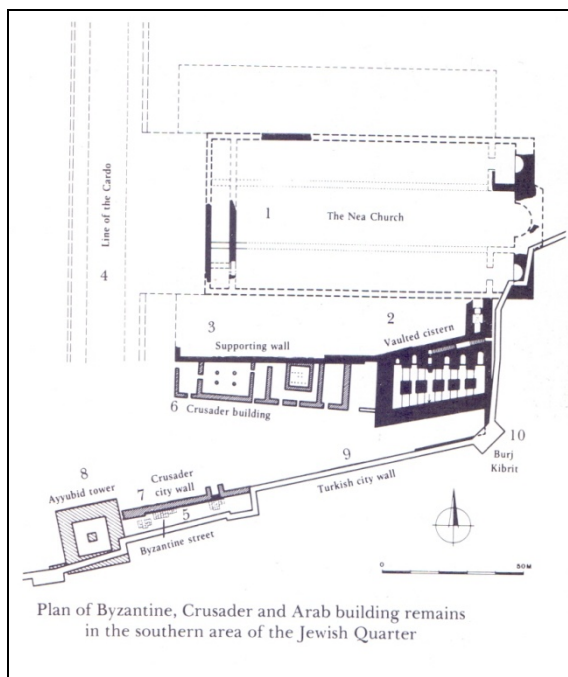


Fig. 6A

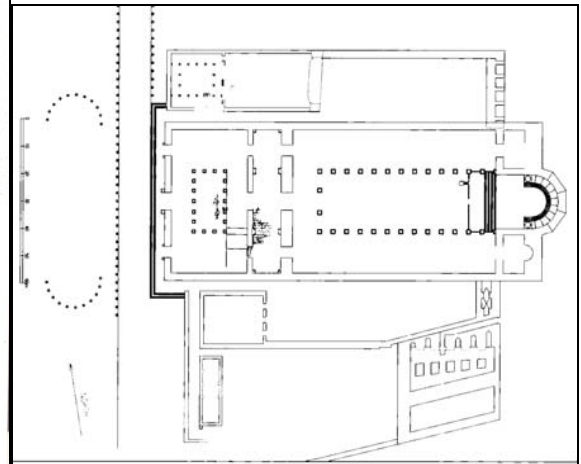


Fig. 6B



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#### 5. Church of Holy Zion (fig. 7)

The church of Holy Zion (Hagia Sion), also known as "Mother of all churches" was built in the fourth century on the traditional site of the Last Supper (Mt. 26:17-29), on the summit of Mount Zion. Tradition identified it also as the place where the apostles of Jesus had gathered (Acts 2:1-4). Some remains of the church have been unearthed, and reconstructions for its basilical plan – proposed (Geva 1993:778). The church was one of the biggest churches in Jerusalem, as can be seen in the Madaba mosaic. A recent excavation in David's Tomb, which forms part of the Byzantine complex, verified its fourth century date (Reem 2013:239).

The tradition of Maria's dormitio (death) in Mount Zion seems to be a later addition. It appears for the first time in a plan of the church within the writings of Arculf, in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, saying '*hic sancta Maria obit* ', 'here Saint Mary died' (Wilkinson 2002:379 , pl. 3, d, fig. 8) .

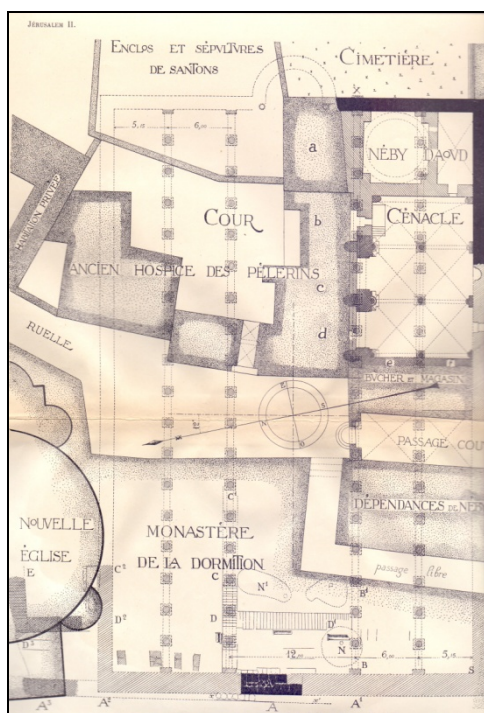


Fig. 7

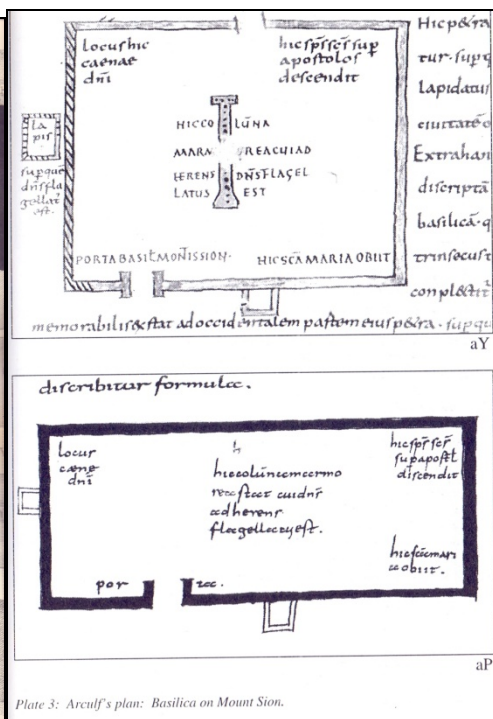


Fig. 8

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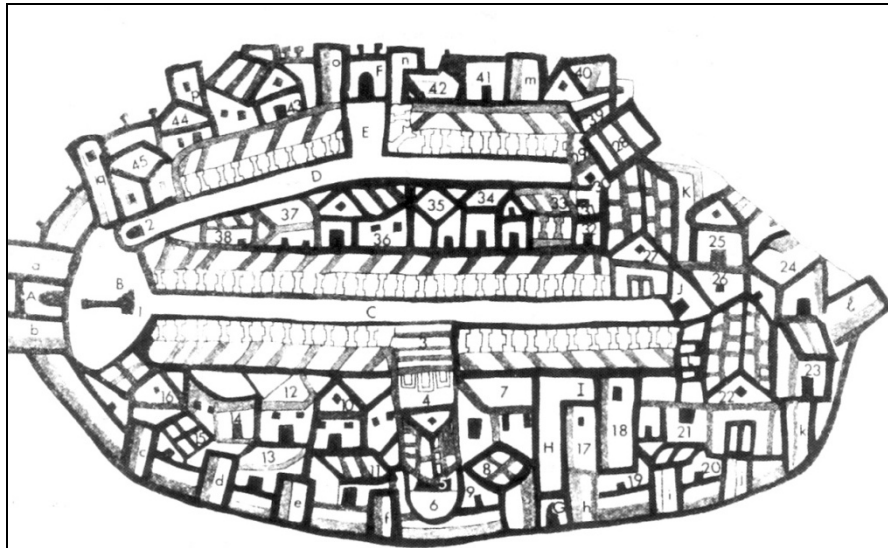
### The urban layout of Jerusalem in the Early Byzantine period and the Madaba map

The depiction of Jerusalem in the Madaba mosaic map of the sixth century (Fig 2), portrays Jerusalem as an oval shaped city, surrounded by a wide circumference wall. The wall incorporates twenty one towers and three arched gates – in the northern, eastern and western sides. The city is dominated by colonnaded thoroughfares and straight-lined streets that are connected to the city gates. Inside the northern gate – a public square is presented, with a monumental column at its center. Two colonnaded street, identified as the eastern and the western cardines emerge from this square. Another colonnade street (the northern decumanus) leads towards the eastern gate and a fourth street (southern decumanus) leads to the Western city gate. Of the several buildings that are presented within the walls, many are characterized by the gabled roof with red roof-tiles, typical of basilicas, and are identified as churches and monasteries, while others have a yellow or a gray roof – and are usually identified as related to the civic: palaces or public buildings (Avi-Yonah 1954:54, Tsafir 1999:160).

The map clearly reflects the division of the city of Jerusalem into two different parts: the northern part, in the area of the Old City of Jerusalem at present, which follows the outline of Roman Aelia Capitolina, and is characterized by the orthogonal layout of the streets; and the southern part of the city, in the areas of Mt. Zion and the city of David today, where a loose plan was applied, with a touch of the "comfortable disorder" so typical of Byzantine architecture and town planning (Tsafir 1999:162). In both parts there are several churches, clarifying the method of the city's Christianization, that is, the insertion of churches into the existing architectural framework anywhere. Both parts of the city – the northern area of Roman Aelia Capitolina, and the southern area of the Christian Zion, are united within the wide circumference wall.

Several studies examined the Madaba mosaic, and it is commonly accepted that the map reflects the layout of Byzantine Jerusalem at its climax, probably in the second half of the sixth century (Tsafir 1999:162). Despite its schematic nature, and the inability of the artist to present the whole area of the city in detail – it is widely accepted that the general layout of the city, as well as the relative location of the important structures, especially the churches, are quite reliable. It is thus possible to offer identification of several buildings, that are seen in the mosaic (Fig 9, Avi-Yonah 1954, Tsafir 1999, Geva 1993 and more). Referring the churches where Saint Mary was

worshiped: Church of the Probatika is presented to the north of the eastern city gate (Fig. 9:43), and The Nea church – is found along the western *cardo* (Fig. 9:27). The church of Saint Mary's Tomb, as well as the Kathisma are located outside the city's limits, and are not presented.



Jerusalem in the Madaba Map, following Gisler copy (1912) and new photographs (Tsafrir 1975:578).

A. The northern gate (*Porta Neapolitana*; *Porta sancti Stephani*, today Damascus Gate; B. The Column square; C. The main colonnaded street (*cardo maximus*), today aligned with Olive Press Street, continued by the Jewish Quarter Street and *Habad* Street; D. The secondary colonnaded street, today Valley Street; E. The street leading to the eastern gate, today Via Dolorosa Street; F. The eastern gate, on the site of today Lions Gate; G. The western gate (*Porta David*) inside today's Jaffa Gate; H. The lateral street (*decumanus*), today in line with David Street and its continuation (not shown on the map) Chain Street; I. The street leading from the *decumanus* to Mount Zion (originally, perhaps, on the line of the *via praetoria* of the Roman legionary camp; J. A gate at the end of the *cardo*, originally in the wall of Aelia before the expansion of the city southwards; K. Section of the wall of Aelia, east of the Nea church; L. Section of the wall of Aelia, west of the Nea with the two gates of the compound of Zion church. a - q. Towers in the wall of Jerusalem. 1. The column within the northern gate; 2. Arch leading from the square to the secondary *cardo*; 3. The facade and propylon of the church of the Holy Sepulcher; 4. The basilica of the Holy Sepulcher (the *martyrium*); 5. The inner courtyard, in front of the Rotunda; 6. The rotunda of the Holy Sepulcher (*Anastasis*); 7. The roof of the baptistery of the Holy Sepulcher?; 9. The baptistery? 10-16. Various buildings north of the Holy Sepulcher (patriarchate, monasteries, hostels?); 17. The "Tower of David?"; 18. The headquarters of the legionary camp (*principia*)? 19 - 21. Buildings (monasteries?); in the area of today's Armenian Quarter; 22. The Holy Zion Church; 23. Building attached to Zion church (today Tomb of David?); 24. Domed building above Siloam Pool, or Church of Siloam?; 25. The church of Siloam or the Church of Peter's Repent? 26. A pit where Jesus was arrested? The Pit of Jeremiah? 27. The Nea Church; 28. Steps leading to Siloam? 29 - 32. Buildings near the gate of the former wall of Aelia, or annexes of the Nea church. 33. The Church of the Holy Wisdom (St. Sophia) also the Praetorium (with two columns to which Jesus was bound); 34-38. Buildings, and churches, between the two main streets; 39. Building east of the secondary *cardo* (today Valley Street); 40. Church south of the Temple Mount; 41. A building with gate south of the temple Mount? 42. Open esplanade, marking the place of the temple Mount? 43. The Church of St. Mary near the Probatika Pool; 44. Building near the Probatika? 45. Building to the east of the northern gate (palace of the governor?).

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Fig. 9

### Discussion

An investigation of the location of the Theotokos adoration sites in Jerusalem in the Early Byzantine period, should be examined in the contexts of the physical growth of the city, and its Christianization, as well as the city's local heritage. The evolvement of Theotokos adoration sites in several other cities, following the Council of Ephesus probably affected Jerusalem by way of competition, too.

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An accepted view relates the spread of worship of Maria Theotokos to the Council of Ephesus (431), which proclaimed Theotokos as a proper title of Mary (La Verdierre 1997:75, Ashkenazi 2009:107). In Jerusalem, however, the church of Mary's Tomb at Gethsemani, was built in the late fourth century. Its date, whether correct, antedated the Council of Ephesus. The local 'Jerusalem tradition' most likely, affected the church builders more than the decision of the church council in this case.

In the case of the *probatica* - The tradition which related the birth of the Virgin to the area of the Bethesda Pools, developed probably later than the erection of the church itself in the early fifth century. In this case, it is possible to suggest that the miracle of the paralytic was the major event that was celebrated at the site, especially if the local tradition of the Bethesda Pools is considered. A Roman Temple, or some sort of an open-air cult, that was dedicated to Askelapius or to Serapis prevailed near the Pools in the Roman period, and the healing character of the water must have been known to the Byzantine builders of the church, that preserved this motive. Another reason that perhaps affected the construction of the church was the location of the Pools, along the decumanus street (that is preserved in the route of the Via Dolorosa today), and inside the eastern city-gate. The Roman decumanus had an important role in Byzantine Jerusalem. It was part of the route of the pilgrims, from Mount of Olives (Gethsemani) to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the center of Jerusalem. The construction of a church at the site is therefore a good example for the Christianization of the city by way of inserting churches into the existing architectural framework. The somewhat later tradition of Mary's birthplace at the site might have been influenced by the implications of the Council of Ephesus.

The case of the Nea church is different. Here, for the first time – a new church that was dedicated to the worship of Maria Theotokos was constructed. It was located in the very center of the city, along its *cardo maximus*, that was extended to the south at the same time, thus connecting the Nea with the church of the Holy Sepulcher. The erection of the big church on the steep slopes of Mount Sion –demanded massive works of preparation, and several suggestions were made referring to the choice of its location. According to one suggestion, Justinian wanted to bring to an end the construction of an earlier, unfinished church (*Vita Sabae* 72-73), but it is hard to accept that the prominent location had no place in Justinian's decision. Gutfeld suggested that the location of the church, on top of Mount Sion, was related to internal Christian conflicts

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associated with the cult of Mary, mother of God, and the building of churches in her name in several places (Gutfeld 2012:487-494). The slopes of Mount Sion, accordingly, were the right place in the eyes of Justinian to build a church in the Theotokos name. Another matter that affected Justinian, according to Gutfeld was connected to the fulfillment of Christian prophecies about the triumph of Christianity over Judaism. Literary analysis of the text of Procopius, indicates many similarities and the possible link between the Nea church and Solomon's Temple. The location of the church high on the Sion mountain overlooking the deserted Temple Mount , the unprecedented size of the church and its complex, the two giant pillars that stood in front of the church, commemorating Yachin and Boaz of the Temple, and more – support this suggestion (Gutfeld 2011: 1176-117 and references there, 2012: 487-494). A very different suggestion was made lately by Ellenblum (2013) who suggested that the location of the Nea, was set due to the will of the emperor to use the water of the Lower Aqueduct that pass nearby.

Interestingly, an examination of the spatial distribution of the Mary-churches implies that the early sites of Mary's worship were placed in the north eastern part of the former city of Aelia Capitolina (the Old City of Jerusalem), and it spread into the south-western hill of Sion (the Nea and Hagia Sion), comparatively late.

### Summary

The development of the adoration of Mary, the mother of the Lord in Jerusalem, started in the late fourth century, prior to the Council of Ephesus, and lasted for centuries. It involved the erection of new churches (as the church of Mary's Tomb, the Kathisma, and the Nea), as well as the adjoining of a Marian tradition to existing churches (as was in the case of the Probatika, and in Holy Sion).

The location of the churches was chosen in general in relation to an 'historic' event, but more important was the location of the site, preferably next to a main street, a city gate, source of water, and the like. The motivation to Christianize the cityscape, and to have power over the urban topography, was thus stronger.

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### **The Veneration of the Theotokos in Byzantium**

*Marian Studies* is nowadays a very developed field of Christian studies in all over the world. It has different aspects such as Marian iconography, Marian hymnography, Marian theology (or Maryology). Special researches concern Marian devotions.

In my report I would like to observe some elements of the Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium, mainly in its capital – Constantinople.

First let me say some words about literature consecrated to this issue. I should notice here that some years ago, in 2011, a very interesting book was published about this subject in the University of Nottingham (UK). Its title is «*The Mother of God in Byzantium: Relics, Icons, Texts*». Another new book appeared in 2010 is written by Bissera V. Pentcheva and titled «*Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium*». In 2009 a Canadian professor John Wortley issued his book «*Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*».

As for Russian scholars I should mention professor Alexey Lidov – a very prominent art historian who is the author and editor of 20 monographs, catalogues and collections of articles, as well as more than 80 articles published in Russian, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Greek and Japanese. His research interests focus primarily on Byzantine iconography and the relations between Christian Orthodox imagery and liturgical theology. For example he edited an international collection of symposium papers *Eastern Christian Relics* (Moscow 2003) and his book *Relics in Byzantium and Medieval Russia: Written Sources* (Moscow 2006). Especially for correct description of byzantine practice of religious veneration he coined a term “hierotopy” according to which the creation of sacred spaces should be considered as a special form of human creativity and a subject of cultural history.

About this byzantine phenomenon Lidov published four international collections of papers: *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow 2006), *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces* (Moscow

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2009), *Hierotopy. Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces* (2009), and *Spatial Icons. Textuality and Performativity* (Moscow 2009). After Lidov's conception the veneration of the Theotokos in Byzantium was a kind of miraculous action connected with a Marian icon and described as "spatial icon".

So we can say that the veneration of the Theotokos in Byzantium was performed as a unity of liturgical, picturesque, symbolical, temporal and spatial interconnections and during such a special service byzantine Christians expressed their love to the Mother of God.

Virgin Mary was given many different epithets: Aeiparthenos, Amolyntos, Dexiokratousa, Diaconissa, Eleousa, Episkepsis, Galaktotrophousa, Glykophilousa, Gorgoepekoos, Hagiosoritissa, Hodegetria, Kardiotissa, Kechariotomene, Kyriotissa, Nikopoios, Pammakaristos, Panton Chara, Paraklesis, Pelagonitissa, Peribleptos, Platytera, Psychosostria, Zoodokos Pege, and others.

Many churches were dedicated to the Virgin and several festival days were celebrated in her honor in Constantinople. For instance, the feast of the Annunciation on 25 March was instituted in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The feast of the Dormition on 15 August was established by emperor Maurice (582-602) [ODB (1991), P.2174].

A prominent Russian scholar N.P.Kondakov lists **89 names of Marian churches in Constantinople**. But a French researcher R.Janin says that in Constantinople and in its suburbs historically existed more than 120 ecclesiastical buildings devoted to the Theotokos [*Janin* (1953), P.156]. In his book *La Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* (1953) Janin mentions and describes **131 Marian churches**.

We can find a lot of information about Marian churches in a very interesting book written by Alexander van Millingen in the beginning of the XX century (*van Millingen, A., Byzantine Churches in Constantinople, London* (1912)).

For example, Alexander van Millingen names one of the oldest churches in Constantinople. It is the **church of the Mary Diaconissa** which is described by Theophanes, the earliest writer to mention the church of the Diaconissa, who ascribes its foundation to the Patriarch Kyriakos (593-605) in the fourth year of his patriarchate, during the reign of the Emperor Maurice.

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The other famous Marian church overlooking the Golden Horn from the heights of the Fifth Hill, was the **church of the Theotokos Pammakaristos** (the All Blessed), attached to the monastery known by that name. According to a manuscript in the library of the Greek theological college on the island of Halki (one of the small group of islands known as the Princes' Islands in the Sea of Marmora), an inscription in the bema of the church ascribed the foundation of the building to John Comnenus (1118-1143) and his wife Anna.

Also van Millingen mentions the old Byzantine church in the valley of the Lycus, to the south of the mosque of Sultan Mehemed, and he believes that it should be identified as the **church of the Theotokos of Lips** because there the annual state visit of the emperor to that shrine took place on the festival of the Nativity of the Virgin. This church of the Theotokos of Lips was also named as church of the St. Mary Panachrantos. It is known that after the Fourth Crusade (1204) during the Latin Empire in Byzantium in 1245 permission was granted for the transference of the relics of St. Philip the Apostle from the church of the Panachrantos to Western Europe. The document authorising that act was signed by the dean of the church and by the treasurer of St. Sophia.

The Lips monastery contained also the tomb of the Empress Irene, first wife of Andronicus III, and the tomb of the Russian Princess Anna who married John VII Palaeologus while crown prince, but died before she could ascend the throne, a victim of the great plague which raged in Constantinople in 1417.

Alexander van Millingen told a very interesting story about a byzantine church named the **church of St. Mary of the Mongols**:

«The church of S. Mary of the Mongols which stands on the heights above the quarter of Phanar, a short distance to the west of the Greek Communal School, was founded in the thirteenth century by Maria Palaeologina, a natural daughter of the Emperor Michael Palaeologus (1261-1282). As the church has been in Greek hands ever since its foundation its identity cannot be disputed. The epithet given to the Theotokos in association with this sanctuary alludes to the fact that Maria Palaeologina married a Khan of the Mongols, and bore the title of Despoina of the Mongols. The marriage was prompted by no romantic sentiment, but formed part of the policy by which her father hoped to secure the goodwill of the world for the newly restored Empire of Constantinople. While endeavoring to disarm the hostility of Western Europe

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by promoting the union of the Latin and Greek Churches, he sought to conciliate the people nearer his dominion by matrimonial alliances with their rulers. It was in this way that he courted, with greater or less success, the friendship of Serbia, Bulgaria, the Duchy of Thebes, and the Empire of Trebizond. And by the same method he tried to win the friendship of the formidable Mongols settled in Russia and Persia. Accordingly he bestowed the hand of one natural daughter, Euphrosyne, upon Nogaya, who had established a Mongolian principality near the Black Sea, while the hand of Maria was intended for Holagu, famous in history as the destroyer in 1258 of the caliphate of Baghdad. Maria left Constantinople for her future home in 1265 with a great retinue, conducted by Theodosius de Villehardouin, abbot of the monastery of the Pantokrator, who was styled the "Prince", because related to the princes of Achaia and the Peloponnesus. A rich trousseau accompanied the bride-elect, and a tent of silk for a chapel, furnished with icons of gold affixed to crosses, and with costly vessels for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. When the mission reached Caesarea news came that Holagu was dead, but since reasons of state inspired the proposed marriage, the bridal party continued its journey to the Mongolian court, and there in due time Maria was wedded to Abaga, the son and successor of Holagu, after the bridegroom had received, it is said, Christian baptism.

In 1281 Abaga was poisoned by his brother Achmed, and Maria deemed it prudent, and doubtless welcome, after an absence of sixteen years, to return to Constantinople. She appears again in history during the reign of her brother Andronicus II Palaeologus, when for the second time she was offered as a bride to the Mongolian prince, Charbanda, who then ruled in Persia, the object of this new matrimonial alliance being to obtain the aid of the Mongols against the Turks, who under Othman had become a dangerous foe and were threatening Nicaea. With this purpose in view Maria proceeded to that city, both to encourage the defense of an important strategic position and to press forward the negotiations with Charbanda. The Despoina of the Mongols, however, did not comprehend the character of the enemy with whom she had to deal. Her contemptuous demeanor towards Othman, and her threats to bring the Mongols against him, only roused the spirit of the Turkish chieftain, and before the Greeks could derive any advantage from the 30,000 Mongolian troops sent to their aid, Othman stormed the fortress of Tricocca, an outpost of Nicaea, and made it the base of his subsequent operations.

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The church was built for the use of a convent which the Despoina of the Mongols, like many other ladies in Byzantine times, erected as a haven of refuge for souls who had dedicated their lives to the service of God. She also endowed it with property in the immediate neighborhood, as well as with other lands both within and beyond the city, and while Maria lived the nuns had no reason for complaint. But after her death the property of the House passed into the hands of Isaac Palaeologus Asanes, the husband of a certain Theodora, whom Maria had treated as a daughter, and to whom she bequeathed a share in the convent's revenues. He, as soon as Theodora died, appropriated the property for the benefit of his family, with the result that the sisterhood fell into debt and was threatened with extinction. In their distress the nuns appealed to Andronicus III Palaeologus for protection, and by the decision of the patriarchal court, to which the case was referred as the proper tribunal in such disputes, the convent in 1351 regained its rights.

As already intimated, to this church belongs the interest of having always preserved its original character as a sanctuary of the Greek Orthodox Communion. This distinction it owes to the fact that the church was given to Christoboulos, the Greek architect of the mosque of Sultan Mehemed, as his private property, to mark the conqueror's satisfaction with the builder's work. The grant was confirmed by Bajazet II in recognition of the services of the nephew of Christoboulos in the construction of the mosque which bears that Sultan's name. Twice, indeed, attempts were subsequently made to deprive the Greek community of the church, once under Selim I and again under Achmed III» [van Millingen (1912), P.272-277].

Being started in Jerusalem the veneration of the Theotokos was spread later throughout the Christian World and after the foundation of Constantinople some relics linked with the terrestrial life and heavenly help of the Mother of God appeared there – in the “New Jerusalem” and “New Rome”, and the City dedicated to Theotokos. She was believed to be the Protectress of Constantinople, and, hence, the Empire itself. She was also contrasted to the pagan Athena as the truly powerful supporter of Byzantium.

As I told many churches and chapels in Constantinople were dedicated in the name of the Mother of God. Of these three were preeminent in age, size, and distinction: **the shrines of**

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*Chalcoprateia, Blachernae, and Hodegetria*. Legend associates all three of these with the name of the Blessed Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II, wife of Marcian, and co-ruler with both.

Three principal *Marian relics* at Constantinople were located there. The **girdle** was particularly associated with the Chalcoprateia church, the **shawl** (*maphorion*) with Blachernae church and a **miraculous icon** with Hodegetria church.

So, we know about very famous tradition of veneration from the time of the emperor John Comnenos (1118–1143). He was especially attached to the icon *Hodegetria*. He adopted it as his personal Palladium, keeping it in the palace and taking reproductions of it into battle with him. There was a ceremony every Friday in honour of this icon at the Pantokrator monastery which he founded. A procession of monks from that monastery and of clergy from the Eleousa together with the faithful would go to the palace to receive the icon. This they would then conduct with suitable chants to the Pantokrator where it was set up in the *heroon*, a funerary chapel dedicated to Saint Michael. An all-night vigil was terminated with the Eucharist, followed by a distribution of bread, wine, and even money, after which the icon was returned to the palace. A similar ceremony took place on other occasions too.

Several different icons of the Virgin are known to have existed in the monastery of Blachernai that is why they were named icons of **Virgin Blachernitissa**. There was a miraculous image of the Virgin and Child there in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (See: vita of Si. Stephen the Younger, PG 100:1076B, 1080AB). From the 10<sup>th</sup> century we have an evidence about another icon of this type: in the imperial bath area near the chapel of St. Photeinos was a marble image of the Virgin from whose outstretched hands flowed the *hagiasma*, or holy water (See: *De ceremoniis*:555.8-10).

One of these Blachernai icons, was kept in the right side of the monastery church covered by a veil that miraculously lifted without human aid every Friday evening. This “*habitual miracle*” is not mentioned before the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century or after 1204.

The icon of the Theotokos Blacherniotissa was very popular among byzantine people; it was taken with emperors in their military campaigns and it was even figured in many byzantine seals of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the most famous Marian churches of Constantinople, the **Zoodochos Pege**, is located outside the land walls to the west of the city, opposite the Silivri gate, at the site now



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known as Balikli. This ancient sanctuary of the Virgin was planted with trees and had a source of water (*pege*) that came to be regarded as miraculous.

There are two very old versions concerning the origins of this ancient shrine.

According to the first, related by the historian Procopius, emperor Justinian (527-565) while hunting in a beautiful part of the land with many trees and much water, had the vision of a small chapel with a large crowd of people and a priest in front of a spring. It is the spring of miracles, he was told, whereupon the Emperor built a monastery at the site. Actually, according to Cedrenus records we know the monastery was built in 560.

The second version, narrated by the chronicler Nicephoros Callistos, says that the Emperor Leo I (457-474), when still a simple soldier, met at the golden Gate a blind man who asked him for a drink of water. As he looked around for water, a voice directed him to the spring and enjoined him to build a church on the site when he would become emperor. Callistos describes this great church in detail.

This description we can find in *Patrologia Graeca* («Description of the holy church of the Pege erected by Leo», P.G. Migne, vol. 147, P.73-77), but the description agrees more with the church built by Justinian. Moreover, it is historically confirmed that Zenon, Hegumen «of the house of the most holy and glorious Virgin Mary and Mother of God at Pege», participated in the Council of Constantinople, convened by the Patriarch Menas (536-552) in 536. The miracles of the “life-containing source” were in great number. For instance, empress Irene (797-802) was healed of a hemorrhage by drinking from the source and made rich offerings to the church, including a mosaic- representing herself and her son Constantine VI. After the earthquake of 869 Basil I rebuilt the church and decorated it with a cycle of mosaics. Burned by Tsar Symeon of Bulgaria in 924, the church was soon repaired and was regularly visited by the emperor on the feast of the Ascension (See: *De ceremoniis*: 108.13-114.0, 774.19-775,6).

From the year 966 we have the description of an official ceremony on Ascension Day, in the presence of the Emperor Nicephoros II Phocas (963-969) and of the whole court. The procession sailed to the Golden Gate and from there rode to the shrine, while the crowd cheered and offered flowers and crosses. The Patriarch met and embraced the Emperor, and they entered the church together. The Emperor attended the Liturgy from a platform set up in the sanctuary, and the feast ended with the Emperor inviting the Patriarch to an official banquet.

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Nicephoros Callistos writing in the 14th century about the hagiaσμα quotes from various sources a total of 63 miracles, of which 15 in his own time. A number of epigrams express awe, veneration and enthusiasm for the hagiaσμα and the miracles associated with it. Preserved to our day are six by Manuel Philes, another six by the Magister Ignatius, one by John Mauropous and others.

The Marian **icon Zoodochos Pege** is so-titled because “Zoodochos Pege” (i.e. Life-giving Fount) is an epithet of the Holy Virgin and Her representation as Zoodochos Pege is related to the sacred spring. It soon became very popular and this type of icon was spread throughout the Orthodox world, particularly in places where a spring was believed to be hagiaσμα. In the 9th century, Joseph the Hymnographer gave for the first time the title «Zoodochos Pege» to a hymn for the Mother of God.

According to the given examples it is observed a continuity of the veneration of the Theotokos in Byzantium in different iconographical, liturgical, ceremonial aspects in common and personal life of Byzantines connected not only with the theological, Christological issues and historical events but also with the memory about the real link between the Heavens and our terrestrial World. This link is manifested by numerous icons dedicated to our Protectress – Mother of God.

In conclusion we can say that Byzantine tradition of the veneration of the Theotokos had different forms and aspects and it influenced religious practices in the East and in the West. Nowadays its great importance continues mainly to be seen in the Orthodox commonwealth as post-byzantine world.

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**The Holy Theotokos  
in the Piety of Saint Anthimos the Iberian**

The Saint Hieromartyr Anthimos, Metropolitan of the Romanian Country (1708-1716), showed in his sermons and writings, in a manner full of enthusiasm and accuracy, his exceptional piety towards Holy Theotokos. Summing up the Church teaching towards Holy Theotokos and expressing it in his unique and delicate manner, Holy Anthimos is the first preacher in the history of the Romanian Church who offers to the Holy Theotokos some hymns in prose, blending in his spoken or written words, the lyricism of the liturgical chants and the exactitude of the dogmatic “oros” with his personal piety.

First and foremost, we must say that the references to Holy Theotokos are not at all few; on the one hand he insists on the historical presentation of her life (according to the Church Tradition – the liturgical, dogmatic and historical texts he consulted), and on the other showing with amazement and piety the virtues of the Immaculate, mingling the apophatic knowledge with the gratitude and meekness of the believer who receives help and blessing. Literary speaking, the expression Holy Anthimos uses concerning Holy Theotokos are true stylistic masterpieces, their rational architecture shining forth beyond the beauty of words, as some “crowns of praises” enlightened by the divine grace.

In *The Personalities of the Old and New Testament* (manuscript-book dedicated to the Holy Ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu in 1709), Holy Anthimos shows that the Holy Theotokos has a Davidic origin: “From Nathan, the son of David, originated the Blessed Mary, after many generations have passed, as is shown here, on this green line, that goes down until her”<sup>xxvi</sup>. The, the scholarly metropolitan shows us in a nutshell the life of the Holy Theotokos thus: “The Blessed Virgin Mary had 15 years when she received (took) in womb from the Holy Spirit, by means of the Angel Annunciation. She had 3 years when she entered into the Holy of Holies and after 12 years she was announced. And she lived, after the Ascension of Christ 24 years and was raised to heavens when she had 72”<sup>xxvi</sup>. In the same writing, Holy Anthimos makes reference to

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the Sibila's prophesy made to the Roman Emperor Octavian Augustus, concerning the coming of the Immaculate: "Thus, on the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of his kingdom, when Christ was born from the Holy Theotokos, the prophetess Sibilla called Octavian and showed him, in the sun, the Virgin, keeping Christ in her arms. And told him: This is the Virgin that gave birth to the Infant. And the houses fell down at once"<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Also, at the end of the book, Holy Anthimos makes a parallel between the names of the Prophets and Apostles and passage that corresponds to them in the Symbol of Faith: "Isaiah = Look, the Virgin will have in her womb and give birth to A Son, Jacob the Great = Who was conceived from the Holy Spirit, that is have been born of the Virgin Mary"<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In the book, *Ecclesiastical Teaching* (printed in 1710), the Saint Metropolitan Anthimos explains the Symbol of Faith and makes some dogmatic remarks concerning the Incarnation of the Savior Jesus Christ: "Who descended from heaven, for us and for our salvation, and became flesh from the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary. – The third article teaches us to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ descended from Heavens for our salvation, conceiving Himself from the Virgin's womb by the Holy Spirit and was born wholly man, with rational soul and with all the characteristics of the human nature (except sin). But without the Deity changing into human nature, neither the human nature into Deity, but both natures living into union: true God and true man"<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In his *Sermons (Didachia)* (1708-1716), Saint Hieromartyr Anthimos the Iberian makes reference to the Mother of God mentioning her "Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary", even from his first Sermon<sup>xxvi</sup>: *which I said when I was made metropolitan*. Also, in *The Second Sermon for the Holy Great Martyr Dimitrios*, Saint Anthimos mentions "the Most Holy Virgin"<sup>xxvi</sup>.

One of the most beautiful sermons<sup>xxvi</sup> dedicated to the Mother of God is the *Interpretation on The Entry into the Temple of the Most-holy Virgin Mary (Cazania la Vovedenie Bogorodițe)* 21<sup>st</sup> of November, where the scholarly and humable metropolitan shows his amazement and weakness in front of "the glories of the Most Holy Virgin Mary": "What strength can have my vile tongue, in order to worthily praise and glorify the exquisite one, wholly

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adorned before all the created world, as the *Song of Songs* says? Or what power has my spring of one drop, to water a rational garden like this?”<sup>xxvi</sup>. After he makes a presentation of the temple (having three parts) built by the king Solomon, he states (assuming the teaching of the Holy Fathers) that the third part was called the Holy oh Hollies “not only for the fact it comprised the fleeting things of this life, that figured many mysteries of our Church, but also for the fact that the true holy of hollies, that is the Most Holy Virgin, was made worthy to live in it for 12 years, who supernaturally gave birth to the Saint of saints, Messiah, the promised One. And it is proved that this church prefigured the heaven, for she is the true heaven who gave birth to the Sun of righteousness and in her womb has lived as in a third heaven a person of the Holy Trinity, the Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ, the true Hierarch, Who rebuilt the human race and prayed to God the Father for the salvation of Adam and his ignorance”<sup>xxvi</sup>. After that Saint Anthimos makes a small presentation of parents of the Mother of God and shows that they were “without any slyness”<sup>xxvi</sup> and had much “heart warmness, and zealousness”, for God, and for this reason “the blessed Anna, the woman of Joachim, gave birth to a holy chair for God, to the Virgin Mary, for the One Who rests on the angelic chairs, to rest now on her, preparing Himself a rational heaven, He Who strengthen the heavens with his wisdom, Who build the earth on waters, of Whom trembles all the Hell’s depths”<sup>xxvi</sup>. After they received from God this “blessed harvest”, her Holy Parents Joachim and Anna “brought her to the temple with a pomp of virgins, bearing torches, according the prophesy of David, to devote her to God, according to their promise”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Saint Anthimos then calls Mother of God “the true rational door of life, who was seen closed by the prophet Ezekiel, (...) daughter of God, (...), Most Pure, joyous and cheerful, (...) a large room of Jesus, the Most High, Who is the Savior of the world, (...) holy infant, (...), the vestment of the ancient nakedness, the mirror of prophets and the redemption of world”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

And since „she is and is called the cause of all virtues, there is neither possible nor any proper means to venerate and celebrate her. For her honor conquers every tongue and overwhelms every human mind. And again, we ought to, with fear and joy – with fear, because of sin and with joy, for the sake of redemption – to utter in one voice: Angelic praise, rejoice, you that are full of grace, Lord is with you”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

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Mentioning that Jesus Christ, our Savior, came into the world as “the Sun of righteousness Who rose from the Virgin’s womb, Saint Anthimos presents the humbleness and honor of the Mother of God in the second *Word of Teaching on 25<sup>th</sup> of December on the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ*<sup>xxvi</sup>: „Young and shy maiden, who not even of the house she would not came out”, showing in the same time the love for her Son: „And the Holy Virgin was heartily waiting the hour in which she could take God in her arms, and embracing Him, with her bosoms to nurse Him, for this reason living silently and peacefully”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Then Saint Anthimos says that the Incarnation of the Son of God kept untouched the virginity of the Most Pure: „The Word of the Father came out, dressed in body, of the Virgin’s body (...). As the sun’s warmth absorbs on high the haze of ground and thence the dew descends and makes the land to bear fruit and be happy, in the same manner the most pure blood of the Virgin, with the power of the Holy Spirit, without any man’s seed, conceiving Himself, the body of Lord Jesus Chris was made, who, appearing in light, as the One Who is the true Light, amazingly making merry all the human race; and giving birth to Him, she made Him more beautiful, much more than He would have been beatified with many other virtues. For He is the spring of the uncorrupted virtues of her virginity and without any feeling of pain this Holy Infant have shined into the world. (...) For she only brought into the world this beautiful harvest, and for this reason have remained saved, away from painful birth, as well as away from any corruption that could affect her virginity. For He Who came into the world in order to make all people clean and without corruption, wouldn’t have thought fit to do any harm to His Mother”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Pay attention to the way in which Saint Anthimos illustrates the love of the Holy Theotokos to her Son and God: „The Most Wise Virgin, with fear and love, by shedding many tears - that her intense love towards the One born of her caused to came out – she moistened the body of the Most Holy Infant”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In the *Word of Teaching on the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple*, Saint Anthimos the Iberian brings to mind the glory of virginity and of the Holy Virgin: „Today’s celebration brings us as a crown that never withers; all the glory of virginity. (...) Today, the glory of God and of the Holy Virgin we openly gaze”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

With much reverence, Saint Anthimos calls Mother of God „a living coffin (...who) hates nobody, banishes nobody, by nobody is sickened, and does not keep away from bringing the ones useful for redemption and saves many from corruption, for the Lover of humanity rests into

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her. (...) For conquers and overwhelms above all understanding of the human mind the word of mentioning and the virginity of the Holy Virgin. If somebody wouldn't consider properly the glory of God, he'd be tempted to think that nobody is greater than the Holy Virgin, Who, as another rational heaven, keeps in her arms the Maker of heaven and earth (...)»<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In the first *Sermon on the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos*, the humbleness, enthusiasm and reverence of the Romanian-Iberian metropolitan amply unveils itself even from the outset: „Since the learned ones and educated into virtues stand in amazement of her magnitude, what can I say about me, the untaught and far from all virtues, what can I do? For this reason, not of my will, I strive to no longer inquire into the highness of virginity, about which human thoughts can hardly ascend, and nor the depth of her gifts, that cannot be easily seen even by the angelic eyes, but only by means of that naming she received before all ages from the eternal Father, with help of Archangel Gabriel. I, on my part, with much reverence and fear, I will utter that greeting, for her praise and veneration: „Rejoice, the one full of grace, Lord is with you”. For there is no greater and more praised naming than this, nobody of ages did not received such a naming, nor anybody, other than her, shall ever receive such designation; for she found grace before God, like no one else, as was told by the angel»<sup>xxvi</sup>. Saint Anthimos shows that the Mother of God is above all Saints and Angels and her name is the second after Jesus in glory and power, offering us an unique explanation of her name: „The Holy Virgin received the word of the true happiness, that is beyond any understanding, more happier than anyone in honor and glory, overwhelming everyone with her grace and mercy: *Rejoice, you that are full of grace. God is with you*. And not only for the happiness he received is made merry by all people, but for her most honored name that was given, because in names Mariam. For in the same way her Son has a name above all names, as the Blessed Paul says: *And He was given a name that is above all names*, in the same way her name is above all names, after the one of Jesus. And as in the name of Jesus all the knee is bowed, of the heaven ones, of the earthly ones and of those underneath, the same is her, more honored in heaven than the cherubims and more glorified, beyond compare than the seraphims and on earth most venerated and joyous as a empress of the world, by all the faithful of the world and underneath more frightening for the demons than any saint; by Mariam, after my vile thinking, can be understood three things: one, by the fact that is a three-syllable name, that is three associations, can be understood that she has given birth to a face<sup>xxvi</sup> of the



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Holy Trinity, the Son and the Word of God; the second, the fact that every association two letters, by which we understand the two nature of Christ, that is the divine and the human one; the third, that there in this name are in all 6 letters, by which we understand the six great mysteries above nature: that is the Annunciation, Birth, Baptism, Death on the Cross, Resurrection and Ascent to Heaven. Through the Annunciation have been revealed the mystery hidden from ages; through Birth the heaven and earth were reconciled, that is the man with God; by Baptism we dressed ourselves with the vestment of incorruption; by Death we received life; by Resurrection we were given the happiness and by Ascension to heaven, the staying on the right of God the Father”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Using real poetic icons of great expressiveness and sensibility, Saint Anthimos states that although God could make „stars more shining than the ones that shine on the firmament and a moon more able to guide us in the night and a sun more bright and shining than the present one, which can touch with his light all the other lights and heavens, greater and larger in their circumference and birds with sweeter songs and flowers with many smells and taller trees and with rich harvest and winds and firmaments more useful to the earth and unnumbered creatures of many kinds and other worlds, different from the one we live, greater and more wisely made, a dwelling, and edifice that can surpass the Mother of God in worthiness could never make, despite of His almightiness.

For it is not possible for somebody, not only to deem, but even to think a more pious or higher being than the deity, in the same way (one cannot deem one) more overwhelming than the one who gave birth to a God to make man. For she was chosen by God before created world, for her to be His eternal dwelling, as David confesses: She is my rest into the ages of ages and in her I shall live, for I have chosen her”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Saint Anthimos is knitting to the Mother of God the most beautiful crowns of praise, unique in the whole Romanian homiletic creation until now, relieving in a waterfall of metaphors and similes the fullness of divine gifts and virtues of the Most Pure Virgin: „Elected is, truly, like the sun, for it is crowned with all the beams of the divine gifts and shines greater than the other lights of the sky. Elected is, and beautiful as the moon, for with the light of holiness puts out the other stars, and for the great and wonderful brightness of all mysterious star rows she is honored like an empress. Elected is, like the break of day, for she is the one who banished the night and

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all the darkness of sin, and brought into the world the bearing day of life. Elected is, for she is spring that by the running flows of the heavenly tides, waters the Holy Church and all Christian souls. Elected is, for she is cypress which exceeds heavens by its highness, and for the incense of the nature, showed herself far from any corruption. Elected is, for she is lily, for though she gave birth among the brambles of universal misfortunes, but she never loosed the immaculate ornament. Elected is, for she is cloud who did not lure anything of the burden of sin. Elected is, for she is virgin before birth, virgin in birth and virgin afterbirth; she is a depth hardly understood of the virtues and a vivid icon of the heavenly beauties. She is a locked garden from whom it sprung the flower that doesn't wither and the sealed fount, ofwhom it flowed Christ, the spring of life<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In what will follow, Saint Anthimos the Iberian proves his theological scholarship (biblical, patristic and iconographic) by expounding the prophecies of the Old Testament which refer to the Mother of God: „She was seen by Moses in the Mount Sinai as an burning bush that doesn't extinguish. She was seen by Aaron, as a staff in bloom and full of harvest. She was seen by Jacob, as a ladder, strengthened as far as the heaven and the angels of God climbed and descended towards her. She was seen by Ezekiel as a locked door, through whom nobody has passed. She was seen by Gedeon as a wool and Habakkuk shady grove, Daniel as a mountain and Solomon as a bed<sup>xxvi</sup>. Saint Anthimos uses for the Mother of God also some appellatives: „The one who gave birth to the One impossible to encompass by the any creature, (...) she who climbs from the desert, that is of the ground, to heaven, (...), she who appears like the dawn, beautiful as the moon and unique as the sun, (...), the one who ascends from the earth to the heaven, whitened, flourished, in whom blasphemy cannot dwell, (...) the Empress of heaven and earth, who comes to dwell on the right of God, the King, dressed with golden vestments, adorned with drawings, as David says, for she is the one who reconciled heaven and earth and God with men. She is the joy of the righteous and the hope of the sinners. She is the one whom we should sing and praise with love, reverence, pure heart and chants or praise, as she is the Mother of God, and with spiritual joy to celebrate her Dormition<sup>xxvi</sup>.

„She is the joy of the righteous and the hope of the sinners. This is the one that we all should sing and praise with chants of magnification, love, reverence and pure heart, as a Mother of God and with spiritual joy to celebrate her Dormition”. The sermon ends with a wonderful and

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comprising prayer to the „Despoina Theotokos, (...), the Most Praised Virgin”, to protect the Christian nation, the luminous rules and the Romanian high officials „to give them love, unity, progress and help in everything”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In the second *Word of Teaching Concerning our Most Holy Despoina Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary*, Saint Anthimos the Iberian shows even from the beginning that „there nobody on heaven and earth more righteous, more blessed than the Virgin Mary, for she made herself worthy, as a Saint above all Saints, to give birth to the Saint and the true Righteous, the most blessed Jesus”, for only by this mystery of incarnation”, God unveiled to the world „the four natural characteristics: goodness, wisdom, power and rightness”<sup>xxvi</sup>. By his specific feature, humbleness, the metropolitan of the Romanian Country confesses his amazement and weakness of the word for praising the Most Holy Virgin, offering her a true hymn of praise, in which the dogmatic teaching and liturgical enthusiasm are expounded in a lyrical form of great beauty: „And gazing at the depth of the miracles, I remain speechless and wonder, for I cannot find proper, upright words in order to praise this wonderful gift. How can I magnify the spring of the love of men? How shall I preach the multitude of mercies? How would I dare to the Virgin’s greatness to examine the depth of mystery beyond nature? And how shall I recount for you, Virgin, and not only for you gave birth to the Son and the Word of God, a birth beyond nature, but because you become mother and remained virgin. For it is natural for a woman-virgin to be virgin only as long as she will guard her virginity, and cannot become mother if she is virgin, and a woman that gave birth to a child can no longer be virgin. But concerning you, by the will of the One born of you, the order of being has changed, by the will of the Maker of nature and you remained virgin after birth. Oh, paradoxical, glorious thing, and breach of being! Oh, holy womb and sacred vessel! In you truly have been torn the deed of sin. In you God made man, without changing His divinity. For this reason, what voice can I use to magnify your virginity and the birth beyond nature? For on account of you we have been made worthy to gain the great goods. By what flowers of praise could I knit the crown of your virginity, for you are adorned by the heavenly Father with the flowers of all beauties? What worthy gift could I bring to you, for you have crowned the human race with glory and honor? For all thing of this world are not worthy of you. For if I would call you *heaven*, you are much higher, for you gave birth to the Maker of heaven. If I would call the *resemblance* of God, gifted and worthy you are. If I would call you

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*Lady of Angels*, in all you are proved to be such, and no matter what words I would use to name you, would not be enough to the praise of your magnificence<sup>xxvi</sup>.

While ending up his sermon doxologically, Saint Anthimos shows that "the blessed and joyful humbleness of the Virgin (...) was one of the reasons why the One Who humbled till death, of Whom the heaven gets frightened and all living around gets humbled, thence He managed to raise the man that is naturally meek, for him to gain the heavenly and blessed places", asking then the intercession of the Mother of God for all Christians: "And since you, blessed Virgin, as you said how Lord seek for your humbleness and raised from the earth to the heaven, in order to reign together with him, seek for us, the vile, your servants, with meekness and comfort the dreadful Judge, your Son, by means of your warm prayers, to save us from the troubles and needs that rounded us up. And as with the divine power in a blinking have gathered the Apostles from all over the world to accompany your holy body for burial with chants and praises, in the same manner our mind, scattered into the world vanities and to enlighten it, to eternally glorify and praise Him. And to you, as to a true Theotokos, to piously sing the angelic chant: Rejoice, you that are gifted with grace, Lord is with you"<sup>xxvi</sup>.

In his last book<sup>xxvi</sup>, *The Wise Christian Ruler. Christian and Political Counsels of the Metropolitan Anthimos the Iberian to the Ruler Ioan Ștefan Cantacuzino*(1715), Saint Anthimos the Iberian expresses his piety to the Mother of God through the prayers<sup>xxvi</sup> that he recommends to the ruler, for him to read them every day of the week. From their text we can also observe the humbleness of the old metropolitan, his piety and sensibility, as well as his liturgical eloquence seen in the language he used. In what will follow I shall present these exceptional, dense prayers full of philokalic and dogmatic teachings in complete form:

„Men-loving Despoina, Mother of the men-loving God, Holy Theotokos, hearken to me and hear my word from your highness of your glory! I have sinned, Most Holy, I have sinned and know my wrongdoings and my sin is forever before me. Seek out, the Most Holy, for the prayer and confession of servant and give me a spring of tars, from my crushed spirit, cleanse me, untie me, wash the mud of my sins; inspire my hearth with the sacred fear towards your Son and God. Most bright cloud of the rational Sun, radiate with your noetic light in my darkened and disordered mind, please drive away the dense mist of my treacherous reflections, for in the

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silence and gentleness of your glowing light, to bring to My Builder and Maker sacrifice of praise and confession, glorifying you with content, that pray for the sinners, and glorifying Christ, the One born of you and our God, into the ages of ages. Amen<sup>”xxvi</sup>.

„My Lady, Theotokos, do not abandon me, your worthless and sinner servant, so as not to be lost for my vile things, but, for your mercy, hearken to me and save me from these trials, for me also to magnify you as my protectress, and the eternal glory of our nation, being saved by mercy, always and to the ages of ages. Amen<sup>”xxvi</sup>.

„Most Holy Despoina, banish from me, the sinner and worthless servant, laziness, oblivion, ignorance, carelessness and all miserable and cunning reflections of my vile heart, my defiled soul and my darkened mind; and extinguish the blaze of my passions, have mercy on me and be helpful, for my body and soul are weak. Save me from my cunning wills that besiege me and of my memories of daylight and night and of my evil deeds. For you are most blessed, more than any nation, and you most honorable name is glorified into the ages of ages. Amen<sup>”xxvi</sup>.

„My hope, Lady Theotokos, you know my deeds and reflections and the weakness of my nature; to you I put before my soul defiled with many sins. You, my counselor, see the filth of my worthless soul. But you give me healing, laying on me a drop of your love. You Most Blessed, hearken to me, make your Son and God benevolent for me, the One Who shall put forward before angels and men my vile deeds and reflections. May the Lover of men receive you always as a Mother, in order to mediate for all sinful and hopeless soul, as you are the intercession and salvation of the sinners! Have mercy on me, who I am deepened in the abyss of sin, who dare to your mercy and men-loving protection, who I bring a whisper from my crushed heart. Do not cease, my Lady, to mediate for me, the humble and worthless, for with your help to make myself worthy of the forgiveness of my numerous and heavy sins. For you are the hope of the desperate, the help of needy, the savior of those who run to you, for you are praised for ever by all creatures. Amen<sup>”xxvi</sup>.

As a conclusion, the piety of Saint Anthimos the Iberian toward the Holy Mother of God is present in his writings and sermons, thus being the mirror of his great gratitude that the scholarly metropolitan expressed to the Most Bless Theotokos, his benefactor and helper. This

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devout attitude, rational and loving in the same time, is a model for every Christian that lives in the Church and is waiting for her blessings and intercessions before God.

**From the History of Veneration of the Mother of God**

**by Schema-Hegumene Thamar (Marjanishvily)**

Schema-hegumene Thamar (Marjanishvily), a zealot of godliness, was a member of both Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches.

Her spiritual journey began in an ancient Georgian Convent at Bodbe, which was rebuilt in 1889. In this convent, she started as a novice, then took the veil under the name of Juvenal, and in 1902 became a hegumene. Several times in Saint Petersburg schema-hegumene Thamar met with St. John of Kronstadt, who influenced her spiritual growth to a great extent. From 1907 the service of hegumene Juvenal went on in Russia. She could not stay off the events of the hardest atheistic period in Russia in the 1<sup>st</sup> third of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Together with her ward nuns of Seraphimo-Znamensky hermitage, built in 1910, she underwent all the difficulties of this period: arrests, interrogations, exiles, infringement of rights.

Schema-hegumene Thamar's veneration of the Mother of God was connected primarily with the name of St. Nino, Equal to the Apostles and the Enlightener of Georgia. Her tomb was there in Bodbe Convent. St. Nino holding the vineyard Cross, which was given to her by the Mother of God, was a patron saint and intercessor for Tamara, who first became hegumene Juvenal, Mother Superior of Bodbe Convent, and then schema-hegumene Thamar, from her early childhood.

The continuation of the spiritual service in Russia and foundation of Seraphimo-Znamensky hermitage by direct order of the Mother of God were clear evidence of Schema-hegumene Thamar's veneration of the Theotokos. That is why Seraphimo-Ponetayevskaya icon of the Mother of God "Sign" (Znamenie) became particularly venerated in the hermitage.

**The Mother of God and the Georgian**

**Traditional Medicine**

The worship of the Holy Mother of God in the life of the Georgian people is presented in various aspects. We will try to show what place the Mother of God occupied in the culture of the Georgian folk medicine. This question has already been the object of study. I mean the article of Lia Tsereteli - "Annunciation and its Iconographic Imagery in Charms," in which significant conclusion is made, viz. it is clearly shown how the ecclesiastic tradition becomes a folk tradition and how it is reflected in folklore (Tsereteli L. 2010, 186- 191).

The Mother of God in Georgia in the first place was considered to be the protector and helper of women and it is so now as well. In all parts of Georgia women went to the churches of the Mother of God when they had problems and asked the Holy Virgin for help. They asked Her to help them and their families, to protect them from diseases, etc. It was the pregnant women who asked Her to save them, childless women entreated Her to give them children, and mothers who had no more milk asked to "return" it to them. Various rites were performed, of these we will discuss several. If their wishes were fulfilled they expressed their gratitude to the Mother of God, lighted candles in the church and took donation there. The narrators said that the Holy Virgin almost always fulfilled their wished, but if this wish was not fulfilled, the one who asked for it was to look for the reason in herself.

The entreating women mainly promised the Mother of God to spend a sleepless night, they would walk round the church three times sometimes barefooted, they lighted candles and prayed with the whole of their hearts, donated something, asked the Holy Virgin for help, and returned home full of hope. "Barefooted she would mostly go to the church of Vardzia, the church of the Holy Virgin and would walk round it, would sacrifice the animal, specially prepared for this church, sometimes she would cut her hair



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and would leave it together with her clothes in the church, and would implore the Lord to listen to her entreaties and give her a child “(Chirgadze N. 2010; 39- 40). In spite of many endeavours the bloody sacrifice was not eradicated in Georgia, though very often it was substituted by setting the animal or bird to be sacrificed free in the yard of the church. Now I will touch upon the tradition of sacrificing one’s hair. The idea of the hair having the partial spirit belongs to the categories of the oldest and universal notions. Such a notion existed in Georgia too (Bardavelidze V. 1949; 141-145). As for the rule of cutting the hair it also was “the sign of obedience, slavery from olden times” (Gabidzashvili Enr. 2011; 26). The Georgian people have preserved such an understanding almost up to the present day. According to V. Bardavelidze “the Khevsurian shaving things, the Mtiuleti –Gudamaqari rite of cutting a child’s hair and the Kartli – Kakheti rite of consecrating a monk are such ecclesiastic rules whose appearance and development must have been conditioned by people’s ideas about the partial spirit of hair very important for people’s lives.” (Bardavelidze V. 1949; 145). If we continue Vera Bardavelidze’s idea, and only the initial understanding of rule and pass the time of its originating , we will clearly see that this rule expressed the obedience of this person to this church, the belonging of this person to it... He/she must deny everything secular and dedicate himself/herself to the service to God” (Gabidzashvili Enr. 2011; 26). Thus, this oldest rule acquires a Christian understanding and with a proper form (cutting the hair in the form of a cross) occupies a special place in the rite of consecrating a nun. At the same time sacrificing one’s hair is one of the constituent elements of people’s rite of entreaties and does not imply following any special rules of cutting the hair or sacrificing it. Thus, the rule of cutting the hair for the Vardzia Church of the Mother of God meant being obedient to Her, her slave (the slave of the icon) and it was done by a childless woman and if she was given a child, she became the “slave” of this church. In this case the oldest rule of cutting the hair is fulfilled and the cut hair is sacrificed to the church. In connection with the above –mentioned Korneli Kekelidze’s idea is interesting it was expressed, after the analysis of the rules of hunting: “... The ecclesiastic rule or the prayer of hunting presents Christianizing the rules of hunting, worked out by people. It is generally known that the church gave its

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ecclesiastic form to each important phenomenon of the pagan life. It is natural that he should have acted like that while hunting too. Later the Christian ecclesiastic “rule” affected people’s rules. Christ’s and St. Giorgi’s names enter people’s rules and charms. It is seen in the rite of lighting candles on the horns of the game, sacrificing them to icons and placing them in churches.” (Kekelidze K. 1955; 145). We can discuss a rite confirmed in the mountainous Racha, in this context: “South of the village of Gebi, on the other side of the Rioni on a hill there was once a church of the Georgian style which was destroyed during repairs and instead of it this (tall tower of the Svani type N. M.) was used as a chapel” (Makalatia S., 1930; 71 – 73). Here, “the holiday of the Mother of God was celebrated in the third week of Easter. On that day “childless women asked the Mother of God to give them children, those who did not have sons, asked for them, pregnant women asked for an easy delivery. Those who had promised to do it walked around this tower with the candles lighted on all the fingers, some would walk around this tower with a spindle, and she would put several pieces of thread round this spindle, this procedure is called “putting a belt round it.” Finally this spindle was to be stuck in the wall of the tower and this tower is wholly nailed” (Makalatia S., 1930; 71 – 73). In this too we must have to do with the oldest rite which was performed beside the Christian chapel, the tower, having the function of a Christian church and is spoken about as the chapel, surrounded by a cotton thread, and arousing the association of “the Holy Virgin’s belt” which for a certain period of time was in Georgia and had a power of miraculous treatment of people (Khazaradze N., 2008; 19). And the spindle too whose ancient symbolics (the tree of life) is known must be loaded with the Christian interpretation, let us remember the Holy Virgin with a spindle in Her hand on the Khakhuli icon.

Here we also want to mention that the entreaties of childless women, women in childbirth or those who have no milk to feed their babies and fulfilling the rites of gratitude are not the tradition only of the Christian faith. Ethnographic data show that in ancient times women in the time of hardship mostly addressed the goddess of earth for help, and performed certain rites of entreaties or gratitude. Quite a few of such rites are confirmed in the Georgians’ traditional life. Not to go far the rule of “satisfying

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the earth,” corroborated by Giorgi Chitaya and studied by him will suffice to illustrate it (Chitaya G., 2001; 312. 313) in it the worship of the earth is clearly seen. The rites performed by megaliths, done mostly by childless women and mothers, having no milk are also interesting (Abakelia N., 2010; 83 – 89). It is not our aim to discuss these rites now.

We have tried to present the oldest elements in the rites of entreaties, addressed to the Mother of God that acquired the Christian interpretation. The above -mentioned is another notable example of the idea expressed by Irakli Surguladze: “The world of ideas the product of our ancestor’s mind, imprinted in their heads does not exist any more, but the rule and ritual has remained, i.e. the row of acts which in spite of its conditional significance creates a real picture of the world that has disappeared. While discussing this question one must take into consideration the coefficient of the changes of the components in the conditions of the historical dynamics of the current process. The real objects by their ritual actions or the mythological – religious system expressed by symbolic signs have their own rule of reading, for in this system specific socio – cultural environment is coded. To assess it and to find a proper place for it is the main task of the researcher. The rules, the actions, expressing them, the things included in them are conditional designators, marks which may have a different interpretation at different times (Surguladze Ir., 2003; 284).

Here we would like to touch upon a certain means of treating nursing mothers, confirmed in Kakheti. “In the Gurjaani Monastery of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin, near the northern wall of the Church of All Saints miraculous milk flows which cures nursing mothers” (Gunia Ir., 2005; 46). Concerning the above – mentioned information Zurab Kiknadze’s opinion about the symbols of the column is interesting. The foundation of expressing this opinion is Nikoloz Gulaberidze’s “The Svetitskhoveli Reader and Hymns.” Zurab Kiknadze writes about the chrism, flowing from the column, from the Svetitskhoveli: “The chrism becomes the mystic form of the milk with which the Virgin Mother fed “the Lord Jesus,” with this symbolism Gulasberidze leads Svetitskhoveli as a cathedral into mariological context though it bears the name of the twelve apostles: the cathedral with its breast with the column with the flowing chrism

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makes the believing nation taste the chrism” (Kiknadze Z., 2009; 136). In this case, the milk flowing from the wall of the Church of All Saints seems to have been perceived as the milk of the Holy Virgin which by people’s notion was able to cure nursing mothers miraculously. It is noteworthy that it is the icon of “the nursing Virgin” that protects nursing mothers.

Ekvtime Taqaishvili offers us interesting information concerning the question under study. This information concerns the “Muslim” Georgia: there is “a carved picture of the Mother of God” in the eastern wall of the gate of the Khakhuli Monastery, the aborigine population calls it Mary (Mariam in Georgian). Though Muslim women do not go to the mosque, they go to this statue without embarrassment, raise their hands and ask to give them children: those who have little milk, ask to give them more, those who have a sick person at home, ask to cure him/her, etc, they ask Her to help them in their trouble (Taqaishvili E., 1991; 217, 218). A tradition, confirmed in Tbilisi, is interesting from this point of view. On the day of St. David, on the first Thursday of Ascension childless women of all confessions, among them Muslims, together with other people go up to Mtatsminda (the Holy Mountain). They ask St. David to give them children and drink the water of the spring there., which according to the legend, has the ability to give them the capacity of bearing children. The legend says that the spring was founded by David of Gareja. It must be taken into consideration that in the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Georgian monks of the Iverian monastery on Mount Athos restored a destroyed church here in the name of the Iverian Mother of God [Description... 1895; 13]. It is not excluded that it was this fact that conditioned the above – mentioned function of Mama Daviti. And the ability of the Mother of God to give fertility, to help women in childbirth, to cure their various diseases conditioned that particular adoration among not only the Christian society, but among the Muslims too.

Depending on N. Mar’s diaries, E. Taqaishvili describes another interesting tradition: “There is a custom of going to Ziareti in Muslim Georgia which is equal of our going to the holiday of certain icons. Ziareti is the name of the place for prayers and these are places where there are ruins of churches, or the former place with crosses. Here people from different places come, especially women. They bring handmade wax candles,

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light them and pray. They stay here for a day or two, if they come from far off places, they stay longer and they must have a dream what animal to kill as a sacrifice – a sheep, a goat, a calf, a cow or an ox; and what they see in their dreams they kill. They observe such a custom in the ruins of Porta (former Shatberdi) monastery and in many other places. Mullahs, of course, are against such behavior of people, but they can do nothing... The inhabitants of Khakhuli also have such a Ziareti” (Taqaisvili E., 1991; 220).

According to the conclusion of M. Beridze and R. Gujejiani, “By today’s material the toponym Ziareti and traditional customs, connected with it, are still preserved in all Georgian villages of Tao – Klarjeti. The main feature of the place, considered to be Ziareti is the existence of the ruins of a church and a Christian graveyard” (M. Beridze, Gujejiani R., 2010; 175 – 179). In the places, considered to be Ziareti might have been the churches of the Holy Virgin, but now they are their ruins.

The tradition of going to Ziareti is confirmed in Ajara as well. Here too “Ziareti was a sacred place where believers went and celebrated holidays. People, being ill with different diseases and childless people prayed, asked the God to cure them, to give them children” (Nizharadze Sh., 1971; 199). The custom of spending a night in a sacred place was widely spread in Georgia. Here the rule of the prophecy in a dream is very important. It mainly was performed in “Muslim Georgia” and in Ajara. Among ancient peoples, especially in the antique world the wide – spread custom of prophecy in a dream seems to have been preserved by Mohameddan Georgians which presents an interesting perspective of future research.

On the basis of all above – mentioned it can be said that in Georgia as well as in other Christian countries the Mother of God is considered to be the protector of women, especially of childless, pregnant and those women who have lost milk. We often come across oldest layers in the rituals of entreaties, performed in the churches of the Mother of God that are mostly loaded with Christian ideas. According to the stories, told by narrators the Holy Virgin often fulfilled women’s wishes. Women’s faith must have helped the fulfillment of these wishes. This faith still more deepened as a result of

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prayers and corresponding rituals and inspired hope, relief and quiet of those entreating and this also helped to cure them.

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**Eldar Bubulashvili**  
**(Georgia)**

**Iberia Falling to the lot of the Mother of God**  
**(Historical and Source Study Analysis)**

According to the oldest Georgian written sources and church tradition, supported by foreign document material of a relatively later period, Georgia is a country that fell to the lot of the Mother of God. Interesting information on this matter is contained in Leonti (Leontius) Mroveli's account, as part of *The Chronicles of Kartli*. Two editions of the Synaxarion containing the hagiography of Saint Nino the Enlightener of Georgians also provides very precious information, one of which is dated the eleventh century and the other the fourteenth century. The former edition (dated the eleventh century) has reached us in a relatively abridged version, while the other is comparatively broad. Accordingly, the issue of Georgia, as a country that fell to the lot of the Mother of God, is covered in a more detailed and broader manner in the latter edition.

Various editions of the hagiography of the Venerable Father Ilarion (Hilarion) the Georgian († 875) cover certain aspects of the subject of Georgia, as a country that fell to the lot of the Mother of God. Recent researches prove that the *keimenon* edition of the life of Ilarion (Hilarion) was written in the first half of the tenth century, while the *metaphrase* edition was created at the beginning of the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> In spite of minor differences, both editions recorded one interesting fact that intrigued us.<sup>2</sup> According to the *keimenon* edition, the Mother of God appeared as a guardian and advocate of Ilarion (Hilarion) the Georgian who was sorely persecuted by the Greek clergymen in one of the monasteries on Mount Olympus. She appeared to the Greek abbot in a dream and severely reprimanded him, "Those who do not accept these (the Georgians – E.B.) are mine enemies; these people are entrusted to me by my Son for their unwavering Orthodox Faith, for they have come to believe in the Name of my Son and have been baptized."<sup>3</sup>



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*The Readings Dedicated to the Living Pillar, the Robe of the Lord, and the Catholic Church*, a work by the famous Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Nikoloz (Nicholas) Gulaberidze (1150-1177) discusses at length the subject of the lot of the Mother of God. Although Georgian written sources of the tenth to the fourteenth centuries prove beyond any doubt that Georgia is a country that fell to the lot of the Mother of God, it is also clear that these data must have been based on church traditions and document materials of much earlier times.

Besides Georgian written sources, the fact that Iveria is a country that fell to the lot of the Mother of God is recorded in foreign written document materials as well. Greek and Russian sources are especially important in this regard. Stephen the Athonite is believed to be the author of the former. It has been speculated that the mention of Georgia, as the lot of the Mother of God, in the work of Stephen the Athonite must have been based on the tradition of the Georgian Fathers of the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos.<sup>4</sup> Also, the story must have become known to Russian clergymen via the same route, that is, through the work of Stephen the Athonite. Russian clergymen considered the Greek work by Stephen the Athonite so important that they translated it, titling it *Mental Paradise* (Рай Мысленный); the translation was published in the Valдай Iveron Monastery in 1659.<sup>5</sup> It is true that the publication was initiated by Patriarch Nikon who also supported its spreading in the seventeenth century, yet it is also true that the book was initially written in Greek by Stephen the Athonite. As part of the work by Stephen the Athonite, *Iveria: the Lot of Mary the Mother of God* does not show any traces of Nikon's editing. Researchers also admit that Stephen's "story about *Iveria: the Lot* [of the Mother of God] served as the main source for the work of [Saint] Dmitri of Don. The latter used the abovementioned work by Stephen the Athonite in his *Menaion Reader* that was in turn translated to Georgian by Gaioz the Rector in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Several works have been created about *Mariam (Mary) the Protectress of Iveria* and the icon dedicated to her in Russian literature. "Their majority are connected with *the Iveron* on Mount Athos and Georgia." Among them, we should note the following: *The Story of the Wonderworking Iveron Icon* («Сказание о чудотворной Иверской иконе Богородицы»); *The Story of the Portaitissa Icon that Arrived in the Iveron Lavra* («Сказание о св. Иконе Портиттиской како прииде в обитель Иверскую»); *Stories and Tales about the Iverian (Georgian) Icons (of the Mother of God)* («Сказание и повесть об иконах (богородичных)

Иверской (Грузинской)»; *The Story of the Miracles of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God* («Сказание о чудесах иконы Богородицы Иверския»); *The Story of the Georgian Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God* («Повесть об иконе пресвятыя Богородицы Грузинския»).<sup>7</sup> These examples of Old Russian literature are mainly represented in the form of *readings*. “These *readings* suggest that *Mariam (Mary) the Protectress of Iveria* also protects the Russian people who were persecuted by the Mongol Tatars. The majority of these *stories* in the current form were written down in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, yet their sources are much older.”<sup>8</sup> Researchers believe that “starting from the sixteenth century on, a belief was formed in Russia and Georgia: *Mariam (Mary)* and *her icon* are not the protectors of *her lot – Iveria* only but of *Moscow and the country in the north* as well.”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, this determined the huge popularity that copies of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God gained in Russia; these copies were brought from Georgia and Mount Athos, and many churches and monasteries were dedicated to them. The following can serve as proof to the huge popularity of Mary the Mother of God and Protectress of Iveria and her icons in Georgia and Russia. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Georgian King and poet Archil and his son (Prince), Alexander Batonishvili, who lived in Moscow at the time, as well as Gaioz the Rector and Romanoz (Romanus) Bazlidze a little later, “translated works dedicated to this topic from Russian into Georgian. While initially originating in Georgia, the same topic was subsequently adopted by the Russians.”<sup>10</sup>

Leonti (Leontius) Mroveli’s version of *The Chronicles of Kartli* provides a very laconic and precise story of how Iveria fell to the lot of Mary the Mother of God on the tenth day after the Ascension of the Savior, when the Apostles cast lots to reveal where each of them would preach the teaching of Christ. We would like to add that, according to a certain church tradition, Iveria fell to the lot of the Mother of God three times.<sup>11</sup> According to Leonti (Leontius) Mroveli’s account, the Lord appeared to the Mother of God before her departure for Georgia and said, “O mother, I shall not deprive this people of the Heavenly Bread through thine intercessions. But do thou send Andrew the First Called to the land of thy lot, and let him take thine icon that will appear through touching thy face. And let thine image be their protector unto the ages of ages.”<sup>12</sup> Mary the Mother of God obeyed the command of the Lord. She announced to Andrew the First Called that he was to go “to the land that fell to my lot so that I may be in command of

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their life and be their helper and advocate, and no enemy shall prevail over them.”<sup>13</sup> Before Andrew the First Called departed for Georgia, the Mother of God handed the Icon Not-Made-by-Hands to him and said, “May the blessing and help of the Lord Who was born of me be with thee, wherever thou goest; and I shall be with thee when thou preachest and I shall be a great intercessor of the land of my lot.”<sup>14</sup>

A different version from that of Leonti (Leontius) Mroveli’s *The Chronicles of Kartli* is offered by the second edition of the Synaxarion hagiography of Saint Nino (the fourteenth century). According to this version, after the casting of lots, Mary the Mother of God “went to the land of her lot and took with her Jacob the Bishop and John the Theologian and sisters who administered. And she traveled for some time and reached Joppa, where the Lord appeared to her and said, *Thou shalt not depart from Jerusalem but stay therein as the Queen of All, for thou shalt be in my stead the protector and comforter of those who labor in My Name. And be not saddened for thy lot, o mother most desired, for they are all created by Me and they pray unto thee, and I shall tend to them and not forget them.*”<sup>15</sup> The cited passage reveals why the Lord would not let Mary the Mother of God travel to preach the new Faith in the land of her lot.

As strange as it may sound, among Georgian sources it is the account by Stephen the Athonite that provides the most detailed and different coverage of the issue of Iveria, as the lot of the Mother of God. “After the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, all the disciples obeyed the command and tarried in Jerusalem and gathered on Mount Sinai together with Mary the Mother of the Lord and awaited the promised Comforter. And when they cast lots to see what part of the earth would fall to each of them to preach the Gospel, the Most Holy Virgin turned to them: *I too wish to cast lots with you to learn what part will be allotted to me by God.* As they accepted the word of the Mother of God, they cast lots with fear and reverence, and the land of Iveria fell to her lot, which is Georgia today. The Most Holy One rejoiced over her lot and after receiving the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon them in the form of fire, she wished to depart for the land of Iveria. But the Angel of the Lord said unto her, *Thou shalt not leave Jerusalem. The land of thy desire will be enlightened in the latter days, and thy dominion will be strengthened there. Thou shalt tarry some time, and a different land will await thee, a land where the Lord will lead thee.* Behold, this is why the Most Holy One tarried in Jerusalem for some time,” concluded Stephen the Athonite.<sup>16</sup>

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According to the same Stephen the Athonite, the Mother of God stayed at the house of John the Theologian in Jerusalem and labored with him to strengthen the new Faith. By the will of God, the Mother of God, as Stephen the Athonite related, strengthened the Faith of Christ on Mount Athos and Cyprus, and left this world long afterward.<sup>17</sup>

The account provided by Stephen the Athonite and the abovementioned Georgian written sources explain well why Mary the Mother of God did not receive a blessing to preach Christianity in the country of her lot. The cited document materials contradict a certain opinion that has been spread lately, according to which, the Mother of God did not enter the land of Georgia to preach the new Faith because the time of her Dormition was allegedly nearing, which had been announced to her through the angels. The sources found by us do not allow for such a conclusion.

Besides Georgia, Mary the Mother of God is believed to be the protectress of Mount Athos, Cypress, and other countries. Naturally, these claims do not contradict Georgian church tradition, according to which, Georgia is the lot of Mary the Mother of God and remains under her protection. As the Mother of the Savior, she is the protectress of the whole world. Her protection covers all those countries that steadfastly keep the true Faith of Christ. Based on this, “it is impossible to view the Mother of God as prejudicially inclining toward one or another nation. She is the Mother of God equally for all Christians. That is exactly why the Mother of God did not go to preach Christianity in any particular country. She remained in Jerusalem, the spiritual center of the time, yet... In spite of it all, we are told that Georgia fell to the lot of the Mother of God. Although she never arrived in Georgia in person, the preaching and spreading of Christianity in Georgia was carried out precisely through her inspiration.”<sup>18</sup>

The fact that Georgia fell to the lot of the Mother of God does not bestow any privilege or superiority upon the Orthodox Church of Georgia in comparison with other Churches. Quite the opposite, throughout the centuries, the Georgian people have seen it as a responsibility and tried to justify the protection of Mary the Mother of God through strengthening in the Faith and self-sacrifice. Georgian written sources abound in examples that prove that the protection of Mary the Mother of God has saved the desperate and helpless Georgian people on numerous occasions.

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Because Georgia was allotted to the Mother of God and because of her protection, she holds a special place in the Orthodox Church of Georgia. A multitude of churches and monasteries have been dedicated to her since time immemorial. Icons of the Mother of God Not-Made-By-Hands are also considered the most precious holy relics of the Georgian Church. A huge number of chants dedicated to the Mother of God have been composed in Georgia. The Georgian people turned grape vine, viewed as the tree of life, into a symbol of the Mother of God. Among the oldest Georgian chants dedicated to Mary the Mother of God, we should especially note the chant *Thou Art True Vine* by King Demetre (Demetrius) I (1125-1156).

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1. m. dolaqiZe, ilarion qarTvelis cxovrebis Zveli redaqciebi, Tb., 1974, gv. 77.
2. Zveli qarTuli agiografiuli literaturis Zeglebi, wigni II, Tb., 1967, gv. 20; Sdr. Zveli qarTuli agiografiuli literaturis Zeglebi, wigni III, Tb. 1971, gv. 228.
3. Zveli qarTuli agiografiuli literaturis Zeglebi, wigni II, gv. 20;
4. t. ruxaZe, qarTul-rusuli literaturuli urTierTobis istoriidan, Tb., 1960, gv. 108.
5. Ibid,
6. Ibid, gv. 117.
7. Ibid, gv. 108.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid,.
10. Ibid, gv. 110.
11. o. qvriviSvili, sveticxovlis misteria, Tb., 2002, gv. 179.

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12. qarTlis cxovreba, teqsti dadgenili yvela ZiriTadi xelnaweris mixedviT s. yauxCiSvilis mier, t. I, Tb., 1955, gv. 38.

13. iqve.

14. iqve.

15. Zveli qarTuli agiografiuli literaturis Zeglebi, wigni IV, svinaqsaruli redaqsiebi (XI-XVIII ss.), gamosacemad moamzada da gamokvleva daurTo enriko gabiZaSvilma, Tb., 1968, gv. 131-132.

16. cxovreba yovlad-wmidisa RuTis-mSoblisa da maradis qalwulisa mariamisa, Targmnili rusuliTgan qarTulad mRvdlis Tadeoz kandelakis mier, gamocemuli `saqarTvelos sasuliero maxareblis~ redaqsiasagan, Tb., 1865, gv. 68-69.

17. iqve, gv. 70-71.

18. o. qvriviSvili, the abovementioned work, gv. 180-181.

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### **Chants for the Theotokos on the Belarusian Orthodox Musical Tradition**

**Summary.** In the text of the report is disclosed verbal and musical content canonical liturgical chants and religious songs that reflect the Byzantine tradition of worship of the Mother of God in Belarus. The author analyzes the chants associated with the worship of the Mother of God before the wonderworking icons of the «Girovichskaya», «Minskaya», created in the XVIII-XXth centuries.

**Keywords:** Orthodox chant, a religious song, the image of the Mother of God, tradition of Cyril and Methodius.

The Orthodox traditions of worship of the Virgin on Belarus evidenced by the history of the spread of Christianity (research of E. Zagorulsky, Archbishop Athanasius Martos, A. Melnikov), ancient wonderworking icons and legends about them, liturgical chants and samples of religious household singing culture (research of L. Gustova, L. Kostukova) and author's creativity on canonical texts of the Orthodox Church. *The purpose of this study is to identify the intonation and semantic matching tunes Virgin liturgical chants and folk religious songs entered the Belarusian Orthodox liturgical singing practice.*

The Belarusian Orthodox singing tradition originated in the Polotsk and Turov principalities, that after the formation of Polotsk (992,) and Turovskaya (1005,) dioceses entered the ecumene of the Byzantine Empire in the Kiev Metropolitanate.

Intensive mental acculturation of Byzantine culture to the old Belarusian contributed to the rise of Christian communities and churches; the names of some of them testify about the Church's cult of the Theotokos. This is the Church of the Annunciation in the Lower castle, Vitebsk (second quarter of the XII century) [Zagorulsky, 2014:435], Church of the Theotokos, Turov and monastery of the Theotokos, Polotsk [Melnikov, 1992: 49,32], and Prechistsenskaya Church in Grodno (XII century) [Zagorulsky, 2014:436]. In all ancient Belarusian churches on the walls were the images of the Mother of God, painted in the fresco technique, as evidenced by

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the archaeologist academician E. *Zagorulsky* [Zagorulsky, 2014:445-458], but they have remained only in the Holy Transfiguration Church (XII century), the Polotsk.

The deep veneration of the Mother of God in ancient bielarusan principalities shows Ephesus icon of the Mother of God, sent by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnin and Patriarch Luke Chrizoverg at the request of the nun Evfrosinya in Polotsk mother of God monastery in the middle of XII century. This icon every Tuesday wore a procession through all the churches, Polotsk worship [*Melnikov, 1992:32*]. Another indication of the worship of the Mother of God in the inthe Turov ancient bielarusan Principality is wonderworking icons of the«Kupiatichi» of the Mother of God, manifest in 1182 the named the MonkMartyrAthanasius of Brest, «the great miracles» [*Melnikov, 1992:207*].

The repertoire of the early ancient Belarusian Orthodox liturgical singing practices contained Canon of the Theotokoschants –troparions, kontaktions, dogmations, canons of the liturgical singing cycles, which were formed on the basis of Studijsko-Alekseevsky monastic ustav (1062), as amended of the Kyivshegumen of the monk Theodosy. Content of ancient liturgical practice was the live intonation is the element that was a melodic multi-voice singing read liturgical texts. In the sixteenth century chant hymns took a developed melodic form, as evidenced by entries in the recorded notes collections«Irmoloys».

The ancient Belarusian chants, which could be reflected tradition of worship before the icons of the Mother of God, in the liturgical chant culture have not survived. The reason was the Unia the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, adopted at the Kyivs metropolis in 1596. Declaring de jure commitment Eastern Canon and the tradition of Cyril and Methodius, representatives of the Greek-Catholic clergy de facto<sup>xxvi</sup> contributed to the modification of the Canon of the Orthodox Church services: arbitrarily changed, reduced and complement statutory liturgical texts so-called «devout » songs, indicating that the folklorisation trend liturgical singing culture of the tradition of Cyril and Methodius[*Gustova, 2014:109*].

In accordance with the rulings of the Zamosc Cathedral, competent Bazilians monks wrote the texts of the catechetical religious songs adapted to local language and distributed them among the local population. Such songs sadness in the prayer books after the appropriate prayers. For example, in reissued in 1837 ,uniats the prayer-book «the Bread of the soul», after prayers to the most Holy Theotokos was placed verbal text of the next song, which in verse form contained



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the teaching of the Church's veneration of the Mother of God: «Hail, Queen, Palate lady mother of God,/ o Blessed Mary, Our intercessor.// Please Note The Cherubim,/ Above the Seraphim / Above the clouds of heaven, and the Angels of Thrones. // Marie, Marie,/ Damsel who praise / Blessed wives in / God Mati famed// [*The Bread of the soul*, 1837: 125].

Music lyrics «devout» songs performed conventional tunes, using the model of the musical material, in accordance with regional-parish oral singing traditions. Anonymous religious catechetical songs have gained extraordinary popularity; they were performed in the home, at any meeting of the (Church or secular), as well as all present at the divine service. More than just unwitting Uniates-Belarusians songs dedicated to Mother of God and her miraculous icons (Girovichskaya, Smolenskaya, Lesnyanskaya, Vostrobramskaya and other) [*Belaruskispiritual song : musical compilation*, 1980-1989:11,12,18,82].

Free interpretation of liturgical singing of the Canon of the tradition of Cyril and Methodius led to the fact that the main service of singing collection by the end of XVIII - beginning of the XIX century was the so-called «Bogoglasnick» with «devout songs», [*Gustova*, 2014:11].

Undoubtedly, one of the songs have received in the XVIII century liturgical usage, was the song «Girovichskaya Mother of God» («Жыровіцкая Бора Маці») ( [*Belaruskispiritual song*, 1980-1989:11]. The verbal text of the song conveys a story about the phenomenon in 1470 the wonderworking image of the Girovichskaya of the Mother of God and resonates with the canonical text of the Akathist to the most Holy Theotokos. Poems of eleven verses of the song consistently present the history of the finding of the icon and worship before her the Theotokos (verses 1 - 3, 6), dogmatic justification of icon-veneration (verses 4, 5, 7 – 9), and, in fact, prayer heaven offering (verse 11). Four-line silabic the chorus of the song - «Happiness you, Cherubims/ Sing, Serafims,/ Rejoice, rejoice, O, Mary» – related chorus (charizmaty) of the Akathist.

Standard tune of the song «Girovichskaya Mother of God» (figure 1) contains the intonation tokens, similar coloration lexemes traditional liturgical chant the Augmented litany (figure 2), which existed in Belarus «always», according to the respondents of members of different dioceses and the deaneries of the Belarusian Metropolis. Tune the Augmented litany was first recorded in Polesie («West Belarus») in the 1920s<sup>xxvi</sup> and recorded in the so-called

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«Polesie collection» with the name «national» [*Use of notation of Church singing, 129:178*]; currently performed throughout the Belarusian rural and small urban churches (left choirs).

Uniform intonation tokens traditional Augmented litany and the song «Girovichskaya Mother of God» hypothesis argue about the liturgical the existence of this song uniattemptle in the XVIII – beginning of XIX centuries The song is «Girovichskaya Mother of God» was sung in the Saturday of the Akathist in Great post and on the masses with an Akathistto the Mother of God.

Note that both of these tunes have existence in the modern Belarusian singing culture of the Orthodox tradition (Augmented litany – in liturgical, song «Girovichskaya Mother of God» – in concert singing practice); enforced in the same pace (tempo), in 2-Dolny meter, have identical nature of execution. Preservative musical language became the oral transmission of singing traditions, which ensured the stability of items such as meter, tempo, the performance, features of intonation tokens. Elements of musical language both chants tied generation of believers through these musical symbols.

The songs of theTheotokosremained popular after the liturgical reforms in the Orthodox churches of Belarus after the dissolution of the Union in 1839 On order diocesan committees of the Uniate«Bogoglasnik» passed the necessary revision; were compiled and published new «Bogoglasnik» with popular religious songs, most of which was devoted to the Mother of God. The repertoire saturation stood «Bogoglasnik», published by the Synodal printing house in 1916, which presented the songs dedicated to the many miraculous iconof the Theotokos, with melodic, intonation close normalZnamenny chant.

Melodies some new songs were close to the statutory everyday service music, as a result of these religious songs together in people's minds with the liturgical context and used as a prayer. For example, the melody of the song «Queen of my Preblagaja» («Царице моя Преблагая») (figure 3) correlated with melodic irmosof Sunday Canon of 6th voice «Jako on ground traveled on foot Israel» («Яко посуху пеществова Израиль») of Znamenny chant and everyday tunes of the St. Petersburg edition (ascending and descending melodic waves within the tonic third, the same cadence) (figure 4). This attribution intonation song «Queen of my Preblagaja» with the Ministry intonational context explains the introduction of a private Church service (moleben)<sup>xxvi</sup>.

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After the October revolution in the Soviet Belarus were closed all parishes and monasteries, banned the activities of the survivors of clergy and believers brutally persecuted. At this time songs of «Bogoglasnick» became the main store of wealth of the Orthodox teaching. According to His Beatitude Metropolitan of all Poland Savva, with these simple as early Christian icons, the songs on the Belarusian lands preserved Orthodoxy. The songs were the only source of doctrinal knowledge for Orthodox Christians.

The most common in the years of Soviet power were the songs, dedicated to Mother of God. Verbal and musical texts «Mediatrice diligent» («Заступницеусердная»), «World intercessor, Vsepetaya Mati» («МираЗаступнице, МатиВсепетая»), «Queen of my Preblagaja» («ЦарицедояПреплагаая»), «To Thee, o mother of the Most Holy» («КТебе, оМатерьПресвятая»), «How good is Your temple, o Lady» («КакхорошовТвоемхраме, Владычице»), «Be of good comfort, all sad» ) («Утешьтесь, всепечальные»), «You, my mother, Queen of Heaven» («Ты, моямати, ЦарицеНебесная»), «To Thee, o Queen Merciful» («КТебе, ЦарицаМилосердна») and many others had greater penetration, were based on traditional melodic speed (mainly minor) and incentives for performers and listeners deep prayer with joy, security through the intercession of the virgin. Some of the songs were a source for creation of new samples, for which used the technique варьирования verbal text using stable tunes. For example, The song «O, Vsepetaya Queen» («ОВсепетаяЦарице») became the basis for the song «To the Holy Theotokos of Girovichskaya» («ПресвятойБогородицеЖировицкой») (both recorded in D. Хмелево, Zhabinka district, Brest region).

Tradition of intonation arrangement of the ancient liturgical melodies conversation continued in the works of the Belarusian Regent. An example is the composition «the Troparion of the Minsk icon of the Mother of God» of Regent Protodeacon Peter Leshkevich, which is organically entered in the liturgical repertoire thanks to the connection of intonation everyday liturgical melodies with the tune of the Troparion (figure 5).

Belarusian Holy – wonderworking icon of the Of the Mother of God «Minsk» – written, according to tradition, the Holy Evangelist Luke, is located in Minsk for more than five centuries (from 1500), with a little way here from the ancient Byzantine capital capital of Constantinople, the Greek city of Korsun and the capital of the ancient Russian Metropolitanate of Kiev<sup>xxvi</sup>. The

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Orthodox shrine, which is located in Minsk Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (and its copy – in the Minsk Church of St. Alexander Nevsky) embodies the canonical doctrine about the God-Savior and reveals the theme of Love and Salvation. Although, artistic structure of the icons may not be associated with the verbal text or music chants, such a relationship can be traced to the semantic points and symbolic designations, which are present in the statutory liturgical melodies of the Orthodox Church.

Forms stanza of chants «the Troparion of the Minsk icon of the Mother of God» transformed of P. Leshkevich in the couplet form, which makes him with a lyrical song. However, the dependence of the musical text from verbal leads to the combination of recitative and vocal beginning.

Melodic chants «the Troparion of the Minsk icon of the Mother of God» corresponds with melodic of irmoses most common in the Orthodox Liturgy of the Sunday Canon of the 6th of the voice of the Znamenny chant<sup>xxvi</sup>. Each of the two verses is based on 1-St and 2-nd melodic lines of each of irmoses of the Sunday Canon of 6th tone. P. Leshkevich used a simple compositional techniques in processing the initial musical material: melodic extension, the connection of musical phrases passing sounds and likeness (concluding cadence of each of irmoses of the Canon and the Troparia are identical).

Significant are the simple means of choral polyphonic presentation (doubling in a third the melody and its chordal support, simple harmonic formulas T - D, deviation in parallel tone for holding topics as mapping, uniform motion durations with stops at the end of phrases) that simulate the semantic spiritual space, corresponding to the sacral space of the icon «the Minsk of the Mother of God», and create an atmosphere of prayerful intercession before, revealing a sense of orderliness, harmony, the image of the Heavenly Kingdom.

Uniform intonation tokens of irmoses of the Sunday Canon of 6th tone, songs of prayer «Queen of my Preblagaja» and «the Troparion of the Minsk icon of the Mother of God» indicate the semantic unity of the ancient authorized Znamenny chant and Belarusian tunes of the Belarusian culture.

In the modern Belarusian Orthodox singing culture continue to be cultured folk songs dedicated to the Theotokos, which are performed in pilgrimages to the shrines, in household, as well as in the rural churches in the Liturgy after the «Zaprichastny» verse. Created the chants, for

the Theotokos intended for use in the liturgical Church and concert singing practice. This is, for example, widespread chants of the senior conductor of the Minsk Monastery of st. Elisaveta of nun Juliana (Denisova) [Denisova, 2004]<sup>xxvi</sup>. Tunes of Kondakions and Akathists before the icons of the Mother of God «Assuage my sorrows» («Утоли моя печали»), «Queen of all» («Всецарица»), «Intercession of the Holy Theotokos» («Покров Пресвятой Богородицы») are extremely flexible dynamics, metric manifold. Harmonic of choral style, in which the author writes, enriched by the use of reduced and altered chords, sudden deviations, supporting voices are in all voices, contrasting dynamics. The lack of semantic connection with everyday tunes is not conducive to the realization of these chants in the liturgical practice, which is a characteristic feature of these songs.

Thus, the chants for the Theotokos included in the repertoire of liturgical, household and concert singing practice of Belarusian culture of the Orthodox tradition. Some compositions on canonical texts and household devotional songs organically joined the worship that is due to the proximity of their intonation tokens to intonation context of the statutory everyday songs and their semantic unity.

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**Veneration of the Virgin Mary in the Early Jerusalem Liturgy: The Evidence of the Georgian  
Jerusalem Chantbook**

It is well known that some of the most important witnesses to early Christian devotion to the Theotokos survive in the Old Georgian language, and in fact, some of these sources survive uniquely in this language. In large part thanks to the work of Michel van Esbroeck, many of these invaluable texts are now well known and available to scholars in western Europe and America. From his work on the early Georgian homilies to the early Dormition apocrypha to the *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximus the Confessor, van Esbroeck paved the way for subsequent scholars to recover the precious evidence of early devotion to Mary that but for these Georgian translations would likely have been lost to the ages.<sup>1</sup> Yet in addition to the Georgian hagiographical and apocryphal literature that was the main focus of van Esbroeck's foundational work, it is increasingly clear that the early liturgies of late ancient Jerusalem, which are known primarily through their survival in Old Georgian translations, also have a great deal to offer for scholars interested in the formation of Marian veneration.

For some time now the liturgical calendars of the early Jerusalem church have been known through their translations into Old Georgian and Armenian.<sup>2</sup> Yet while these documents are unequalled for what they reveal about the evolving feasts of the Virgin in late ancient Palestine, their terse accounts of Mary's annual commemorations offer little sense of her celebration in the lived experience of early Christian worship. Thankfully, however, there is another important early liturgical source that can provide such a perspective, the Ancient Chantbook of the Jerusalem church, a work that survives only in Old Georgian where it bears the title *Iadgari*.<sup>3</sup> This remarkable collection of texts reveals for the first time the hymns that were sung in the churches of Jerusalem during the sixth, the fifth, and even the fourth centuries. Not surprisingly, the Theotokos figures prominently in these early Christian hymns, and not only on the occasion of feasts in her honor, but also in the course of regular Sunday worship as observed throughout the course of the year. From this collection of hymns we can see that already by the later fourth century devotion to the Virgin Mary and her unique powers of intercession had become an important feature of regular Christian worship, at least in the church of Jerusalem.

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The basic outlines of Christian worship in the later fourth and early fifth centuries have long been known, thanks largely to the famous pilgrimage account of Egeria, a wealthy woman 2

from late ancient Spain who travelled to the Holy Land and elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean. Egeria stayed in Jerusalem for several years, from 381-4 it would seem, and so her account of the Holy City's ceremonies at this is especially informed and detailed.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time her account is selective, focusing largely on the main feasts, and moreover it is incomplete, breaking off suddenly in the midst of her description due to the loss of a number of pages in the manuscript.<sup>5</sup> The Armenian and Georgian lectionaries are able to fill in many of the gaps in Egeria's account, and they also enable us to chart the development of Jerusalem's calendar and its stationary liturgies into the early Islamic period. But the broad overviews of Jerusalem's liturgies offered by these lectionaries now can be given much greater texture through the hymns that survive in the Georgian Jerusalem Chantbook. Although these hymns have been well known to Georgian scholars for some time now, they are largely unknown to specialists on late ancient Christianity in western Europe and the Americas, with of course the exception of scholars of early Christian liturgy, who have been quick to recognize the unique value of this collection.

We know from Egeria that the singing of hymns was a central element of Christian worship in late ancient Jerusalem, since she refers to singing of hymns and antiphons over one hundred times in her account. It is true that the Armenian lectionary gives some idea of Jerusalem's early Psalmody, and the Georgian lectionary provides incipits for the hymns appointed for its various feasts.<sup>6</sup> Yet the Georgian Chantbook reveals for the first time the words of the songs that once filled Jerusalem's churches, offering an unrivalled perspective on early Christian music and worship. The various layers of this early liturgical collection reveal a rich corpus of sophisticated theological poetry steeped in biblical allusions, such that, as Peter Jeffery observes, "[t]he importance of this material for the history of Christian hymnody and theology...cannot be overstated."<sup>7</sup>

This early Jerusalem hymnal survives in two distinct recensions, one of which, the earliest, survives only in Georgian translation. In its present form this oldest version of the Chantbook dates to sometime around the turn of the seventh century, at which time its various elements were gathered together into a liturgical manual that could be used for numerous occasions throughout the church year.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the early Chantbook contains within it three distinct collections of hymns, and each of these appears to have been individually assembled earlier still. The first and largest collection consists of hymns appointed for the evening office, 3



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the morning office, and the Eucharist for each of the year's major liturgical feasts, according the order of the liturgical calendar.<sup>9</sup> Jeffery persuasively dates this collection to the middle of the sixth century, on the basis of the calendar that organizes this section of the Chantbook, and so he concludes that its hymns thus must date even earlier.<sup>10</sup> A short collection of festal hymns then follows this larger cycle, and it too is organized according to the same liturgical calendar. The purpose of these hymns is not entirely clear, but Jeffery suggests that these are "supplementary troparia" for the major feasts.<sup>11</sup> The Chantbook's third and final section presents the "Hymns of the Resurrection," which are hymns for the weekly Sunday services.<sup>12</sup> Thanks to the seemingly tireless industry of Charles (Athanasie) Renoux, these particular hymns have now been made accessible to a larger scholarly audience in French translation. <sup>13</sup> Moreover, Renoux has persuasively dated most of these hymns to the late fourth or early fifth century, meaning that we now have a sizable corpus of hymns that were regularly used by the early Christians for their Sunday worship. Renoux identifies one of the Chantbook's manuscripts as a particularly faithful witness to the actual liturgical practices of late ancient Jerusalem's churches, and accordingly this manuscript, Sinai Georgian 18, forms the basis for study of liturgical chant and poetry during this period.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most remarkable features of these Sunday hymns is their organization according to an eight-fold tonal structure, known more commonly in the Orthodox tradition as the Oktoechos. According to this liturgical system, which is used primarily during the period from Pentecost to the beginning of Lent, the music for each week rotates in sequence through each of the eight modes. Given the importance of this liturgical practice for much of Christian history, liturgists have understandably focused their attention largely on this aspect of the Sunday hymns. There is little point in repeating such work here, although suffice it to say that the Georgian Chantbook provides the earliest evidence for such practice and seems to link its origins with late ancient Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> Instead, we shall turn our attention to another quality of these hymns that has gone largely unnoticed so far, that is their evidence of significant devotion to the Virgin Mary during the Sunday liturgies already before the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Chantbook's hymns thus offer particularly early evidence of Mary's veneration and prayers for her intercessions, and accordingly these hymns would appear to afford one of the richest and also one of most overlooked sources for exploring the beginnings of Marian piety. 4

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There is some significant diversity among the various manuscripts of the early Jerusalem Chantbook, and one of the most significant differences is the inclusion in several manuscripts of a collection of “Praises of the Holy Theotokos” as a part of the hymns for Sunday worship. These Marian hymns constitute a remarkable corpus in their own right, and it would appear that they represent the earliest surviving collection of hymns devoted specifically to the praise and veneration of the Virgin Mary.<sup>16</sup> In the Chantbook these hymns appear individually at the end of the matins service for each of the eight tones, and their length varies from thirty to one-hundred and fifty lines, averaging about fifty lines. Sinai Georgian 41, the manuscript that best preserves these hymns, has a total of fifty-four strophes in its hymns to the Theotokos, and the other manuscripts also preserve some variant strophes. According to Renoux these hymns most likely were not intended specifically for use in the matins service, but instead he proposes that their position at the end of matins and before the liturgy provided a convenient location for gathering Marian hymns for each of the tones so that they could be easily found.<sup>17</sup>

Altogether these “Praises of the Theotokos” offer a rather sizable collection of Marian hymnography, which seems to have been a part regular Sunday worship in late ancient Jerusalem already by the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The only problem, however, is that these hymns are absent from two of the most important manuscripts. There is certainly no question that these hymns were in use by the sixth century at the latest, since they were superseded by the newer version of the Chantbook at the beginning of the seventh century. Yet Renoux argues persuasively on the basis of their content that they must be even earlier: their theology and imagery of the Theotokos corresponds very closely with other witnesses from the fifth century and finds its closest parallels in Hesychius of Jerusalem and other writers of the same period (that is, the early fifth century).<sup>18</sup> One of the strophes is even cited by Proclus of Constantinople in his famous *First Homily on the Theotokos*, and on the whole it would seem that these hymns belong to the early fifth century.<sup>19</sup>

There is a single strophe, however, that seems to reflect the influence of the Chalcedonian definition, making brief reference to the unity of Christ’s two natures without confusion.<sup>20</sup> On the basis of this lone passage, Renoux suggests the possibility that these hymns may belong to the latter half of the fifth century, at least in part.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the bulk of his arguments seem to favor more strongly a dating to the first half of the fifth century, and so it is tempting to see this isolated passage as a possible later intrusion to this corpus of early hymns to the Virgin. 5

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There is certainly little question that many of these hymns date to the pre-Ephesian period, although unfortunately it is very difficult to be more precise at this point. Yet the absence of those issues that gave rise to Fourth Council, with only this one notable exception, would seem to indicate their composition before the events of this divisive council. Accordingly, we have in the Marian hymns of the early Jerusalem Chantbook a substantial collection of hymns to the Virgin that is seemingly at least as old as the Akathist hymn and is quite possibly even earlier.

The Jerusalem Chantbook has still more to offer scholars of early Marian piety than this important collection of hymns to the Virgin. Indeed, devotion to the Virgin Mary is scattered throughout its hymns for the Sunday services. In addition to these special “Praises of the Theotokos,” the other hymns of the Chantbook regularly feature acclamations of the Virgin and invocations of her intercessory powers.<sup>22</sup> This is true for all of the manuscripts, including those believed to reflect the earliest recensions of the Chantbook. Praises of the Theotokos and pleas for her intercession are so diffuse and interwoven with the rest of the hymnography that they clearly form an integral part of this ancient collection of hymns rather than reflecting a more recent addition. This is particularly significant since Renoux has persuasively dated these hymns collectively to the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The absence of any influence from the debates of the Fourth Council appears to confirm their composition before the middle of the fifth century, as does the appearance of many hymns also in early Armenian hymnography, which drew heavily from the Jerusalemite tradition as practiced at the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the hymns of the Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook evidence a remarkably advanced level of devotion to the Theotokos already at the heart of the Sunday liturgy much earlier than many scholars would have thought to expect. The hymns focus especially on praising Mary’s purity and holiness and her divine maternity, themes that one might anticipate from such an early source. Nevertheless, alongside of these acclamations are also frequent pleas for Mary’s intercessions with her son, an indication that the cult of the Virgin had already begun to take root within the Jerusalem church. Much of what we find here is typical more generally of early Christian prayer to the saints, and so it seems that the beginnings of Marian devotion need to be understood primarily as a subset of the emergent cult of the saints.<sup>24</sup> And, as Renoux also observes, there is nothing in the Chantbook’s hymns that would betray any influence from the early traditions of Mary’s Dormition and Assumption, a collection of ancient traditions that seem to have become widely circulated only toward the end of the fifth century. Likewise the titles 6

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given to the Virgin in these hymns are, according to Renoux, “sober and classical,” a quality that he contrasts with the “luxuriance of appellations and images” for Mary in the special collection of “Praises to the Holy Theotokos.”<sup>25</sup> Since these “Praises of the Theotokos” would appear to be slightly later than the rest of the Oktoechos hymns, one is tempted to conclude that this comparative restraint is a sign of relative antiquity in the Marian piety evident in the rest of the Sunday hymns. Nevertheless, these early hymns clearly envision Mary’s pleas as having an unequalled ability to influence her son, a sign it would seem that veneration of the Virgin was already by this time beginning to assume its unique position within Christian devotion to the saints

On the whole then the weight of the evidence seems to suggest that the Marian piety evident in this section of the Chantbook dates to sometime before the Council of Ephesus, affording some of the earliest evidence for the veneration of the Theotokos in a liturgical context, in this case, at the heart of Jerusalem’s Sunday liturgies. For some scholars this finding may come as a bit of a surprise. There is a tendency in much scholarship on early Christianity, especially older scholarship, to presume that the veneration of the Theotokos did not really exist prior to the Council of Ephesus in 431 and furthermore that this council played an important role in generating the cult of the Virgin in its wake. It is quite clear, however, that this is not the case and that the roots of Marian veneration lie earlier in the later fourth century and perhaps in some cases even earlier. Despite then the silence of many early Church Fathers regarding Marian devotion, it would seem that the *lex orandi* of ancient Christianity was likely a little bit ahead of its *lex credendi* with respect to honoring and venerating the Theotokos, and the Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook in particular offers especially important evidence of this fact.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps it may also seem a bit unexpected to find that some of the clearest and most convincing evidence for early devotion to the Theotokos comes from Jerusalem, and not from Constantinople or Egypt, as some earlier scholarship would lead us to suspect. Yet the emergence of such devotion to Mary in late fourth and early fifth-century Jerusalem is not altogether surprising. Undoubtedly the Marian veneration revealed by the Chantbook’s hymns corresponds with Jerusalem’s early commemoration of a feast of the Virgin, the Memory of Mary on 15 August, which had been celebrated there since the first decades of the fifth century, if not even earlier. Likewise, it seems that around this same time the Virgin’s tomb first began to emerge as a focus of cultic veneration.<sup>27</sup> Thus, although scholarship on early Marian piety has 7

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often tended to look elsewhere for the first shoots of devotion to the Virgin, it seems increasingly clear that late ancient Jerusalem stood at the forefront of the emerging cult of the Theotokos, as witnessed especially by its early liturgies and holy shrines. And among the most important witnesses to this incipient veneration of the Virgin is the ancient Jerusalem Georgian Chantbook. Marian piety is of course but one of many topics that remain to be explored across the vast richness of the Chantbook's hymns, and to be sure here we have merely scratched the surface even of this particular theme. Nevertheless, the Jerusalem Chantbook provides crucial evidence for the emergence of organized Marian devotion at a time when sources for such practice are scarce, and accordingly I hope in the near future to return to these hymnic invocations of the Theotokos with more focus in order to mine their rich evidence for the Virgin's veneration in greater detail. 8

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Michel van Esbroeck, *Les plus anciens homéliaires géorgiens: Étude descriptive et historique*, Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain 10 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1975); Michel van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge*, 2 vols., CSCO 478-479, Scriptores Iberici, 21-22 (Lovanii: E. Peeters, 1986); Michel van Esbroeck, *Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge: Etudes historique sur les traditions orientales* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1995).

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6 The hymns of the Georgian Lectionary were studied in Helmut Leeb, *Die Gesänge im Gemeindegottesdienst von Jerusalem. (Vom 5. bis 8. Jh.)*, *Wiener Beiträge zur Theologie* 28 (Vienna: Herder, 1970), a work that appeared before the editions of the Georgian Chantbook.

7 Jeffery, "Sunday Office," 54, 58.

8 Hélène Métréveli, "Les manuscrits liturgiques géorgiens des IX<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècles et leur importance pour l'étude de l'hymnographie byzantine," *Bedi Karlisa* 36 (1978): 43-8, 47. See also G. Péradzé, "Les monuments liturgiques prébyzantins en langue géorgienne," *Le Muséon* 45 (1932): 255-72; Charles Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I. Hymnographie liturgique géorgienne : textes du Sinaï 18.*, *Sources liturgiques* 3 (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 85-6; Frøyshov, "Early Development,"; Frøyshov, "Georgian Witness," 233-8; see also Andrew Wade, "The Oldest Iadgari: The Jerusalem Tropologion, V-VIII c.," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 50 (1984): 451-6, 451.

9 Metreveli, ankievi, and evsuriani, უძველესი იადგარი, 7-333.

10 Jeffery, "Sunday Office," 57. See also Jeffery, "Earliest Christian Chant Repertory," 14.

11 Metreveli, ankievi, and evsuriani, უძველესი იადგარი, 334-66; Jeffery, "Sunday Office," 55, 57. See also Jeffery, "Earliest Christian Chant Repertory," 14

12 Metreveli, ankievi, and evsuriani, უძველესი იადგარი, 367-512.

13 The first and most important of these translations and studies is Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I*. The project has now been completed with the recent publication of Charles Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II. Hymnographie liturgique géorgienne, texte des manuscrits Sinaï 40, 41 et 34*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 52.1 11



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(Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); and Charles Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection III. Hymnographie liturgique géorgienne, introduction, traduction, annotation des manuscrits Sinaï 26 et 20 et index analytique des trois volumes*, Patrologia Orientalis 52.2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). Renoux has also translated the festal hymns from Lazarus Saturday through Pentecost from the oldest manuscript (which reflects a monastic setting): Charles Renoux, *L'hymnaire de Saint-Sabas (Ve-VIIe siècle): le manuscrit géorgien H 2123. I. Du samedi de Lazare à la Pentecôte*, Patrologia Orientalis 50.3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008). Another important set of German translations has been published by Hans-Michael Schneider, which translates hymns from the beginning of the festal collection: those for the Annunciation, the Nativity and its Octave, and Epiphany and its Octave. See Hans-Michael Schneider, *Lobpreis im rechten Glauben: die Theologie der Hymnen an den Festen der Menschwerdung der alten Jerusalemer Liturgie im georgischen Udzvelesi Iadgari*, Hereditas. Studien zur alten Kirchengeschichte (Bonn: Borengässer, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I*, 30-64; see also the very brief summary of some of these points in Frøyshov, "Early Development," 165-8; and Frøyshov, "Georgian Witness," 237. On the differences in the manuscripts, see Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection III*, 325-6, which gives a good summary, and also Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I*, 10-13.

<sup>15</sup> Frøyshov, "Early Development," 164-9, 171-3.

<sup>16</sup> Translations of these hymns have been published in Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*; and Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection III*.

<sup>17</sup> Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*, 20-1; Hélène Métrévélī, Ts. Tchankieva, and L. Khevsouriani, "Le plus ancien tropologion géorgien," *Bedi Kartlisa: Revue de Kartvélogie* 39 (1981): 54-62, 60-1; Jeffery, "Sunday Office," 58.

<sup>18</sup> Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*, 21-2.

<sup>19</sup> Metreveli, ankievi, and evsuriani, უძველესი იადგარი, 439, lines 27-31; trans. Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*, 160; Nicholas Constatas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1-5, Texts and Translations*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 136 lines 18-22 (cf. PG 65, 681B).

<sup>20</sup> Metreveli, ankievi, and evsuriani, უძველესი იადგარი, 399, lines 10-13; Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*, 122.

<sup>21</sup> Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*, 22-3.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I*, 60-2, 98, 100-1, 104-5, 109 etc..

<sup>23</sup> In addition to the passage considered above from the "Praises to the Holy Theotokos," see also one other possible example in Metreveli, ankievi, and evsuriani, უძველესი იადგარი, 479, line 1; Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection II*, 285 n. 8. Here the hymn uses the term უძველესად (ἀρχαῖως), which, as Renoux notes, despite its association with Chalcedon, was well used before the fourth council. On the Armenian hymns, see Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I*, 52-4.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Renoux, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection I*, 54, 62, 109, 111, 116, 117, etc.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Marian Liturgies and Devotion in Early Christianity," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (London: Continuum Press, 2007), 130-45; Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Later Fourth Century," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 369-99; Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century: A Fresh Look at Some Old and New Sources," in *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (London: Burns & Oates, 2008), 71-87; Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Apocrypha and Liturgy in the Fourth Century The Case of the 'Six Books' Dormition Apocryphon," in *Jewish and Christian Scriptures: The Function of 'Canonical' and 'Non-canonical' Religious Texts*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Lee Martin McDonald (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 153-63.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78-107.

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**Mariam Didebulidze**

**(Georgia)**

**Tradition of Portraying the Mother of God in  
Medieval Georgian Art**

The portrayal of the Mother of God Mary has the oldest tradition in the Christian world. Her picture is supposed to have existed as early as in the period of catacombs (Priscilla's catacombs), (38, ill 95, 117); generally it is considered that her cult and her pictures appeared after the 431 Ephesus world church meeting, though churches and pictures, dedicated to Her (for example, a scratched on a limestone picture from the Berlin museum (46, 75) confirms their existence before the Ephesus meeting), as well as the facts of Mary's worship as the main "means" of incarnation (50, 45 -53, 66 -98; 35, xxvii). This is confirmed by Iakobo's first Gospel, dated back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in which Mary's life is described, also the legends about painting the icon of Mary with a baby, by St. Luke etc.

It is clear that the tradition of depicting Mary existed from old times, for instance in the decor of the churches, built in the holy land by Constantine and his mother. Only their descriptions have remained and about which we can speak by the pictures, depicted on souvenir ampoules and small works of art (e.g. the worship of the magi on the Montsa ampoule of the 6<sup>th</sup> century). There is a supposition that the images of Santa Maria Majore of the Triumphal Arch in Rome, having such unique iconography were created almost at the same time as the meeting (50, 50).

There are many studies, concerning Mary's pictures and their iconography (35, 37, 39, 40, 45, 50, 52, 60, etc). The images that are quite well-known and belong to earlier periods of time still date back to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the 6<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. to the time after the Ephesus meeting. Of these the most well-known are the mosaics of the Triumphal Arch of Santa Maria Majore, the Berlin ivory diptichon, Montsa ampoule, panagia, the mosaic of Angeloctista altar, the icon of Santa Maria Nova,

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Cleveland cloth, Sinai encaustic icons, Santa Antiqua frescos, the so called Syrian monastery (Vadi Natruni) column fresco, the frescos of Sakara monastery of Jeremiah and Baucis; Rabula Gospel, etc.

We must distinguish the independent image of Mary proper and the cases when she is presented in Christological scenes (e.g. in the Christmas on Maximian's pulpit, in the worship of the Magi on the early 4<sup>th</sup> century sarcophagus in Arles, in the scene of Ascension at Santa Sabina's court, 420-s), etc. Mary as the object of independent cult, and correspondingly Her independent portrayals of this cult appeared after the Ephesus meeting.

As for Georgia, Mary's worship, of course, does not differ from other Christian countries. The important themes and development in the Christian world were important for Georgia too, she shared common Christian ideas and their corresponding images, among them Mary's worship and the practice of expressing it. Great was the charm and influence of the images –icons, spread on the Holy land and in Constantinople (29).

In the history of Christianizing Georgia Mary's participation and share is quite special. She is the participant (though not directly) of the first appearance of Christ in Georgia – in the form of the Lord's seamless coat, which according to the ecclesiastical story, was knitted by the Mother of God (3, 27 -36).

The secret place where the seamless coat was buried compared to the place of Jacob's stairs. It is the prebiblical face of Mary. "And is that place as the place, seen as Jacob's stairs and risen to the sky." St. Nino's Life (20, 135.)

The important thing is that Georgia is known as the country, given to Her and St. Andrew the First – called when he came to Georgia at the request of Mary, he

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1. Common Christian themes sometimes draw special attention due to local traditions in this or that country (e. g. in Georgia the worship of the cross in Gumati, prayer in the conch of the altar (48), Evstathy's hunting (8), etc.

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brought Her icon which was not handmade (2, 129 -130, 131, 136; 3, 127- 131; 179 - 183). This icon (or its copy) is known as the Atskuri icon at present, though it has a trace of being copied and renewed many times (1, ill. 55).

“After the Ascension of Christ when the apostles cast lots Georgia appeared to be the lot of the Virgin, and she had a vision of her son who said to her: Mother, I do not intend to neglect the nation that is prior to others and deprive them of your intercession. You better send St. Andrew to this lot of yours and give him your image, created by putting a wood panel to your face. And this image will substitute you and defend them for centuries.”

And then the Virgin said to St. Andrew: Andrew, my son, my soul suffers because in the country that is my lot the name of my Son is not preached. When I was ready to go to this country that is my lot and preach about my Son my Son and my God appeared to me and ordered that you should go there instead of me and take my image seen with my Son to the country of lot in order to rule their lives and to help them and none of their enemies could overcome them.

Then the Holy Virgin asked to bring her a panel, washed her face and put it on Her face and Her image appeared.

“Then the most Holy Mother of God asked for a wooden panel, washed her face and posed it on her face. And the image of Her was presented with the incarnated Child in her womb, the good world of the God, and this image is known to the Atskuri people as the Atskuri icon of the “Most Holy Mother of God.”

It was also the Holy Virgin who sent St. Nino to Georgia to preach Christianity ( 17, 360 -361, 24, 190).

“And it was the time when the Most Blessed Mother of God was eager and was making arrangements to go eastwards to preach about her Son who Himself is called the Sun of Truth rising from the East.

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While she was strengthened by these words from her heart and was praying, Her Son and Her God dissuaded Her from this desire. And as far as She was the most desirable and the most blessed woman superior to women and men and the heavenly hosts, the God who wanted to ensure grace and eternal life for our nation sent a female again. I presume at the request and application of the Mother of God to Her Son.

It must be noted here too that the role of the blackberry bush in St. Nino's missionary activities in Mtskheta is also connected with Mary's image. The cross, made of vine, also points to the Mother of God: the vine is Mary. It is doubtless that Mary's cult must have been powerful in our country from the very start (21, 290).

The special "appreciation" of Mary began in Tamar's epoch. Some researchers explain it by strengthening Byzantine influence (41, 730). Though in reality it is connected with the theme of Tamar, woman queen (king in Georgian), more exactly, the theme of Mary – Nino- Tamar, the role of a woman, emphasized by Nikoloz Gulaberidze in ecclesiastic iconomy, in the mystery of incarnation. "I think I have searched for all other testimonies for the honor of females."

Later, special piety towards Mary strengthens due to having the relics of the Holy Virgin Mary – Her shirt and belt in Georgia. No matter how different the information about the time of their bringing or the place where they are kept, the important thing is that these holy relics make this country and Mary's role in its specially important life (3, 131 – 149, 149 -169).

What is it that our early – Christian and medieval art tells us about all this? How was all this expressed in the Georgian art?<sup>2</sup>

In the Georgian imitative art factually all iconographic images of Mary are portrayed (29, 132).<sup>3</sup>

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2. It is clear that our knowledge and our conclusions are based on the material that has reached our time, correspondingly it is not complete and it is not excluded that new discoveries, the revelation of new works and things will give us new knowledge.

3. Though there are a number of iconographic images that are not found in the material known to us, e.g. Mary the source of life, etc.

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The earliest images of the God's Mother Mary are mainly found in stone reliefs in Georgia. They are dated back to the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries (of Edzani Sion, Lower Bolnisi churches, Khandisi, Brdadzori, Dmanisi, Davati steles, Tsebelda iconostasis reliefs, etc. (12; 19; 49; 57; 59). In these reliefs Mary is presented as enthroned like Theotocos (12, 10 – 15; 13). Almost contemporary. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century Tsromi Church on the walls of the apse, under the mosaic picture in the conch there is the figure of Mary Oranta in the centre of the Apostles's row ( 42, 163 – 183; 23, ill. 17).

We see the specimens, containing Mary's image in other branches of the imitative art later e. g. the enamel entreaty of Martvili encolpium (8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> cc. 58, tab. II, I). Mother of God Oranta, the enamel medallion of the Khakhuli icon, 10<sup>th</sup> century (58, tab. 1, 1).

Of pictorial icons – the encaustic of the Tsilkani Mother of God, the enthroned odigitria together with St. Barbara (10<sup>th</sup> century).

The specimens of chasing art mainly belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> century: the panel icons of Chukuli, Chikhareshi, Jakhunder in whose central part the Holy Virgin is odigitria, Martvili standing odigitria icon, Khobi icon of entreating Mary, Bedia chalice, Ieli icon Mary with the image of Eleusa (56; 50), 1tc.

Her earlier image is in the illustrations of Jruchi four part Gospel – the image of Mary Odigitria, 940.

In the developed Middle Ages Mary's images are certainly more numerous and they are of special importance. This is not surprising for from the 10<sup>th</sup> century the idea of uniting the country is closely connected with the idea of Georgia's being the lot of the

Mother of God and in the historical sources the accentuating of this idea begins from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The theme of glorifying Mary factually substitutes the picture of glorifying Christ in the conchs of dome – shaped churches.<sup>4</sup>

But we are more interested in what aspects of Mary's cult generally so widespread in the Christian world became more attractive and close to the Georgian society and

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proceeding from this, for the Georgian art. Art very gently and exactly expresses ideology, general disposition, main national priorities, etc.

Many themes, connected with Mary, developed in Georgia if not early almost simultaneously with the specimens of art of Byzantium – e.g. the type of odigitria from Tsebelda (59, ILL, XXVII), Mother of God of Eleusa's type in the conch of the chapel of the No 8 church of Sabereebi (51, 165 – 167); or the illustrations of Jacob's first Gospel in the Ateni painting (9, 155); or in Betania mural painting, biblical prototypes of Mary (18, 198); Jesus root – the prototype of Mary's chaste conceiving in Qintsvisi (7, 135), etc. All this is the evidence of the creative character of the Georgian Christian art.

As we have already mentioned main iconographic types of the Holy Virgin are presented in the Georgian art.

Our Lady Odigitria: Tsebelda tile (7<sup>th</sup> cent.), Tsilkasni encaustic icon (9<sup>th</sup> cent.), painting of Nesguni (9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> cc), the chased Odigitria icon of Our Lady in Martvili (10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> cc.), Ushguli icon of Odigitria (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), the chased icon of the Holy Virgin in Tsageri (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), the painting of the altar conch of Vardzia church (12<sup>th</sup> cent.), the painting of the apse of the Qintsvisi church of the Holy Virgin (13<sup>th</sup> cent.), Ipkhv pictorial icon (13<sup>th</sup> cent.), Shuamta Odigitria (16<sup>th</sup> cent.), the chased icon of Bichvinta Odigitria (17<sup>th</sup> cent.), etc.

One concrete image of Odigitria – the icon of the Holy Virgin of Iveria became the object of special worship in the whole Christian world (35; 46) and, of course, in the first place in Georgia.

Mother of God Eleusa: the painting of the conch of the chapel of Church No 8 of Sabereebi (10<sup>th</sup> cent.), the chased icon of Laklakidze (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), Lagurca pictorial icon (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), Adishi pictorial icon (12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> cc), Lekhtagi fresco (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), etc.

The Mother of God of entreaty (Agiosoritisa) Khakhuli icon (10<sup>th</sup> cent.), Khobi icon

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4. It is clear that it is due to the great activation of the incarnation theme at that time.

(10<sup>th</sup> cent.), Tbeti apse painting of the second register (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> cc.), Nesguni icon (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> cc.), Lakhushti icon (12 – 13<sup>th</sup> cc.), Vardzia icon (17<sup>th</sup> cent.), etc.

Nikopea Kiriotisa the painting of Ateni Sion (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), the mosaic of Gelati church of the Holy Virgin (12<sup>th</sup> cent.), the painting of Iprali (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), Samtavisi drum (17<sup>th</sup> cent.), etc.

The Holy Virgin of Vlakhernisti (Nishiani) – the mural painting of Lakhtsveri (15<sup>th</sup> cent.), the icons of Lagurki (12<sup>th</sup> cent.) and Lakhushto (13<sup>th</sup> cent.), the mural painting of St. Giorgi church in Gelati (16<sup>th</sup> cent.), etc.

The Cypriotis Holy Virgin – (Cyprus, Panakhranta), Edzani Sioni relief (6<sup>th</sup> century), Khandisi Stele relief (6<sup>th</sup> cent.), St Nicholoz of Qintsvisi (13<sup>th</sup> century), the painting of Bertubani (13<sup>th</sup> cent.), Ikorta (12<sup>th</sup> cent.), Akhtala (13<sup>th</sup> cent.), Zarzma (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), Likhne (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), Martvili (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), Alaverdi (15<sup>th</sup> cent.), Pshauri (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), Nekresi (16<sup>th</sup> cent.), churches.

The Holy Virgin Oranta: the 2<sup>nd</sup> register painting of Tsromi (7<sup>th</sup> cent.), Oshki (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), Khakhuli (10<sup>th</sup> cent.), the church of the Four (10th century), of the church apses, the painting of the Tsalenjikha church conch, etc.

Besides these main types other iconographic images were also portrayed, of course. Especially in the painting of the later period. Choosing this or that type of Mary's image had different motivation, of course. E.g. T. Virsaladze thinks in connection with Nicopea's portrayal in Ateni and Gelati that "Nicopea's image was connected with the idea of the royal house" (9, 143).

The 14<sup>th</sup> century Ubisi panel icons are especially noteworthy in this respect. They are wholly dedicated to Mary and Her biblical prototypes (5; 1).

Mary's well known miracle-working icons of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, painted by the Georgian monk and painter Ioane Tokhaba must be specially noted. In the upper part of

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the Vlachern icon, Odigitria, Nicopea (the image of the Hagia Sophia conch), of Agiosoritisi, Hchemeti (22, 61 – 72). It is noteworthy that of these five two are the images of entreating Mary, with almost similar iconography.

In Georgia among various images of Mary the icons of entreating Holy Virgin are not very numerous compared even with Odigitria, but as it seems just this very function of Mary – the function of assistance was extremely important for the sons and daughters of the country under Her protection, and it was connected with Her share and was Her permission. One the most well – known Georgian icon – Khakhuli Mother of God is presented just in this image. The evidence of the greatest importance and worship of this icon is a special panel in which David the Builder and his son Demetre placed it (25; 32). Thus, the image of the entreating Mother of God seems to have been very important in Georgia.

It is not excluded that such an active portrayal of the composition of “the entreaty” in the Georgian mural painting, and in the altar of churches too and not only in the family tombs was conditioned by the desire of portraying Mary and Her function of assistance.

And indeed, if at the early stage the leading motive in the conchs of the altar Christ’s glorification and vision prevailed (Chvabiani, Saberes, Oshki, Khakhuli, the church of the Four, etc.), later either the glorification of Mary (Ikorta, Vardzia, Qintsvisi, Timoteubani) or entreaty (Iprali, Nakipari, Pavnisi, Zenobani, Betania, Sapara, etc.), it is also interesting that in Tamar’s epoch it was entreaty that was added to the composition of glorifying the cross in the painting of the dome – supposedly again with the purpose of portraying entreating Mary.

It is also noteworthy that many churches in Georgia bear the name of Sion that points to Mary’s dormition. And the theme of dormition is closely connected with Mary’s function of assistance – it was just before Her dormition that Christ told Her that She would be the first with the right of assisting people. “And then again that voice said “Mother, those who will glorify you I will glorify forever and ever, and for whom you will intercede, I will do good to them even more than you have asked to glorify you

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and you have daring and I will fulfil your will and obey you as the most beloved mother. This function of Mary in Her cult, the function of a helper and protector seems to have been more attractive and appreciated in Georgia.

Thus, in almost all the branches of the Georgian pictorial art in Middle Ages Mary's image is widely presented. It is quite natural for the culture of a Christian country though as it seems Her title of the helper and protector of Georgia rendered her image special actuality and attraction.

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**The Interpretation of the Most Holy Virgin's**

**Image in Georgian Hymnography and in David**

**Guramishvili's Poetry – "The Lamentation of the Virgin."**

The Most Holy Virgin's representation in hymnography by means of images and symbols originates from the imagery of the Old Testament; in the Old and New Testaments the images and symbols of the Virgin are understood through the hypodigmal-paradigmal imagery. Since hymnography is nurtured by the Biblical imagery, an original image or a symbolic representation is rare. The merit of every hymnist is that in a new context each of their creations manifests a shade of uniqueness. The same is the case with the compositions where the theme is the interpretation of the Most Holy Virgin's image.

The Georgian hymnographic tradition, which is founded on theological literature of Byzantium and Palestine-Antioch and hymnography among them, in order to represent the Most Holy Virgin use such images, symbols, metaphors that have been introduced into practice and used widely in biblical-evangelical and theological literature which also occur in secular literature, sometimes preserving their symbolic essence and sometimes in a transformed manner. The hymns dedicated to Good Friday are the most expressive, as in them the indivisibility of the human and divine, their unity and harmoniousness are brought forward simultaneously; the eternal emotional experience of suffering and the possibility of man's attaining future spirituality; the Son's empathy for His mother, and the Holy Virgin's lamentation over her Son's Crucifixion are felt through the perception of eternity. The hymns expressing the Holy Virgin's lamentation over crucified Christ and the deep emotions are the foundation of the image of the Most Holy Virgin represented in David Guramishvili's poems dedicated to this topic, for it is one of the most significant of all the compositions dealing with the theme of the Holy Virgin.

In the Good Friday hymns the Most Holy Virgin is represented with great pain and acute emotions. She accompanied her Son to Mt Golgotha together with other mothers, she listened to



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Pilate's statement and the sound of the hammer when the Redeemer was nailed to the cross on Mt Golgotha. It is from this viewpoint that I am going to discuss the hymns and David Guramishvili's poem "The Holy Virgin's Lamentation," they express the Saviour's rare patience, by means of the Crucifixion the image of the Saviour who defeated death through death is created and the basis of the symbolic character of the Cross is defined, for the Crucifixion that had been thought disgraceful before, changed its value and now it had a mission of the spiritual salvation of all mankind. The words of the heirmos meant for this day "Lament me not, Mother," uttered by the Saviour, make us realize the hope, which the Redeemer's Crucifixion brought to mankind. Here I will quote the text of the heirmos: "Lament me not, Mother, when thee behold thy son, born without seed, in the sepulcher, for I will rise and ascend to heaven in glory, for I am God, and I will have glory from them, who consider thee the true Mother of God" (heirmos with neumas, 1982:595). Parallel with the mourning scene depicted in the frescoes and icons the words of the hymns represent the full tragedy of Good Friday, which is renewed every year to achieve mankind's spiritual growth, completeness and perfection, it is a most hard road towards man's achieving God and deification, it can be overcome only by means of spiritual strength and divine wisdom.

The hymns meant for Good Friday represent the Saviour's suffering image, who, though being innocent, endured torture for the spiritual salvation of mankind, He saved mankind from the curse with His honest, immaculate blood; on Good Friday cruel and intolerable punishment was carried out: until then the world had never seen such an innocent victim, the spilling of innocent blood and such a cruel, terrible judge. He, who had come to exalt mankind, was humiliated on Good Friday; He, who had come on to this world to save mankind from suffering, on Good Friday was tortured and crucified. He, who marked the beginning of the eternal life and who granted spirituality to mankind, passed the road to Golgotha and met his death. Through lies and treachery, betrayed and sold for silver coins and insulted, the True Light, the Saviour of all mankind died on the cross on Good Friday, with the words: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke, 23, 46).

The Holy Week is the last days of the Saviour's life in this world, Good Friday is the last day, the day of the Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross and Entombment. It is repeated annually liturgically and through imagery, which return every Christian to the Saviour's Crucifixion

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spiritually and they again feel the eternity of the road He passed, each Christian shares in the world where the Son of God, sent to this world as a man, was part of mankind like any other man who is part of mankind. Good Friday is the only day in the liturgical year when liturgy is not offered because when celebrating church services the greatest offering was our Lord, the Saviour Himself, who was sacrificed for the spiritual salvation of mankind. A whole cycle of hymns was dedicated to this theme, where, the Crucifixion of the Saviour is presented in keeping with the Gospel, this evokes the feeling of rare pain in the reader or listener. Church services of Good Friday are celebrated on Good Thursday, for the Friday celebrations are complicated, they consist of several parts and are loaded with symbols and mysticism, their imagery is not simple either. Here the inner emotions of Christ following the road to Golgotha attract great attention, the attitude of his disciples, the Most Holy Virgin and the whole nation to the Saviour's Crucifixion, for "the few are chosen" who can show their empathy with the Saviour.

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of the Holy Week the liturgy of the First Martyrs is offered. At the matins on Good Thursday twelve gospels of Christ's passion are read; they describe Our Lord's suffering before and during the Crucifixion. They are the lections of the Friday matins, and the twelve gospels mean twelve excerpts selected from the four Gospels, it begins with the Saviour's conversation with his disciples at the Last Supper and ends with the episode of Joseph of Arimathea's laying Him in a tomb in a garden, and setting a watch at its entrance by the Romans. Each liturgy represents a different kind of the Saviour's passion, beginning in the Gethsemane garden and finishing with the Saviour's Crucifixion on Golgotha and His death. The hymns or homilies dedicated to this day evoke rare spiritual emotions in the faithful, on the one hand they are distinguished for repentance, acute perception of man's suffering and being purified of one's sins-on the other, which also arouse hope.

The Golgotha sacrament is conditioned by some symbolic-imagery mission: 1. First and foremost Christ's Crucifixion put an end to the old life in mankind's history and ushered in the new one, it divides the epochs of the Old and New Testaments; the epoch of mankind's history, connected with the Old Testament, ended and the new one, connected with the New Testament commenced; 2. Through the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Saviour man's soul and mankind's soul in general revived; by means of the road leading to Golgotha mankind was offered a chance of repentance, which leads man to spiritual purification; it was on Golgotha that

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the pre-Christian history of Adam's descendants and mankind ended, the history which began with the original sin, Adam's and Eve's "eating from the tree" and lasted until the Saviour's Crucifixion – the epochal novelty; 3. Adam, fallen in sin was renewed, "that old man" died and "the new man" was born ["That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; *And ye put on the new man* which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4: 22-24);] ...*Ye have put off the old man* with his deeds; *And have put on the new man*" (Col. 3:9-10);]. In Jesus Christ's Crucifixion the idea of revival of the spiritual life and dwelling in heaven is embodied, which was achieved through expiating the original sin, man was given an opportunity of deification; the road the Saviour covered to Golgotha is the road of escaping from the precipice of sin and defeating the evil, it passes through the torture suffered for the spiritual salvation from sin and evil, for the Saviour's Crucifixion changed the world; 4. The Old Testament acted according to the law, the New Testament overpowered sin and evil by the unity of law and grace, law and love; the cross, which had been considered as shameful punishment acquired a new symbolic, semantic meaning, defeated death, which is expressed by the most significant Easter hymns, "Christ is risen, who defeated death by His death, and revived life within graves," it defeated death; 5. The Saviour's Crucifixion on Golgotha was the struggle between love and envy, goodness and evil, light and darkness, grace and sin, which ended in the victory of love, goodness, light and grace; 6. The Saviour's Crucifixion confirmed the reconciliation between man and God, Crucifixion is the evidence of the Saviour's spiritual mission, the beginning of the spiritual renovation of mankind. The hymns represent the symbolic meaning of the holy week and the Saviour's spiritual mission from an original point of view, the Saviour sacrificed his life for the reconciliation of mankind with God; 7. Golgotha sacrament was witnessed by the most Holy Virgin and the women with spices, who were the first to see the Saviour's empty tomb, i.e. they were the first to hear the news of the Saviour's resurrection. All this is viewed symbolically and by means of imagery, which represent a very strongly pronounced image of the Holy Virgin.

The Good Friday hymn brings forward both the cosmic picture of the Saviour's death and the Holy Virgin's great suffering and emotions, which are more acutely perceived, for she was an eye-witness. "One of the three, God's word and His son was flesh by you, the Most Holy

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Virgin. He was nailed to the cross for our salvation, drank vinegar and bile on His free will for us to drink in immortality, and he spoke like God and man: if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, out of my side shall flow rivers of living water. Entreat to Him, Mother and Virgin to save our souls from peril” (Metreveli, 1980:204).

Along with the Crucifixion of the Saviour the hymns represent the Holy Virgin’s mourning and lamentation: Mother said, mourning and lamenting she had good courage and wept before the cross together with His beloved disciple” (Metreveli, 1980:208). The mourning image of the Holy Virgin is represented against the background of John the Theologian, for the Saviour entrusted His mother to him. The poetry of the hymns depicts the image of the Holy Virgin as a special aesthetic ideal in the medieval culture, for because of her purity, chastity, she wiped out the original sin (“Who paid Eve’s debt” – Borena); she is the only one of virgins who was a mother and the only one of mothers who remained a virgin. In theological literature, namely in hymns, this mystic phenomenon along with being symbolic also has an aesthetic value; Such a kind of representation is called “seeing through the face and the mirror” by hymnists. David Guramishvili presented the hardest day in the history of Christendom, the day of Crucifixion by evangelic consistency and imagery. They are the verses included in his “Davitiani:” “The Story of Crucifixion,” “Lamentation;” in the poem “The Lamentation of the Virgin,” he elevated the Most Holy Virgin’s wailing over her Son’s Crucifixion to cosmic emotions. In them both Christ’s teaching and the author’s attitude to the process of the Saviour’s Crucifixion and the mankind’s perception of the Crucifixion are blended; he expressed mankind’s repentance, the feeling of expiating their sins through the Virgin’s lamentation. These poems coincide with one another by their attitude, vocabulary, form, which create the compositional unity of all of them and “Davitiani,” they also build the basis for blending Guramishvili’s world outlook and lyrical mood. All this is a mixture of the Biblical-Evangelical, patristic-hagiographic and hymnologic trends, which are targeted at spiritual purification, achieving the kingdom of Heaven, spiritual renovation and approaching God.

These poems are distinguished for the amazing sense of responsibility they are created with, they also indicate the Georgian nation’s moral responsibility. They can be considered to be a confession of every person. As a part of the world, Georgia also participated in the Saviour’s Crucifixion, as the Evangelic-Apostolic teaching tells us, “For if by one man’s offence death

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reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one *judgement came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5, 17-18). In accordance with the Evangelist-Apostolic teaching, theologian fathers and hymnists, David Guramishvili thinks that Georgians are also to blame for dooming Christ to Crucifixion, therefore they should also answer for and share the sin mankind committed. It is the Apostle Paul’s words quoted above that support this point of view.

Therefore the most Holy Virgin’s suffering for the Saviour’s Crucifixion is shared by Georgian mothers as well. Thus it is the duty of Georgian mothers, who have lost their children, to condole with the Virgin and comfort her, the Saviour Himself gave this example to mankind, when crucified Christ, moved by the pity for his mother, entrusted her to John, His beloved disciple, “Woman, behold thy son!” (John, 19, 26), and to John He said, “Behold thy mother!” (John, 19, 27), and then He implored God, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!” (Luke, 23, 34) The most Holy Virgin stood at crucified Jesus’ feet, and tormented by the pains caused by the Crucifixion of her only son, looked at the victim of injustice with tearful eyes.

David Guramishvili’s narrating the story of the Saviour’s Crucifixion and describing the scene of lamentation, the mourning of the Holy Virgin over her son and the heart-rending words, addressed to women, who had lost their children, must show the way leading mankind and accordingly the Georgian nation as well to spiritual purification, because Crucifixion occurred for the spiritual catharsis of all mankind, both born before Christ and the generations after His birth. It is an expression of mourning, expiating one’s sins and supplication, a sort of monologue-confession uttered in painful, heart-rending words, it helps to attain a new “self,” a new spiritual world. As K. Kekelidze notes, “The poem fully expresses the hopeless situation, feeling of the mother who, seeing her only son, the Saviour, murdered by the enemy, mourns over Him and is filled with indignation at the ingratitude of people, who could not tolerate even the one who wished them well” (Kekelidze, 181:653). According to J. Mosia’s words “By representing the Saviour’s mother, D. Guramishvili expressed his great humane attitude to, love and empathy for mothers, in general, and first of all for those mothers who had lost their children” (Mosia,

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1986:117). R. Baramidze said about the acute pain of Mother for the death of the Saviour, her son, but it was a hundred times more painful when her son was crucified for the welfare of others (Baramidze, 1986:156).

David Guramishvili's expression of the Holy Virgin's mourning is not only the acute suffering and bitterness caused by the death of her son, it is also the Virgin's address to all women who lost their children, this address is full of empathy and expectation of comfort; other women's children will resurrect spiritually and defeat death; the words, uttered by the Holy Virgin are imbued with the spiritual salvation and survival.

Come here, all the mothers, who have lost your children!

Have pity on Mary, who so far has pitied you,

Listen to her lamentation, and you, too, shed tears,

Comfort your souls, abandon the sorrow of your heart.

(Guramishvili, 1980:76)

David Guramishvili, with great sorrow and words full of pain, presents the Most Holy Virgin's motherly feelings and rare emotions, her physical and spiritual suffering caused by the unbearable agony of her son, people's ingratitude, ruthlessness, stupidity, the result of the Crucifixion on Golgotha and the torture, which were tolerated with great patience by Christ, son of God, the Crucified God.

When the parent saw her son, God-anointed,

With a crown of thorns on his head,

Naked and humiliated

Nailed to the cross with his hands and feet,

With a sword wound in his side,

She Shuddered and fell down weeping like a one defeated

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(Guramishvili, 1980:76)

In the poem the story of Crucifixion and the emotions it evoked are presented in a poetic manner, realistically and dramatically. As M. Ujmajuridze says, “The Holy Virgin mourns crucified Christ as Mother and at the same time, as a supplicating person” (Ujmajuridze, 2005:89). In the poem poetic and psalm-hymnographic traditions are fused. The tragic stories of the Virgin’s mourning, the Saviour’s Descent from the Cross, the Ressurrection, the wisdom of Christianity and the ascent to heaven are presented eloquently and symbolically. It must be said that the words of the Holy Virgin also reflect the hopeful attitude of the mother, who lost her son, for in Jesus Christ’ Crucifixion she saw the ideal of the mankind’s salvation and spiritual survival, fully comprehended the son-God’s divine mission. Therefore the key-note of this composition has a double connotation: mourning and hope. The most Holy Virgin also mourns over herself, for during her son’s life she was in His shadow and was protected, which David Guramishvili presented as an image of the grace and warmth of mother and child relationship.

The Saviour’s Crucifixion marked the way to the spiritual salvation of mankind, survival, and getting out of the precipice of sin and evil. According to David Guramishvili’s poem, that has already been mentioned, “The Lamentation of the Virgin” the Virgin mourns over the death of her son; factually it is the lamentation of the poet himself, his mourning, for he feels that he is sinful. In his opinion, which coincides with the chief motif of the hymns, especially with St Andrew of Cretes’ “Great Canon” and King David the Builder’s “Canon of Repentance,” where the Saviour’s Crucifixion is regarded as a sin of every man; because of the Saviour’s Crucifixion Guramishvili himself is a sinner, it is the emotion and attitude of the man of liturgical consciousness. The experience and perception of the Crucifixion are brought down to the level of mystical theological teaching and thinking.

In David Guramishvili’s poems, dedicated to the Holy Virgin, the poet’s own liturgical consciousness and the pattern of thinking are revealed, as the Saviour’s Crucifixion and every Biblical-Evangelical phenomenon and fact are experienced not only as belonging to the past, but

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as something meant for all the times to be perceived according to the present time. Proceeding from the above it is eternal, occurring at a concrete time and supertemporal as well (Siradze, 2005:60-61). Therefore Guramishvili's words "Come here, all the mothers, who have lost your Children" are addressed to such mothers of all times and are perceived as the manifestation of eternal empathy and comfort. And that is why Guramishvili's "The Lamentation of the Virgin" is not limited in time and space, it is a piece of poetry expressing eternal Christian ideals, Christian and liturgical consciousness. And the Virgin's aching heart has no time and space, it is horizontal and vertical, following the traditions of hymnography and Rustaveli, which are based on theological teaching, namely on the Areopagitic point of view, it is "timeless time." Of all Guramishvili's works this episode is distinguished for its depth, poetic simplicity and divine wisdom, where the image of the Holy Virgin is represented by means of purity and symbolic imagery. The poet indicates the Saviour's and the Holy Virgin's filial and motherly love and care through referring to the biblical episodes and the Saviour's phrase "Lament me not, Mother" is a word for word repetition of the heirmos, in which there is a rudiment of hope, for in it the motif of Ascension, which must be everybody's ideal, is emphasized. In the poem the Holy Virgin remembers the episode of Abraham's offering Isaac as sacrifice, when God provided a ram as an offering instead of Isaac, but in this case this Biblical hypodigm did not change into a paradigm, the Saviour's innocent blood was sacrificed for mankind's salvation from sin. The Holy Virgin implores her son to allow her to ascend to Heaven ahead of Him and give Eve the good tidings that the sin will be expiated and therefore man will have the hope for salvation and mankind will be full of faith.

The lines representing the Virgin's lamentation over the Saviour are a monologue of the mother whose child died, where along with the emotions of physical pain there is also a feeling that there is only one Saviour and his origin is great: "As a young sprout on a branch, the rooted stem!" The Holy Virgin's words explain the essence of Christianity, Christ is represented as the one who opens the door the Paradise, illuminates mankind spiritually, saves and purifies them. Mourning over Christ is the road to purification, and Guramishvili as a person and part of mankind, is the man who, by lamenting over Crucified Christ takes up the road to purification, his first and foremost goal being approaching God, achieving deification. The idea the poet



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expresses in “The Lamentation of the Virgin” is his personal attitude to the perception of the world and comprehending the idea of mankind’s existence.

The emotion of the mother, whose child died, her lamentation coming from her heart, is very vividly presented to the reader, when Guramishvili represents the inner world of the Holy Virgin, her spiritual state, the words of the inconsolable, heart-broken mother, whose lamentation expresses her godliness, moral grandeur, the belief in the spiritual renovation of mankind, relationship between mother and son, love, mother’s care for the Saviour and the painful emotions of the mother who has lost her protector.

The hymns and David Guramishvili’s poem “The Lamentation of the Virgin” give a quite clear representation of the Holy Virgin’s image, which is perceived symbolically and which is at the primary source of mankind’s salvation from sin as the Mother of God. It was also evident that the most Holy Virgin, represented by David Guramishvili, differs from her image indicated in the hymns by the feature that the poet brings the Virgin’s suffering to physical pain, and in the hymns her spiritual suffering and pain are more acute. In the hymns the Virgin’s image does not express a personal tragedy, but rather mankind’s tragedy, their spiritual emotions. The hymn renders the supernatural picture of the Saviour’s death the importance common to all mankind, which in David Guramishvili’s poem is overshadowed by expressing the mother’s emotions.

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**An Old Georgian Iambic translation of the *Song of Songs*  
as an *Encomium to the Holy Mother of God*  
in the Vienna Codex No. 4**

I

In the Austrian National Library (*Österreichische Nationalbibliothek*) in Vienna a twelfth century Georgian manuscript is preserved, containing an Iambic version of Solomon's *Song of Songs*, one of the canonical books of the Bible (ᾠσμα ᾠμάτων<sup>xxvi</sup>). Along with three other Georgian medieval manuscripts kept in Vienna, Codex No. 4 was first described by Grigol Peradze in 1940<sup>xxvi</sup>. It consists of 305 paper folios and is entitled «სანატრელი». According to the colophon (304v), the manuscript was copied in the year 1160 by Nik'oloz Nikra in K'edva, in the surroundings of the Monastery of David Gareja. The codex has preserved several contemporary and later inscriptions providing us with important historical information<sup>xxvi</sup>. In the sixteenth century it was to be found in the Library of the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Jerusalem<sup>xxvi</sup>, as shown by the note left by the Archbishop Vlasa from Urnisi, who bound and restored the manuscript in 1570. In 1864 it fell into the possession of the private collection of the Archdeacon Cleopas, the future Archbishop of Nazareth. After his death, the manuscript was probably sold in Alexandria and in 1931 was finally acquired by the Austrian National Library.

As already noted by G. Peradze, Codex No. 4 comprises a collection of twelve texts translated from Greek, mainly belonging to the homiletic and the exegetical genre of Patristic and Byzantine literature (works of Anastasios of Sinai, Gregory of Nyssa, John of Damascus, John Chrysostomus and Pseudo-Chrysostomus)<sup>xxvi</sup>. Other texts are also included<sup>xxvi</sup>, among which a translation of the *Song of Songs* (folios 255-266v). This version differs from those available in other Georgian sources<sup>xxvi</sup>, namely the Oshki manuscript (= Mount Athos, Library of the Iviron Monastery, geo. 1 dating to the year 978, in two volumes)<sup>xxvi</sup>, the *Šereuli k'rebuli* (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-65 1188-1210, ff. 211v-214v)<sup>xxvi</sup>, the Mcxeta Corpus (=

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Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-51, seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, ff. 427-429)<sup>xxvi</sup> and the 1743 printed Bakar's Bible<sup>xxvi</sup>. It should be noted that both in the Vienna Codex No. 4 and in A-65, Solomon's *Song of Songs* is included in a miscellaneous collection of texts not belonging to the Holy Scripture, but instead containing works of diverse content, ranging (in the specific case of A-65) from ecclesiastical literature to astrological treatises<sup>xxvi</sup>.

The translation of the Ὕμνα ὁσμάτων from the Vienna manuscript is an unique text not only as it differs from the other Georgian versions of this book, but also due to two additional outstanding features that immediately capture the reader's attention. The first is that the text was translated not in prose, but in poetry. The adopted meter is an iambic verse, consisting of 12 syllables. The second is that the translation is preceded by a special heading conferring an unexpected exegetical meaning: besides being presented as an iambic poem, the text is labeled as an encomium to the Holy Mother of God written by King Solomon the Wise: «ქებაჲ ქებათაჲ, შესხმაჲ წმიდისაღმრთისმშობელისაჲ, ბრძნისასოლომონისაგან».

Unfortunately, in his description of the manuscript, G. Peradze has not made any comment regarding the origin of the title and, consequently, of the interpretation of the text, which is to be found in Codex No. 4. To my knowledge, until today, no scholar has tackled this very issue<sup>xxvi</sup>. Even K. Kekelidze, who considered the *Song of Songs* to be a dialogue between a woman and her son<sup>xxvi</sup>, and Z. Sarjveladze, who first published the text<sup>xxvi</sup>, appear not to have taken this problem into consideration. This title implies an explanation of the text that is unknown to the Greek Patristic tradition of the third-fifth centuries, which did not advance a comprehensive Mariological interpretation. Moreover in reading this book, the subsequent Byzantine exegetes of the Holy Scripture adhered to the teaching of the Church Fathers of the earliest period. Therefore, the heading of the Georgian translation of the Ὕμνα ὁσμάτων, available in the Vienna manuscript, poses several questions demanding scholarly investigation.

In this paper I shall offer some reflections in order to try to clarify the origin of this particular twelfth century Georgian exegetical understanding of the text. Before embarking on my analysis, I would like to highlight the significant fact that the translation accessible in Codex No. 4 is not only anonymous, but is also devoid of any kind of commentary or marginal notes explaining the theological foundations of the implied Mariological interpretation. Today it is furthermore still

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unclear whether the latter belong to the Georgian translator or whether a corresponding Greek heading was to be found in the prototype, which was adopted for producing the version. Data from the Greek manuscript tradition that may help resolve this issue is unfortunately not available. I maintain that the possibility that the title might belong to the Georgian author should not be entirely ruled out. Such a conclusion is suggested by the fact that a link undoubtedly exists between the perception of the text in terms of an encomium and the translator's decision to express it in verse. The connection between the theological interpretation and the poetical form of the version makes an attribution of the heading to the medieval Georgian interpreter highly probable. The circumstances that led to this text being written and to when it was translated both remain subject for speculation, since no pertinent information is contained in the Vienna manuscript.

## II

In the Greek Bible the *Song of Songs* follows the *Proverbs* and the *Ecclesiastes*. A comprehensive critical text of the Greek version is expected to be published in the Göttingen series<sup>xxvi</sup>. At present scholars can refer to 1935 Rahlfs's edition<sup>xxvi</sup>. The content of the *Song of Songs* is highly original and its meaning eludes univocal interpretation. The text is presented in the form of a dialogue between two interlocutors, the groom and the bride. Despite having a short extension, this Scriptural book has triggered a multitude of different interpretations over the centuries. Given the complexity and the magnitude of this topic, this paper cannot include an appropriate discussion of each and instead intends concentrating on very briefly outlining the framework of the exegesis, widespread in the late antique and the early Byzantine literature (for the necessary insights, a number of available reference works may be consulted)<sup>xxvi</sup>.

The interpretation of the *Song of Songs* boasts a long tradition among the works of the Church Fathers. Since Hippolytus Romanus (ca 170 - 235) composed the first exposition, this Biblical book has been subjected to comprehensive theological study, in particular in the fourth-fifth centuries. Even if several commentaries have been lost, many others have come down to us in Greek, Latin and in the languages of the Christian East, at times in full, at others in abridged versions in several Byzantine catenae<sup>xxvi</sup>. The Georgian tradition is of fundamental importance to

understand the earliest phases in the development of the Patristic exegesis of this text: only fragments survived in Greek of the above-mentioned commentaries of Hippolytus Romanus (= CPG 1871<sup>xxvi</sup>), but a translation is to be found in the *Collection of Shatberdi* (*Šat'berdis k'rebuli*), a parchment codex, which can be dated between the years 973-976 (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, S-1141: ff. 162-176), as well as in a manuscript of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries (Jerusalem, Library of the Greek Patriarchate, geo. 44: ff. 193v-207)<sup>xxvi</sup>. A second key source of the fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (= CPG 3158<sup>xxvi</sup>), was translated in the eleventh century by Giorgi Mtac'mideli (ca. 1009-1065). It is available in his autograph (Ath. 49, fol. 148r-207v)<sup>xxvi</sup> and in a number of other manuscripts (Tbilisi, National Centre of Manuscripts, A-55, eleventh century, ff. 73-165v; A-108, twelfth century 235v-251)<sup>xxvi</sup>. A third commentary is to be found in the above-mentioned *Šereuli k'rebuli* (ff. 193-210)<sup>xxvi</sup>.

The Greek Patristic tradition had basically offered a dual allegorical exegesis of the *Song of Songs*. The first was of an ecclesiological nature: the bride was identified as the Church. The second was psychological: it considered the bride to be a symbol of the soul. This twofold explanation of the text was already predominant by the fourth century and was accepted in the subsequent epochs, starting from the commentary of Theodoret of Cyrrhus (ca. 393-458) that generally follows the earlier tradition(= CPG 6203)<sup>xxvi</sup>, even if with a few differences in the interpretation of single details<sup>xxvi</sup>. On the other hand, Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350 – 428), who was an advocate of a literalistic interpretation<sup>xxvi</sup>, instead distanced himself from the predominant Patristic view<sup>xxvi</sup>.

Commentaries of the *Song of Songs* containing comprehensive Mariological interpretations of the text are not attested in Byzantium before the fourteenth century. The *Scholia* of Matthew Cantacuzenus (1325 ca. – 1391<sup>xxvi</sup>) is the first available work. Previously, only individual verses had been interpreted to represent the figure of the Holy Mother of God. To my knowledge, the earliest case to be found in Greek is in the commentary of Michael Psellus (1018-1078). His Ἑρμηνεία τοῦ Ἄσματος τῶν ᾠμάτων is written in verse<sup>xxvi</sup>. From a content perspective, the author's views do not stand out for being particularly original: they depend on the traditional Patristic exegesis, in particular on Gregory of Nyssa's work. A remarkable exception features in

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the last section of the poem, in which verses 6:8-9 are judged to be a prefiguration of the Theotokos<sup>xxvi</sup>. This conclusion marks an unexpected, if not even abrupt change of register when compared with the rest of Psellus' interpretation<sup>xxvi</sup> and probably represents the most significant innovation in his poem. In fact a cursory look at the previous exegetical literature does not reveal traces of a similar understanding of this passage. In any case, Psellus' approach, even if adding something new to the earlier tradition, remains confined to only a few specific verses.

### III

An example may at this point be provided to illustrate the varied Patristic approaches in reading the *Song of Songs*. In chapter two the bride, after having confessed her love to the daughters of Jerusalem for the groom, eulogizing him, proceeds to offer a vivid account of the visit from her beloved. The Georgian translation reproduced below is from the Vienna Codex No. 4 (fol. 256v-257v). The text is provided with the corrections proposed by Sarjeladze in 2:1 (ღელღვანთაჲ in place of ლელღვანთაჲ), 2:8 (მხლდომარე for მჰლდომარე), 2:14 (მოხუჭდი rather than მუხუჭდი) and in 2:15 (ყუავილოვან instead of ყუავილოვას)<sup>xxvi</sup>. In 2:17, after ძმისწულო, I have left the redundant addition ემსგავსეშენ, ძმისწულო ჩემო, which seems to have been inserted for metrical purposes. In 2:17 at the end of the chapter, after ღელღვანთასა, manuscript Georg. 4 adds an interpolation from chapter four (vv. 6-7), in which the arrangement of the verses is moreover reproduced in a muddled form. In this addition, which I have removed, the sequence of the verses is as follows: (I. 4:6b) მეთჳთმივიდემთასამასმურისასა და დავემკჳდრობორცუსა გუნდრუკისასა (II. 4:6a) შერიჳუებადმდე [258r] დღისა და აღმდრჳდა ჩრდილთა. (III 4:7) ყოვლად მუენიერხარ, მახლობელო ჩემო, დაბიწიარცა ერთირად არს შენთანა. The Greek parallel text is reproduced according to Rahlfs' edition<sup>xxvi</sup>. A comparison between the two texts reveals several specific differences, probably deriving from the poetic nature of the Georgian translation, namely to the free translation technique, rather than to the very singular feature of the Greek prototype.

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2:1

მე - ნათლისფერიყუავილიველისადდა[256v]

ოქრომნათობიშროშანიღელღოვანთად.

Ἐγὼ ἄνθος τοῦ πεδίου,

κρίνον τῶν κοιλάδων.

2:2

დავითარშორისეკალთაღსაშროშანი,

ეგრეთქალწულთაშორისტრფიალიჩემი.

Ὡς κρίνον ἐν μέσῳ ἀκανθῶν,

οὕτως ἡ πλησίον μου ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν θυγατέρων.

2:3

ვითარცახეთამაღნართაშორისვაშლი,

ეგრეთარსჩემიძმისწულიძეთაშორის.

საგრილსამისსაგულმანმითქუადადავჯედ;

დატკბილარსმისინაყოფიპირსაჩემსა.

Ὡς μῆλον ἐν τοῖς ξύλοις τοῦ δρυμοῦ,

οὕτως ἀδελφιδός μου ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν υἱῶν.

ἐν τῇ σκιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐπεθύμησα καὶ ἐκάθισα,



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καὶ καρπὸς αὐτοῦ γλυκὺς ἐν λάρυγγί μου.

2:4

შემიყვანეთმესახლამასღვნისასა,

დაგანაწესეთჩემზედასიყუარული,

Εἰσαγάγετέ με εἰς οἶκον τοῦ οἴνου,

τᾶξάτε ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἀγάπην.

2:5

დადამამტკიცეთნელსაცხებელთამიერ,

ვაშლიმომასხთმე,

წყლულსასიყუარულითა.

στηρίσατέ με ἐν ἀμόραις,

στοιβάσατέ με ἐν μήλοις, ὅτι τετραμένη ἀγάπης ἐγώ.

2:6

მარცხენემისიზედაკერძოთავისა,

დამარჯუნემანმისმანშემიწყნაროსმე.

εὐώνυμος αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τὴν κεφαλὴν μου,

καὶ ἡ δεξιὰ αὐτοῦ περιλήψεται με.

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2:7

სიმტკიცეთადაძალთადააგარაკსა

ლოცვითგაფუცებ, იერუსალიმისა

ასულნო, აღ-თუ-სდგეთთქუენ, დაგანაღვბეთ

ტრფიალიჩემი,

ვიდრემდისცაინებოს, [257]

ἄρκισα ὑμῶν, θυγατέρες Ἱερουσαλήμ,

ἐν ταῖς θυνάμεσι καὶ ἐν ἰσχύσεσι τοῦ ἀγροῦ,

ἐὰν ἐγείρητε καὶ ἐξέγείρητε

τὴν ἀγάπην, ἕως οἷ θελήσῃ

2:8

კმაძმისწულისაჩემისაჲ: აჰა, მოვალს

მხლდომარემთათადამსრბოლიბორცუთაზედა.

Φωνὴ ἀδελφιδῶν μου· ἰδοὺ οἱ πότις ἦκει

πηδῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη, διαγλόμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς βουνούς

2:9

ძმისწულიჩემიჰგავსქურციკსადანუკრსა

მასირმისასაბეთილისამთათაზედა.

აჰა, ესეღვასფარვითზღუდესაჩუენსა,

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დასარკუმლითგამოშთამოიჭურობსიგი

დაარდაგთადთგარდამოიხედავსჟუნდა.

ὁμοιός ἐστιν ἀδελφιδός μου τῇ δορκάδι ἢ νεβρῶ

ἐλάφον ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη Βαιθήλ.

ἰδοὺ οὗτος ἔστηκεν ὀπίσω τοῦ τοίχου ἡμῶν

παρακύπτων διὰ τῶν θυρίδων,

ἐκκύπτων διὰ τῶν δικτύων.

2:10

ძმისწულიჩემიმომიგებსდამეტყვსმე:

«აღდეგდამოვედაწ, მახლობელოჩემო,

განშუენებულოჩემოდატრედოჩემო.

ἀποκρίνεται ἀδελφιδός μου καὶ λέγει μοι·

ἀνάστα, ἐλθέ, ἡ πλησίον μου,

καλή μου, περιστερὰ μου,

2:11

რამეთუ, აჰა, ზამთარიჩუენგანწარჯდა,

წჳმაჲდასცხრადაწარვიდაგზასათჳსსა.

ὅτι ἰδοὺ ὁ χειμὼν παρήλθεν,

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ὁ πέτοϛ ἀπῆλθεν, ἐπορεύθη ἑαυτῷ,

2:12

ყუავილმანიმსთოსოფელსაშინაჩუნსა

დასხლვისაჟამი, ესერა, მოიწია,

გურიტისადისმაჲმაჟუეყანასაჩუნსა.

τὰ ἄνωθι ᾠφθῆ ἐν τῇ γῇ,

καίροϛ τῆς τομῆς ἔφθακεν,

φωνή τῆς τρυγόνου ἡκοῖσθῆ ἐν τῇ γῇ ἡμῶν,

2:13

გამოუტეველელუმანყუავილითჳსი,

მოსცესვენატაყუავილთასულნელებად,

აღდეგდამოვედაწ, მახლობელოჩემო, [257v]

განშუენებულოჩემოდატრედოჩემო.

ἡ σὺκῆ ἐξῆνεγκεν ὀλύνθουϛ ἀπὸ τῆς,

αἱ ἄμπελοι κυπρίζουσιν, ἔδωκαν ὀσμὴν.

ἀνάνστα, ἔλθέ, ἡ πλησίον μου,

καλὴ μου, περιστερὰ μου,

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2:14

თვითთავითშენითმოხუჭდი, ტრედოჩემო,  
კლდისასაგრილსა, მახლობელადზღუდისა,  
მიჩუენეპირიდამასმინეკმაღმენი,  
რამეთუტკბილარსკმაღდაშუენიერპირი.  
καὶ ἔλθε σύ, περιστερὰ μου, ἐν σκέπῃ τῆς πέτρας,  
ἐχόμενα τοῦ προτειχίσματος· δεῖξόν μοι  
τὴν ὄψιν σου, καὶ ἀκούτισόν με τὴν φωνήν σου,  
ὅτι ἡ φωνή σου ἠδέσθαι, καὶ ἡ ὄψις σου ἀραΐα.

2:15

მიჰყრენითმელნიმცირენი, რყუნილები  
მოქმედნიშორისვენატასა, რამეთუ  
ვენატნიხუენნიყუავილოვანარიან.  
πάσατε ἡμῖν ἀλώπεκας μικροὺς  
ἀφανίζοντας ἀμπελῶνας,  
καὶ αἱ ἄμπελοι ἡμῶν κυπρίζουσιν.

2:16

ძმისწულიჩემიჩემდადამემისდამი,

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რომელიშროშანთაჰმწყსი.

ἀδελφιδέ μου ἔμοι, κἀγὼ ἀπὸ  
ὁ ποιμαίνων ἐν τοῖς κρίνοις

2:17

ვიდრემდისწარვიდესდღედამოიწივნენ

აზრდილნი, მოიქეცუკუჭემდამომართ,

ძმისწულო. ემსგავსებენ, ძმისწულოჩემო,

ქურციკსა, ანუშუელთა, მსპოლველსანუკრსა

ორმისსამთათაზედადღელოვანთასა.

ἕως οὗ διαπνεύσῃ ἢ ἡμέρα καὶ κινηθῶσιν

αἱ σκιαί. ἀπόστρεψον, ὁμοιωθήτι σύ,

ἀδελφιδέ μου, τῷ δόρκωνι ἢ νεβρῷ

ἐλάφων ἐπὶ ὄρη κοιλωμάτων.

Gregory of Nyssa's commentary is centered on the nuptials of Christ and the soul. In the *Homily V on the Song of Songs*, he interprets chapter 2 as an allegory of a gradual ascent of the soul to unite with the divinity<sup>xxvi</sup>. The lily, to which the bride is compared (2:1), is a symbol of purity, meaning a further step towards purification. The wine cellar (2:4) signifies the blood of Christ's passion. The groom behind the wall looking through the windows, peeping through the lattices (2:9) is an allegory of God speaking through the precepts of the law and the Prophets. Hearing the voice of the Logos through the windows of the Prophets, the bride rises and becomes a dove

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(2:10); she moves away from the wall (which is a figure of the law) towards the shelter of the rock, representing the Gospel (2:14). Since the soul is no longer more attached to an earthly experience, it openly wants to be able to see the face of the beloved, to distinctly hear his voice and defeat the Lord of Evil. In this way, the soul finally joins the Good Shepherd, the one who “grazes among the lilies” (2:16).

Mattheus Cantacuzenus, writing about a thousand years later, offers a totally different interpretation of the chapter<sup>xxvi</sup>. His work does not depict the spousal love between Christ and the soul and its ascent to God. The lily (2:1) is a symbol of the Holy Mother of God. The wine cellar (2:4) is the Jewish Temple because the Theotokos is the only one who had dwelt in the *Sancta Sanctorum*. The wall (2:9) is the flesh that the Savior took on for mankind. As a wall preventing the inside of an house from being seen, God’s flesh invisibly girds His divinity within, but the latter, be it somewhat indistinctly as through a window, manifested itself to the Apostles on Mount Tabor. The lattices symbolize Christ’s Passion. The words “rise up, my fair one, my dove” (2:10) are addressed to the Holy Mother of God, since it is time for her to be born, to become God’s abode. Verse 2:14 (“*[Thou art] my dove, in the shelter of the rock, near the wall: shew me thy face, and cause me to hear thy voice; for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is beautiful*”) is applied to Christ’s incarnation in the womb of the Theotokos, who is the purest Temple: the shelter of the rock is therefore interpreted as the place on which Christ has founded the Church. The voice is that of the Holy Mother of God according to the Gospel of Lucas 1:38 (“*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word*”).

#### IV

The examples offered above clearly highlight the difference between the two interpretations of the *Song of Songs*: one belonging to the fourth, the second to the fourteenth century. On the other hand, the evidence provided by the Vienna Codex No. 4 proves that, already in the second half of the twelfth century, a comprehensive Mariological exegesis of the book existed. The latter may certainly be even older, though it is difficult to determine to what extent. Whatever the date, it may nevertheless be argued that Georgian Medieval theologians had anticipated the Byzantines by proposing a fresh approach to this text, since Psellus appears unaware of the existence of a

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similar understanding of this Scriptural source. His silence may indeed be interpreted as indirect confirmation that this exegesis was, if not unknown, at the very least rare in the eleventh century Byzantium. This makes it seem even more improbable that the title in the Georgian translation had been taken from the Greek original. Being able to perhaps directly attribute the heading to the Georgian translator, logically leads us to conclude that the Georgian was a precursor to the Byzantine tradition. However, a crucial question still awaits an answer: how did this particular exegesis of the *Song of Songs*, focusing on the Holy Mother of God, originate? If it is clear that it did not derive from the commentaries of the Church Fathers, where did it first come from? What theological tradition provided the basis for its development and popularity in the late middle-Byzantine period?

The origin of the Mariological interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, it is my belief, may be explained through a closer scrutiny of not merely the exegetical tradition, but also of the other complementary genres of Byzantine literature dating from the sixth-ninth centuries. Psellus (within the confines of the last chapter of his commentary), the anonymous Georgian translator and Mattheus Cantacuzenus may have been influenced, according to my hypothesis, in their respective interpretative approaches, more by the devotional hymnographical tradition and the festal sermons, than by classical Patristic literature. When considering both these Byzantine celebrative genres (widespread given their association with liturgy), several authors are soon found to have extracted from the *Song of Songs* a multitude of images and metaphors that they chose to use in praise of the Holy Mother of God.

At some point, probably since the sixth century, several verses of this Scriptural text began to be regarded as a typological prefiguration of the Theotokos. They have been subsequently used in the composition of eulogia (salutations and encomia), which, along with their laudatory function, had to include a proper theological content. In this respect, important material for our investigation can be traced to Byzantine sources written for the Feast of the *Dormition* of the Holy Mother of God<sup>xxvi</sup>. The following examples, that I collected from the Homiletic tradition of the sixth-ninth centuries, may confirm the proposed hypothesis.



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1) Theoteknos of Livias (sixth-seventh centuries) interprets verse 4:16 of the *Song of Songs* (“*Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow through my garden, and let my spices waft abroad. Let my brotherkin descend into his garden and eat the fruit of its fruit-trees*”) as referring to the Holy Mother of God. In his *Encomium on the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God* he writes: “She has found what Adam was deprived of, because of his disobedience. She has entered, saying: “*Breathe on my garden*” (SS 4:16). God the Word has entered, has dwelt in her, and Paradise is opened”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

2) In the *III Sermon On the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God*. Andrew of Crete<sup>xxvi</sup> (ca. 660-740) identifies in the *Song of Songs* a number of prefigurations of Mary: “The holy book of Canticles described you in advance, when it made this hidden allusion: *Who is this who comes up from the desert like a column of smoke, breathing myrrh and incense made from all the merchant’s powders?* (SS 3:6). The same holy book also foretold you when its author wrote “Here is Solomon’s resting place; he has made its posts of silver, its base of gold, its steps of porphyry. Within it is paved with stone, [a gift of] love from the daughters of Jerusalem (SS 7:10). And further: *Come out, daughters of Sion, [and gaze] on King Solomon. He is wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, on the day of his hearth’s delight. See her, daughters of Sion, and call her blessed; queens and concubines, praise her, for the fragrance of her garments is beyond all perfume*” (SS 3:6). And a few lines below: *You are truly the one who is beautiful and there is no stain in you* (SS 4:7). Let holy Solomon sing to you yet another verse: *You are as lovely as Jerusalem, and the fragrance of your garments is as the fragrance of Lebanon* (SS 6:3; 4:11)<sup>xxvi</sup>.

3) Germanus of Constantinople (365-733) offers a Mariological interpretation of verse 3:1 of the *Song of Songs* (“*Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loved; I sought him but found him not; I called him, but he answered me not*”). In the *Encomium on the Holy and venerable Dormition of or most Glorious Lady, the Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary* he writes: “When she heard this message, the Mother of God rejoiced greatly, taking but little account of this passing human life; lighting great lamps throughout her house, she invited her relatives and neighbors, swept her room and decked her bed with flowers, as if it were all a virgin’s bride-

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chamber- that bed which until then she had flooded every night with prayerful tears, in her longing for Christ her Son. “*On my bed*” as Scripture says, “*I have sought him whom my soul loves*” (SS 3:1). Eagerly, she prepared all that was needed for her departure. She announced she was about to pass on, made public what had been revealed to her by the angel. And she showed everyone the baton that had been given to her: a palm branch, the symbol of victory over death and the token of unfading life”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

4) In the *II Homily On the Holy and Glorious Dormition and Transformation of Our Lady Mary, Mother of God and Ever Virgin* John of Damascus (675-749) depicts the Lord answering his mother using a number of expressions taken from several chapters of the *Song of Songs*<sup>xxvi</sup>. “Then, having spoken these words, she would have raised her hands, I imagine, and would have blessed those gathered there; and she would have heard, “Come by blessed Mother, into the place of my rest”. “*Arise, come, my dear one, beautiful among all women; for behold, winter has passed and the time of pruning has come*” (SS 2:10-12). *My dear one is beautiful, and there is no blemish in you*” (SS 4:7). *The odor of your ointments surpasses all fragrance* (SS 1:3; 4:10). And having heard these words, the Holy woman would have committed her soul to the hands of her Son”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

5) An extensive use of the *Song of Songs* can be found in Theodore Studites’ (759-826) *Homily on the Nativity of Mary*<sup>xxvi</sup>. This sermon is simply saturated with citations from this text, from which the author extracted a number of images that he reuses in a series of consecutive acclamations addressed to the Holy Mother of God<sup>xxvi</sup>. In particular he takes the images of the “locked garden” and of the “sealed fountain” (SS 4:12) as referring to the Theotokos. He also offers a clear Mariological interpretation of several verses from chapter two, as well as of verse 3:6, similarly as it has already been found in the case of Andrew of Crete’s homily.

The above-cited sections from the sermons written for the feast of the *Dormition* are extremely eloquent and clearly show that the association between the *Song of Songs* and the cult of the Theotokos was a frequent feature of the celebrative texts of the post-iconoclastic period. This represents the substrate that subsequently provided the basis for developing an overall Mariological interpretation of the text. It was certainly a gradual process that undoubtedly started even earlier, when in the Jerusalem Church Chant single verses from the *Song of Songs* began to be used in hymnographic compositions. Examples of this kind may be found in the Georgian *Iadgari*, which represents the oldest existing source for studying this tradition. The verse *I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers* (SS 8:10) is considered to be an explicit reference to the Holy Mother of God in a *troparion* of the first mode: “...რომელიშენიერიზღუდსდამფარველიმორწმუნეთაიგამომწნდი...”<sup>xxvi</sup>. Citations from the *Song of Songs* are also available in the seventh century *Life of the Virgin*, the most complete biography of the Theotokos, composed in Byzantium. This source survived only in the Georgian translation carried out by Euthymios Mtac’mideli (955-1028) in the early eleventh century at the Iviron monastery and is ascribed to Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-662). In this text the following epithets are found, taken respectively from SS 3:7 and 4:12-15: “ცხედარი მეუფისაჲ” (*the King’s couch*), “მტილი შეუხებელი” (*a garden locked*) and “წყარო ცხოველი” (*a fountain sealed*)<sup>xxvi</sup>. The allegorical interpretation of the *Couch of Solomon* (SS 3:7), of the *locked garden* and of the *sealed fountain* (4:12-15), as referring to the Holy Mother of God, became a *topos* not only in the subsequent Byzantine literature (as shown by the above mentioned text of Theodore Studites)<sup>xxvi</sup>, but also in iconography (for instance, in the twelfth century Icon of the Annunciation from Sinai that contains symbolic allusions to the *Song of Songs*<sup>xxvi</sup>).

On the basis of the collected data, the following conclusions are to be drawn. The *Song of Songs* began to be definitively related to the cult and the praise of the Holy Mother of God by the sixth century, most likely in the Jerusalem Church. The subsequent homiletic tradition of the seventh-ninth centuries developed the typological association between the bride and the Theotokos, anticipating the emergence of a full comprehensive Mariological interpretation of the text. The latter became widespread during the middle-Byzantine period and was dominant no later than the

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twelfth century. The liturgical tradition, developed in connection with the celebration of the feast of the *Dormition*, has therefore progressively replaced the interpretations of the *Song of Songs* that were offered by the Church Fathers of the third - fifth centuries. This assumption appears proven thanks to the evidence provided by Greek and Georgian sources. An additional confirmation of this conclusion is obtained when considering the testimony of other Christian traditions, belonging, on the one hand to the Western, and, on the other, to the non-Chalcedonian Churches.

The earliest full Latin Mariological interpretation of the *Song of Songs* dates to the twelfth century, when Rupert of Deutz (ca. 1075-1129) composed his commentary<sup>xxvi</sup>. It should nevertheless be noted that in the Western tradition important precedents can already be found several centuries earlier, namely in the works of Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340-397). The latter did not write any specific commentary about this Biblical book, but his writings contain citations from the *Song of Songs*. In several instances, he appears to be inclined to identify the Holy Mother of God with the bride. This association, however, is not in any manner of thinking explicit, but is mediated by the ecclesiastical interpretation, according to which Mary is a figure of the Church ("*Ecclesiae typus*") and vice versa, the Church is a figure of Mary<sup>xxvi</sup>. With regard to non-Chalcedonian traditions, the following sources should be considered. The famous Armenian writer of the second half of the tenth century, Grigor Narekatsi (951-1003), composed a commentary to the *Song of Songs*. As recent research has revealed, this author seems not to be generally inclined to develop argumentations focusing on a Mariological exegesis<sup>xxvi</sup>. In this regard the Armenian tradition markedly contrasts with the Georgian.

A brief look at the Ethiopic Church, shows that the use of the *Song of Songs* in praising the Holy Mother of God is extremely frequent in hymnography, although this practice appears to be a more recent significant phenomenon than in other Eastern traditions. In fact, the Ethiopic hymnographic genre called *The Image of Mary*, in which various parts of the body of the Holy Mother of God are praised with constant references to the ὄσμα ὁσμάτων, developed only from the fifteenth century onwards<sup>xxvi</sup>.

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A summary is now required: the analysis offered in the present paper represents only a preliminary study on this topic. The Old Georgian translation of the *Songs of Songs*, contained in Codex No. 4 of the Austrian National Library, merits special attention. In the theological tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church, it appears to be the earliest example of a comprehensive Mariological interpretation of the text. The Iambic version is anonymous and currently cannot be dated with any precision. Therefore, it demands to be subjected to additional analysis in future research. Its poetic features and the translation technique adopted should be thoroughly investigated in order to shed light on a number of still unsolved aspects, such as the issue of authorship and origin. As already noted by Z. Sarjveladze, this translation significantly deviates from the Septuaginta<sup>xxvi</sup>. It remains to be established whether differences should be ascribed to the prototype that was available to the Georgian translator or whether they resulted from a free translation method, reflecting the decision to produce a poetic version. Moreover, this text should be studied against the background of the Georgian poetic tradition of the eleventh and twelfth century, which has left us excellent examples of religious iambic poetry, many of which are also expressly devoted to the Holy Mother of God.

The origin of the comprehensive Mariological interpretation of the *Song of Songs* in the Byzantine tradition is unknown. However, it seems very likely that such an understanding of the text did not indeed derive from Greek Patristic commentaries, in which completely different interpretations are given, but was rooted in the liturgical hymnography and subsequently became common practice in celebrative homiletic literature, in particular in the sermons written for the feast of the *Dormition* of the eight-ninth centuries.

In previous studies focusing on the history of the interpretation of this Biblical book, this aspect seems to have been underestimated, if not completely ignored by scholars, who were instead more sensitive to works belonging to the traditional exegesis of the Church Fathers. The material presented in this paper demonstrates, on the contrary, that the history of the Mariological interpretation of the *Song of Songs* demands thorough academic investigation. Moreover, the Georgian tradition has yet again shown to preserve a genuine treasure trove of new exciting manuscripts paving the way to previously unexplored avenues of study. Georgian manuscripts are nothing less fundamental for studying the theological tradition of the Orthodox Church and

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especially in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the origins and the development of the cult of the Holy Mother of God during the Middle Ages.

**Nana Burchuladze**

**(Georgia)**

### **Essence of the Imagery of the Mother of God's Zarzma Icon**

The importance of the icon of the Mother of God with Baby Jesus is extremely great for the Christian Church. It is the most eminent collective image of the dogmats of the Lord's incarnation, sacrifice and salvation, due to which Her iconography is distinguished by special typological versatility, among them there is one widely spread variety "Caressing", the same "Gracious" Mother of God (Eleusa) whose origin by the ecclesiastic tradition is connected with the name of Luke, the evangelist.

The iconographic scheme of the icon of the Caressing Mother of God presents the image of the Mother of God with the body of Baby Christ, (Emanuel) clinging to Her bosom who on His part touches His Mother's face with His cheek and has His arm round His Mother's neck.<sup>1</sup>

It must be noted that specimens of the Caressing Mother of God have been preserved in Georgia (Sabareebi's cave paintings of churches – the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> cc.) on Mount Sinai (the icon, portraying the Lord's miracles and cycles of injuries, created by the Georgian monk Ioane Tokhabi in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the upper register of this icon is the

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image of the Constantinople icon of the Vlachern Mother of God), in the Cappadocian painting (the 11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century fresco icon of Tokali Kilise), the so called Vladimir's icon (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> cc.), Among them the portrayals of Sabereebi are the oldest. They are portrayed near sacrifice niches and scenes of crucifixion.<sup>2</sup> Later this iconography spread in various branches of art very widely.

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1. A variety of this iconography "Glicophilusa", i.e. the Mother of God kissing sweetly whose scheme contains warm relations of Mother and Son and Her caresses, seen more emphatically.
2. Shevakoviau. Georgian Monumental Painting of Early Middle Ages.

Special warmth and gentleness greatly influence people who see the iconography of the Caressing Mother of God, the warmth and gentleness with which the attitude of the Divine Couple to Each Other is shown. Though the expression of Their eyes is sad and ununderstandable, containing secret melancholy. And this is, of course, conditioned by the essence of the imagery of the iconographic wording.

It can be freely said that one of the best specimens of Eleusa's theme is Mother of God's icon of the Zarzma Monastery which generally is a unique creation, of ecclesiastic art of a high artistic level, made with brilliant technique and what is most important with a unique depth of the imagery of its essence.

The Zarzma icon, now kept in Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Art,<sup>3</sup> is of a medium size (80 X 64 sm.) It is an icon chased of gilded silver which in its time had pictorial faces. As the wooden board (47 X 35 sm.) was damaged it was changed several times and today on the 20<sup>th</sup> century board one can see a photo, taken for the painting, existing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

In the central part of the icon, against the background of a vine leaf the Mother of God of Eleusa type with the Baby Jesus is presented, as for the wide frame, apocryphal cycles of the Lord's twelve holidays and of the Mother of God's life that is quite a rare phenomenon in the Christian art and especially in the mentioned period.<sup>5</sup>

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Between the central part and the frame, on a narrow slope the donator's text is written in beautifully carved Georgian uncials. It is at a glance perceived as a décor merged into ornamental background. The text has the following contents:

“Holy Queen, be a mediator of mine before your son and our Lord and of all Laklakis: of Eristavt Eristavi Mirian and Khurtsiki, son of Khurtsiki: Mirian, Khorsan,

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1. Due to the danger, created by the Turk – Osmanlis in Southern Georgia, the icon was taken to the Gurian Shemokmedi Monastery in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was brought from there to Tbilisi in 1924. Several fragments of the upper part of its chasing is in Russia and is kept in the Hermitage.
  2. The board of those times split into two parts, with its painting is kept in the Museum funds.
  3. These two cycles together, only on opposite walls, are presented in the Ateni Sion, painted last in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Kurdia, Khtsh; I miserable Evpraksia, mother of Khurtsiki and Mirian adorned this icon to pray for all the Laklaks and to pray for my soul.”

As it is discovered the one who adorned the icon is Evpraksia, the mother of Eristavt Eristavis Khurtsiki and Mirian. She adorned the icon with the purpose of praying and mentioning in prayers of her sons, grandchildren and all the Laklaks (the Same Laklakidze's) in general. As for this family, as is seen from the donator's inscription that is made on the donation for the icon of transfiguration at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century it was the owner of the Zarzma church and lands.<sup>6</sup>

Proceeding from the meaning of the word “adornment,” Evpraksia had the already existing pictorial icon chased. Unfortunately, nothing is left of the initial painting of the icon. Due to the damaged board the latter was changed many times during the centuries and at present a photo, taken in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is inserted in it instead of the 19<sup>th</sup> century painting. The icon does not have the comparatively later adornment – precious stones either, of these only the holes of their settings are left.<sup>7</sup>

There is no information about this icon in historical sources, but by its iconographic – stylistic characteristics (G. Chubinashvili)<sup>8</sup> and considering the information, existing about the Laklakidzes (E. Taqaishvili) it is dated back to the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>



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It must be noted that it is from this time that icons on which the saints are portrayed with the scenes of their lives are spread in Byzantine art.<sup>10</sup>

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6.G.Chubinashvili, *Georgian Chasing Art*. Vol. 1, Tbilisi, 1959, p. 128.

7. According to the description of Dimitri Bakradze and Ekvtime Taqaishvili and the photos of Roinishvili–Ermakov, the chased cover of the icon was adorned by 32 precious stones of a large size which supposedly were stolen during the antireligious campaign in the 1920-s.

8. G. Chubinashvili, *Georgian Chasing Art*, p.p. 194 – 212.

9. Petersen Shevchenko thinks that the Zarzma icon was created in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (N. Petersen - Shevchenko. *Vita Icons and Decorated Icons of the Comnenian*).

10. N. Petersen –Sevcchenko, *ibidem*.

On the lower part of the Zarzma icon from the left to the right the episodes of St. Ioakim and Anna's life are distributed. Their succession from the left to the right is as follows: "The refusal of the present by Ioakime and Anna," "Ioakime's Annunciation," "Anna's Annunciation," "The birth of the Mother of God" and "Marrying Mary to Joseph."

On the upper part of the frame the following is presented in the same way: "Crucifixion," "Resurrection," "Ascention" and "The Dormition of the Mother of God."

But as for the lateral planes, here including "Annunciation" "Palm Sunday" six scenes ("Christmas," "Presentation at the Temple" "Epiphany," "Transfiguration") are distributed without any system at a glance, breaking the historical succession.

There is an opinion that such a distribution of the scenes on the vertical parts of the frame is based on a certain artistic system by which balance is established among compositions and the general structure becomes more symmetrical (G. Chubinashvili). But as it appears the secret of the strangeness of the iconographic scheme of the greatest sanctity of the Georgian church lies in its theological essence.

The matter is that the scheme of placing the scenes on the icon in historic succession and adding half a figure of the Mother of God as compositional axis to it, with the outline of the Mother of God's head presents the well-known "Chrisma," well-known

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in the early Christian art, considered to be a symbol of the dogmat of a divine victim and salvation.

Chrisma is a monogram, received by joining the letters of Jesus Christ's name.<sup>11</sup> We come across its different variations and in different cases its symbolic essence is explained from different points of view. For instance, Chrisma with six endings points to the creation of the world in six days by God. And when the upper part of the vertical

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11.It "as a protecting sign on the weapons of Byzantine warriors was portrayed on shields.

axis is closed and it has the shape of the Latin letter "gh" in that case it points to Christ's royal glory, for ghekh in Latin means king. Chrisma with eight endings means the crucifixion of the world's lord and His second coming on the 8<sup>th</sup> day and as this last version is connected with the dogmat of the victim and salvation, we come across it in the ecclesiastic art of the early Christian period very often.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the main axis, according to its contents, of the theological program of the Zarzma icon is the crucifixion of our Savior, i.e. the theme of a victim. Its proof is that in the upper left corner of the frame of the icon, at the head of the succession of scenes a "crucifix" is portrayed and also that along it, below the initial composition of the Mother of God's cycle, the story of taking sacrifice to the church by Ioakim and Anna is presented. Herewith, according to the Christian imagery the Mother of God of "Eleusa" type Herself is seen by us as a prophetic icon of a divine sacrifice. In such icons the caresses of mother and child do not express a simple motherly feeling of love, they express the sadness and pain that people's deadly sin - not recognizing the Lord, mocking, torturing and be ready to kill Him arises.

It is noteworthy that in the paintings of the cave churches of Cappadocian and of David Gareja monastery monks' cells "Eleusa" is placed in sacrificial niches and so that the "Crucifixion" is portrayed near it. It is also important that the back of the main icon of the Philotheos Monastery of Mount Athos, "the sweetly kissing Mother of

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God is adorned with the picture of “Crucifixion,” and the back part of the Vladimir Mother of God presents “prepared church” (Petimasia) together with the instruments of the Lord’s injury.

“The prepared church” is the symbol of the Lord’s second advent, the Doomsday and salvation, i.e. the theological program of Vladimir’s icon from the iconographic point of view expresses the idea of obtaining salvation and eternal life.

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12. In connection with this we must remember that an event is known from the reliefs of Early – Christian burial places and sarcophagi when in the composition of the “crucifixion which had many episodes and many figures and which was wide –spread Our Savior’s body is substituted by placing the Chisma of this type on the cross(see R. Milburn. Early Christian Art Architecture. Berkley and Los Angeles, p. 69, tab. 40).

Zarzma Mother of God’s program is dedicated to the same idea, only in this case the ideas of the victim, the second advent and salvation are not presented on both sides of the board, they are presented on the surface, clandestinely, esoterically.

In this respect it is noteworthy that the last three scenes of the upper plane of the frame “the defeat of the hell.” Ascencion” and “ “the dormition of the Virgin” are considered to be the icons, prophesying the second advent of the Lord. Thus, their being placed together with “Crucifixion” in the upper part, the heavenly part of the icon visually and by its essence makes us closer to the eighth day.

It must be noted that the “Caressing” Mother of God is also the icon of the mourning over Her son’s body, lying on a stone, presented in advance and also that it is a symbol of joining the church of this world to the heavenly Church and God. The inevitable condition, of this according to the teaching of the church, is taking part in the mystery of Eucharist. In this respect, of course, it is not fortuitous that the scene of “Crucifixion” on the Zarzma icon is presented liturgically and not historically, by the blood and water from Our Savior’s side flowing into a vessel lavishly and the fact that the icon has a symbol of Eucharist as a background, the most beautiful carpet, made according to the motif of a vine leaf. While looking at it a metaphore said by Our Savior in the Gospel many times “I am a genuine vineyard” and the chant, dedicated to

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the Holy Virgin by King Demetre (1125-1315) “ You are a vineyard” come to one’s mind.

Thus, the imagery program of the Zarzma icon contains the dogmas of the victim and salvation and the theme of the Holy Eucharist, connecting them. It is this that conditions the originality of its iconographic scheme and the divine spirit of the icon.

As for the style and manner of painting, the icon is so refined and artistic that it is clear that its author is a high class master. By its compositional scheme, the structure of separate scenes, proportions of figures, poses, gestures and placing them in “space,” expressions of faces and the working out of second-rate details (landscapes, architecture) as well as vegetation ornament or presenting other decorative elements the icon stands among such masterpieces as are the iconostases of Sapara, Shiomgvi, Samtavro, Zedazeni, Ateni, and more than that, the nearest parallel of the icon of the Zarzma Mother of God is the 12<sup>th</sup> century icon – architrave, preserved in St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sioni, on which twelve holidays of the Lord are presented. And which is considered to be a brilliant specimen of Byzantine painting. Among them “Annunciation” is very much like the “Annunciation” of the Zarzma icon. This in the first place concerns the Mother of God’s figure and the throne and building, painted behind her and that most unique fact that the Mother of God has two spindles, held crosswise in her hands on both icons which points to the fact that the conception of the Savior of mankind Jesus Christ happens with two - heavenly and man’s natures.

While observing the icon of Mount Sinai, one will clearly see that this resemblance has quite a natural foundation revealed by the short inscription “eshecopla” performed in a very beautiful handwriting in the lower part of the building. The inscription is written in the Georgian uncials and is the painter’s autograph. Herewith in the scene of “Entering Jerusalem” the trace of a Georgian inscription is seen in the foreground on the cornice of the roof of the buildings of the city. This inscription, unfortunately, is so fragmentary that it is illegible. Making Georgian inscriptions on this beautiful icon – iconostasis clandestinely means in what hard conditions Georgian monks had to work on Mount Sinai. On the other hand, the inscriptions also mean that our ancestors on the

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Holy Mount Sinai did not do only literary work but they also did very important artistic work too. The Laklakidzes' icon is so close to the icon on Mount Sinai that naturally a question arises – cannot we think that they are created by the same master, well – versed in both painting and goldsmith's art? All the more so as in both in the old and modern ecclesiastic art such precedents have taken place.

Finally it must be said that the Zarzma Caressing Mother of God's icon is a unique specimen of the category of the Christian art about which the great fathers of the church said at one time "The eyes of those who see these Venerable icons will be pure and their minds will become able to cognize God."

**Priest Maxim Vlad**

**(Romania)**

**Devotion to the Mother of God expressed by Romanian people in his own dialect popular.**

**(The Piety in Comparison with the Mother of God expressed by the Romanian People in Its Popular Creation)**

In the tradition of the Romanian folkloric poetry, the carol represents the most diversified and the best represented category of the ceremonial texts. The religious carols are part and parcel of the eastern spirituality, i.e., of the Romanian religious folklore, being made up as right confessions of faith, plain and spontaneous, whose continuity and transmission from a generation to the next have been guaranteed by the rites power. The carol perpetuates orally both old popular traditions and the richness of the dogmatic ideas contained by them, and thus it could be considered as a Gospel in popular verse. Moreover, "the knowledge of the carol justifies and, at the same time, overcomes the ethnographic interest; an outstanding chapter of mythology and a testimony of some steadfast cultural traditions, the carol equally imposes itself to our attention as a thesaurus of language and as a bright preamble of the Romanian written poetry."<sup>xxvi</sup> Its origin is not a pagan one, even though its name derives from the Latin term "*calendae*" (first day of the

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month in the Roman calendar), the carol claims itself as a natural and necessary prolongation of the cantor's stand songs, of the liturgical hymns. However, only a part of its repertoire – the one which directly sends to the facts evoked in the Gospels – may be rigorously considered as a Christian one. It may be added to this one a strong personal annotation which reflects the spirituality of the community coagulated around the anonymous author, but, also, some reminiscences of some apocryphal texts, which in the first place influence the carol by their fabulous side.<sup>xxvi</sup> Owing to its power of diffusion, the Christianity has disseminated its "miraculous" in the soil of popular cultural elements which are specific to each nation that has embraced it. The outcome was the apparition of some folkloric elements in the Christian layer, a junction between the sacred side and the profane one of the rite which is especially obvious in the carols material.

The Christian carol, specifically Romanian, has a double function: the first one is the invocation of the sacred by this devotional act, and the second one, the evoking of the mythical time which is desired to be reiterated at each feast in which the carol serves as ceremonial. Valeriu Anania confesses that of the "lyrical jewels"<sup>xxvi</sup> which we owe to "anonymous creators of carols" and of which beauty cannot satiate him, is the text of the carol which praises the greatness of the Christmas evening, in which the Holy Son was incarnate by the Virgin: "Great is today's evening/But it is not today's evening/It is the evening of Christmas/Of the old Christmas/When the Holy Son was born/The Holy Son on this earth."<sup>xxvi</sup>

The verses are surprising by the game of the tenses. The present tense is asserted, and then negated; the external time is converted in mythical time, by annulling its flow and by petrifying in the sacred instant of the feast. The asserting and negating of the present tense – of the Christmas feast "of now" – does not have the role of annulling the immediate reality but, on the contrary, "it intensifies it by reiterating the original event."<sup>xxvi</sup> "But it is not today's evening/It is the evening of Christmas."

The majority of the carols bring in the first place the emblematic figure for the New Testament of the Mother of God. The attributes which belong exclusively to her, namely, "Birthgiver of God" (*Theotokos*), and "ever Virgin" (*Aeiparthenos*), come up connected up

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together particularly in the star songs. Thus, Mary is called by such appellatives as: *"Most pure," "The pure one," "The Virgin Mary," "Most holy Light" "The blessed most honored,"* etc.

The image full of gentleness of the Virgin is surrounded in the carols by the compassion of the collective character – the Orthodox Romanian people, which was effectively participating during its history in the enculturation of the Gospel in its own space: *"Don't weep my Mother anymore/We shall give you swaddling clothes/Oh, Most Pure one/To swaddle the Holy Babe."*

The possessive adjective (*"My<sup>xxvi</sup> Mother"*) strengthens the conviction that in the Faithfull's soul Mary is not only our Savior's Mother, but She is the Mother of the entire mankind, since she prays before the Most Holy Trinity for everybody's salvation with the same devotion. The richness of images that present Mary in her maternal hypostasis as well as the intimacy created by the noun "Mother" (which is the Romanian term for an Orthodox nun), underlines a disjunction in the Marian cult: the majority of the Westerns creations have developed "the cult of the Virgin Mary," by exploiting the idea of the "immaculate conception," of the virginal birth, while the Orthodox East does prefer to accentuate Mary's distinctive feature of being "the Mother of God." Let us not forget that the first one who called Mary "the Mother of my Lord" was Elisabeth, driven by a divine sign, since the babe – St. John – leaped in her womb: *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"<sup>xxvi</sup>*

The hostility of the men, corrupted by sin, which did not allow Mary to become Mother of God in their houses, is reprovably set in contrast with the Gospel's hospitality of the Romanian people which is expressed on in the carol: *"Oh, Bethlehem, you have not received/Inside your good houses/To offer a little shelter/To the Most Holy little Babe./You have not known, Oh, Bethlehem/With how much love comes/The most holy among Virgins/The Birthgiver of the Lord."*

*"The most holy among Virgins"* becomes the equivalent of the *"Blessed among women,"* which is a superlative that distinguishes Mary among all the other women by the special grace bestowed to her body, worthy of blessing and glory. It is necessary to be mentioned that, in the religious carols, the attribute *Aeiparthenos* – *"Ever Virgin"* is harmoniously linked as a token of high devotion, with *"Most pure," "The pure one," "The most holy Light," "The blessed most*

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*honored,*” the appellatives invested with so much profoundness, which are, also, resumed later by the cultured lyric.

The carolers go from one house to the next not only to bless the hosts with the wonderful news, but, also, to counsel them to get ready for an unexpected visit. Symbolically speaking, the host hospitality who invites the carolers inside the house, may be interpreted as an attempt at “re-writing” the facts, and this time as it behooves, since the carolers do not do anything else but try to repeat the Mary’s gesture of trying to find a shelter. Mircea Eliade remarked the fact that for the archaic man, the reality is the imitation function<sup>xxvi</sup> of a celestial arch-type (in the case of the carol, “the imitation” of a biblical event). The texts of the carols are telling especially on the sorrowing of Mary who is giving birth to her Son into a poor manger, thus setting the greatest example of humiliation. At this point, the words of Blessed Augustine are welcome, since they teach us that “all the power resides in humbleness, since the pride is fragile. The humble ones are as hard as a cliff; the cliff seems to have its head bowed, but it is unbending.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Her whole life, spent in the shadow of her celestial Son is a sum of small suffering and joys completely human. Since, unlike the gods and the fantastic beings of which the mythologies are oozing, and which are born of water, of the air, or of the bosom of nature, Jesus becomes incarnate of a woman. “The Mother of the Lord becomes a social standing superior to us, she is a deified nature, a human nature nevertheless, not a nature strange to us, but the nature in which the sin has died,” as noticed in her study<sup>xxvi</sup> Anca Manolache. *“The Babe is lying in the manger/And the Most pure Virgin/Sits close to Him while she is sad/Because in the town Bethlehem/Could not get a shelter as a present/And she gave birth to her Holy Son/ Down in the manger on the earth.”*

In assuming the biblical facts, and, at the same time, in giving them a personal note by reporting them to the Romanian tradition and spirituality, the folklore has disseminated them in dramatizations specific to the melos of the doina (elegiac song typical of Romanian lyrical folk poetry and music), of the ballad, as well as of the carol. Descended from heaven in order for him to venerate the icon of the Most Pure one, an angel is asked by her what good news is he bringing for her village. The angel pours out his bitterness through an imprecation, by cursing the news as well as the behavior of the men who do not offer either shelter or help to Mary. By taking her in his possession, by recognizing the Mother of the Lord, the empathy in comparison with her suffering are brought out by using the ethic dative, which is one of the marks specific to



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the morphology of the popular lyrical text: (*"No one in the world allows my<sup>xxvi</sup> Mother to get inside the house"*): *"He descended, has descended/The angel of the Lord Holy/At the cross of the church/At the icon of the Most pur' one,/And the icon has asked him/What good news is in our village?/Bad news, may it be burned by fire/Since Mary the Virgin/Has met her time to give birth,/And she goes from house to house/No one in the world allows my Mother to get inside the house."*<sup>xxvi</sup>

Quite edifying for the way in which the folkloric creations interpret and re-organize the biblical material, is the strong local imprint with which these texts are impregnated. An attentive reading emphasizes to us that, most often, Mary's way from Nazareth to Bethlehem is prolonged by the popular imagination to the Romanian hillsides. From these texts, the majority of the traditionalist poets have been inspired, and in their verses the religious lode is knitted with autochthonous notes. Let us bring here to memory that the birth of the Virgin, as it is described by the poet Ion Pillat, does not take place in Galilee, but into a Romanian patriarchal village from the zone of Argeş: *"There were no olives, neither laurels, nor fig trees.../The holy land is not of Galilee.../Nazareth is in our land, Joachim/From the porch the Lady's River looks."*<sup>xxvi</sup>

Thus, in the popular creations is realized a strong connection between the Mother of God and the nature which surrounds her. The faithful do assume their liberty to put in the mouth of the Virgin their judgments on certain plants or animals which help or prevent the coming of Jesus into the world. The popular literature is abounding with texts which develop this motif, some of them being circulated on a melodic line in the carols or star songs, and some others in the form of prose legends.<sup>xxvi</sup> As the historian Corina Turc was remarking in her study,<sup>xxvi</sup> the Romanian mentality was during the 17- 19<sup>th</sup> centuries reliably nurtured by folkloric motifs by carols superstitions, by legends in which the Virgin Mary played the role of mediator between the divine instance and the sinner.

In order for me to illustrate this idea, I will stop at some carols which catch both the importance and the falling in "disgrace" of some animals or plants within the collective imaginary, by stopping at the symbolism it bears and analyzing the lyrical structure of these texts, to the extent to which – I repeat – the carols are situated at the confluence of the epic, lyric and dramatic genres.

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It is attributed to the Virgin a lasting and dynamic relation with the nature which resonates at her presence and living. Of course, the trees and the plants of the Romanian popular carols do not indicate the Galilee's cultural cliché, rather than that there are some signs of the displacing the biblical occurrence on the little sheep's ballad hillside – *"Up on the hillside, foot of Paradise."* By imposing itself gradually as a universal religion, the Christianity has involuntarily contributed at the "fraternization" of some aspects which belong to heterogeneous religions, which, under some other aspects, do not have any common points. The presence of some elements of the Mediterranean basin's folklore and of Asia Minor in points which are geographically quite far from one another gets explained by the fact that, all at once with the early Christianity, the peoples which assumed it as their faith have embraced, also, the legends and the figures brought by it as founding stones for the building of the cults. Monica Brătulescu was noticing that the texts widely spread which present the Mother of the Lord tired of walking on the road and asking for shelter in the shadow of the poplar and of the yew tree,<sup>xxvi</sup> are originated into an old Christian legend, impregnated by the Orient's atmosphere; the carol, at its turn, was inspired by an apocryphal Gospel, where the palm tree was the one which was defending Mary from the merciless scorching heat.

In passing to the animalic range, the antinomic characters do change, by keeping a scheme which is identical with the one that I mentioned in the above carol nevertheless. At this time Mary asks the horses to help her, by requesting them to quiet down the crunching and their restless tramping, but to breathe, also, over her in order for them to warm her up. With the same obstinacy as the poplar, even more than that, they seem to intensify the agitation: *"The horses listened to her badly/They were stronger crunching/And in hoofs they were more snapping."*<sup>xxvi</sup>

The Virgin heads towards the oxen manger, while not being able to give birth to her Son around the horses. The oxen prove to be much more submissive to her requests, and by their massiveness as well as by their warm breathing they were protecting the coming of Jesus into the world. Their goodness is rewarded with the permanent satiety and with the making easier the toils which these pack animals have to realize: *"Damn to you, oxen blessed,/By me, by my Son/And much more by God./May you have more satiety/All the day three times/And at night twice/And may you go in nine days/As much as should go in two."*

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A fundamental trait of the Romanian folklore is the fusion of the popular lode with the Christian one at the level of the characters or of the dramatic solutions. In the carols, the elimination of the popular mythological characters is done gradually, they being replaced at the end by the saints of the Christian "pantheon," and the elements belonging to the popular miraculous are made less distinct. However, in some texts we still meet them co-inhabiting. This is the case with some carols in which the Virgin Mary insists besides Holy Sunday to participate in the baptism of the babe Jesus: "*Commanded, Holy Mary, O Lord, to the Lord, O Lord,/To the dear holy, to the Sunday/To do so much well/And to come on Thursday to us/On Friday she may come back/Since a little Son is to be baptized.*"<sup>xxvi</sup>

The holy Sunday, "*the dear holy*" is a symbolic character, born from a profoundly religious logic: if the Virgin is embodied oftentimes as a church, it is a natural thing for the day of the week, in which the most important religious service takes place, to be in its turn glorified.

Coming back to the lyricism of the carol, it has to be underlined that the first of its adaptation to Christianity was the introduction of some refrains or of some final formulas. One of the oldest refrains inserted in the carol seems to have been "*Alleluia*" which was deformed in the profane carols and in the Christian ones by the syntagm corrupted from the original "*Leru-i Ler.*" First attestation of this refrain is found at Dimitrie Cantemir, both in the *Descriptio Moldaviae* and in the *Hronicul vechimei romano-moldo-vlahilor*.<sup>xxvi</sup>

By making a summary presentation of the Virgin's image in the popular lyric (be it even intertwined with the other literary genres, as it is the case with the carols and with the star songs), I tried to point out the profound perception, even it is a primitive one, the reporting to the sacred of the simple, religious man. It goes without saying that the time of genesis for these popular creations is a privileged one, connected to an archaic ontology, which allows a lasting relation between the creation and its creator. All at once with the nativity of the Son and through Mary, the transcendence takes an image, "the addressee" of the prayers, the absolute possessor of the mediation and of the fulfilling the prayers is by now well determined. Horia Roman-Patapievici catches these internal movements of the traditional religious man – the being uncorrupt by modernity or by his own processes of conscience, because in the course of salvation the reason is manifesting itself freely: "The traditional homo religiosus has lived his relation with God as a

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relation with an absolute transcendence without image and representations (the Father) or as a relation with the describable transcendence, close to us and simultaneously divine (the Son).<sup>xxvi</sup>

Without doubt, the cult of the Virgin Mary, as it appears in the popular literature, is a precious indication of propensity toward gentleness and humbleness by the anonymous creator. By knowing these data of the autochthonous spirituality, we do feel under an obligation to introspect our own soul, because, "seeing that things are as they are, how could one to not love a nation which has ennobled the feeling of duration by faith in the perpetuity of Incarnation? And how could one to not love a land in whose swaddling clothes God has warmed up His holy little feet?"<sup>xxvi</sup>

**Ia Gadua**

**(Georgia)**

### **Parallel Imagery and Symbols of Virgin Mary and Eva in Ecclesiastical Poetry**

The imagery and symbols of the Virgin is undoubtedly exceptional in its plentitude and diversity. While in hymns to God and Saints most importance is attached to their theological interpretations and, consequently, their study is predetermined by these aspects, metaphorical thinking and the abundance of tropes are characteristic to the hymns addressed to the Virgin creating esthetic feelings in listeners. The symbolic and allegoric thinking as well as spiritual simplicity conduct human spirituality towards the high Heaven regained by the mankind through the deliverance with the Saint Virgin's succour.

Reverence for Virgin Mary is presumably conditioned by her human essence. It should be noted though that the superiority of the Virgin Mary to not only mortals but to the Angels as well is always clearly implied.

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The symbolic imagery of the Virgin Mary has acquired fixed forms and has been regularly repeated in hymns. This allows the study of the process of the development of the tradition of the symbols and imagery beginning from biblical traditions up to hymns. The research shows that not only Georgian hymnography but also the samples of the best spiritual writings are rich of these fixed imagery and symbols.

The blessed virgin, mother of light, queen, the chamber of sanctuary, the stronghold of Christians, the rehabilitation of Eve, purple rose, the ladder that Jacob saw, the stronghold of our life, the burning bush, lamp, she who helped all people, mountain, the fruitful mountain, the Sioni mountain, a tree in blossom, the tree of truth, the abode of God, the abode of the holy spirit, the abode of light, the holiest heaven, the abode of God, the olive tree, the beautiful and fruitful olive tree, the highest of the cherubims, the unmarried maiden, pure fleece, God's pure chamber, the branch of purity, the chamber of sanctuary, armour undefeated, the temple of God, the Virgin who must be praised by psalmody, the divine flower of virginity, the highest of cherubims, the second heaven, a lily, the pure lily of life, the present of life, the hidden spring - these constitute only a small part of the repertoire of the epithets, symbols and images from the embellishments of the Holy Virgin that the authors of hymns make use of. True, nearly all epithets are taken from Greek but they were so naturally established in Georgian hymns that some of them even became a part of national theology.

Using hypodigmatic or paradigmatic data the authors of hymns are able to choose allegoric symbols, associations, parallelisms of images and literary technique in bringing their own attitude and emotions to the listeners. But behind these symbols the immense information is to be seen which requires liturgical perception or awareness of a creator and addressee. It is impossible to understand the imagery and symbols of the Holy Virgin without considering the events of the Old Testament, as the Old Testament is the expectation of Christ, and its allegory and symbols imply the events and people of the new era. St. Fathers repeatedly note that the Old Testament points out to the events of the New Testament through its parables. As parallel imagery, these hypodigmatic and paradigmatic data of the Old and New Testaments are united in hymnography. At the same time, the hymns to the Holy Virgin are distinguished for the poetic character of psalms.

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Th authors of Hymns often call the Holy Virgin « the destroyer of cursing» opposing her thus to Eva. With the succour of the Mother of God it was possible to re-establish the union of God and Man, she wiped out Eva's original sin: «from the barren Anna the destroyer of the curse who gave birth to Creator has shined out today (Giorgi the Athonite.... 2007 :133) ; « the rescuer of the first fathers and destroyer of the anguish planted by Eva (Giorgi the Athonite.. 2007 : 134).

Presenting the Mother of God and Eva as memebbers of binary opposition was stasrted in the theological doctrine.

Justin the Martyr was the first to make comparison of Eva and the Holly Virgin. According to Irenaeus of Lyons, the Theologist of the 2nd century, the Mother of God is the new Eva, because Mary gave birth to new Adam - in other words, she is the saviour of Eva. St. Irenaeus of Lyons's Christology is based on the doctrine of 'recapitulation' or 'accumulating' which begins from St Paul the Apostle's doctrine (Christ - new Adam), and implies that everything from the beginning to the incarnation is amassed in Christ.

In St.Irenaeus of Lyons theory of Maryology «recapitulation» or amassing is worded in the following way : « Eva was willful. First she was willful when she was still a virgin. If Eva, whose husband was Adam who was still barren, became the reason of the death of herself and of the whole mankind, Mary, who in the like way had her pledged husband and who was a virgin, too, became the reason or savior of herself and the whole mankind through her humbleness.... What was bound up by virgin Eva through her disbelief, was released by the the Virgin through her faith » (Ireneos Lionel 2002 : 15-16).

The Mother of God is presented as the opposite to Eva by John Chrisostomos in his reader «On the Dormition of the Mother of God»: « In the beginning the angels accused Eva, but Mary they glorified, because she cured women of their feebleness and enlivened their declined glory. And Adam who was expelled from Paradise she set on to the way towards the Heaven, who the closed Paradise opened and settled the malefactor there. Because you hath broken down the middle wall of partition, again by you, St.Vergin, peace of the Heaven was established all over the earth (John the Chrisostomos 1959 : 205)

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Although all symbols and images characterize the Mother of God with various features, the majority of the symbols are grounded on one image – the Virginity of the Mother of God, her immaculateness, which is expressed by John of Damascus in the following way: « The virgin before giving birth, the virgin when giving birth to Christ and the virgin thereafter, the only and eternal virgin.»(John of Damascus 1986 :118).

This is an unconceivable mystery for human mind and St. Andrew of Crete in his reader « The Birth of the Mother of God» applies the method of poetical interpretation - enigmatics : « If the world could be measured with hand-span, and the sea could be boarded all around with ropes, the sky measured by feet, or the stars be numbered by numerals, in the same way - the drops of rain, dust of the earth, the thickness of air or quantity of sand, if all these were known and perceived with the mind, only then could our lips be able to describe and our mind to perceive.» Andrew of Crete 1986 : 145).

As already mentioned, a number of images and symbols connected with the Mother of God originated from the Bible. All of them are noted for unique and deep symbolic meanings, poetic expressiveness, greatness, rich imagery and - which is important – for the invaluable theological information. In fact Biblical chronotopic mysteries are presented in a concentrated way in these images and symbols, because the imagery and symbols of Mother of God contain the teaching according to which the Old Testament was the preparatory period for the New Testament; they declare the expectation of the prophets of the occurrence of the Messiah, which may be confirmed with one of the hymn from the oldest hymnody of Annunciation : “Today will the truth of the prophets be born, for they see the prophesy come true – the Virgin is with the young and by her Immanuel is born who is “God is with us.” (The oldest... 1980:10)

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### Summary

In the the hymns to God and Saints theological aspects are chiefly of main importance, but the hymns to the Mother of God are also noteworthy for their metaphorical thinking and tropes, that stimulate esthetic feelings in the listener. They make the symbolic and allegoric thinking comprehensible, also, and the spiritual simplicity is made accessible, which conducts human spirituality towards the high Heavens regained by the mankind through the deliverance and with the succour of the Saint Virgin.

Understanding images and symbols attached to the Mother of God is impossible without taking into consideration the Old Testament, as the Old Testament is the expectation of Christ; its symbols and allegories point out to the New testament. The Old Testament was the pre-portrayal of the events of new era and new people.

The authors of hymns often call the Holy Virgin «the destroyer of cursing », opposing her to Eva. With the succour of the Mother of God it was possible to re-establsih the union of God and Man, she wiped out Eva's original sin. Presenting the Mother of God and Eva as members of binary opposition started from theological doctrine. According to Irenaeus of Lyons, a theologist



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of the 2nd century, Mary gave birth to new Adam, and so the Mother of God is New Eva, in other words – the saviour of Eva.

Although every symbol and image characterizes the Holy Mother with various features, the majority of the symbols are grounded on one image – the virginity of the Mother of God, her immaculateness, which is expressed by John of Damascus in the following words : »The virgin before giving birth, the virgin when giving birth to Christ and the virgin thereafter, the only and eternal virgin.»

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**The Mother of God as the Protector of Mother-and-Child Relationship  
(According to ethnographic material)**

According to Georgian written sources and the ecclesiastic tradition, Georgia is the country allotted to the Virgin Mary. Also, according to Georgian ethnographic material, in about all regions of Georgia the Mother of God is one of the most popular saints – in troubled times or difficulty she is asked for help and assistance. In our presentation paper we endeavour to show what is the character of the Mother of God as the protector saint of family fertility and reproduction. The title of our paper fully reflects the faith of Georgians in the Mother-of-God; at all times respondents begin their information with the phrase: "The mother of God is the deity protecting mother-and-child relationship"... that is why in the first place childless family turned to the Mother of God, praying, offering sacrifices, making vows : 'If I only.. have a Child, then I...', "only let my child be healthy / if only my child is cured of..." It is understood that a

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worshipper is ready to perform every ritual that is required, in other words: that means: offer up prayers, make sacrifice, keep night vigils, etc.

Most interesting is the blessing given to a bride by a chief priest that is attested in the mountainous region of East Georgia: "You blessed Mary, Saint Mother of God, your fiefdom – men and women - beseech you, be merciful to the daughter-in-law (the name is mentioned) [that has] come to you; make her lucky, let her never regret coming to you and imploring you in her own way. Give your fiefs a son and son's cradle, they have not deprived you of what is their custom, and don't deprive them of your mercy, you well beloved [*sheni chirime*] .(Ochiauri, 1988). After the chief priest an elderly lady asks the Mother of God to give a son to the new wedded, so that "in her house a cradle be always rocking". This ritual is performed on the banks of the river Maturela; after the blessing, a bride used to be laid into the river three times, she was not allowed to change her wet clothes. It is deduced from this material that water is supposed to grant her fertility and the bride should share the fertility power of water to obtain the power of reproduction (Ochiauri, 1975. 161-168).

True, the text of the above prayer is very different from the canonical prayer text, it is a sample of folklore, but the researchers believe that in east Georgia mountainous regions the texts in use are based on Christian ecclesiastic grounds, but the pagan strata are also seen, which is caused by the weakness of the influence Georgian Christian church and by the formation of the institute of the pagan chief priests (Makhauri, 2013.195; Z.Kiknadze, 1998. 7-8).

Georgian ethnographic material connected with the ceremonies of the New Year cycle is rich with the examples of the idea of fertility connected with water as well as with the revival of nature (Makalatia, 1972. 299-306; Rukhadze, 1999.155-166). E.g., during the attested ceremonies in the east mountainous areas and Ertso (region and lake in south-east Georgia) a young member of the family used to bring honey and cheese mixed in with dairy butter to the river's edge, put bread into the water and say: Water, I have brought you a donation, you let me take luck". According to Prof. T.Ochiauri, 'luck' implies the childbirth.

According to S.Makalatia, in Racha mountains "the protector of childbirth and mothers is The Mother of God", ...the festival of the Mother of God is held on the third Sunday after Easter. On this day the housewife strings coloured beads on a cotton thread – they are called *sharna-s*,

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she also hangs up colored swatches – “the veil of the Mother of God”, fixes them with a needle, and binds this *sharna* round the girls’ heads, imploring the Mother of God for them to be lucky.

After that, women go to the shrine of the Mother of God carrying these *sharnas*, ritual cakes [*ganatekhi*] and wine; childless women ask for a child, sonless women ask for sons, those who are pregnant ask for the happy childbirth (Makalatia, 1987: 88-89).

Generally childlessness was hard to bear for a woman, A childless woman used to go barefooted to the Church (mostly to Mother-of-God church), went round the church, sacrificed a special cattle for slaughtering; sometimes she used to cut her hair and left it in the shrine together with her clothes, imploring to be heard and be given a child” (Chirgadze, 1997. 79).

Noteworthy material is given in “Priesthood before slaughtering cattle in Shatili Mother-of-God Cross-church”: “Glorified and victorious be, you Queen Mother of God, the beloved angel of God, I praise you, God your creator will not take offence, will not despise you for your assistance... man and manhood multiply for us ... your greatness be increased. I beseech you for a son; beseech God to give us a son. For a son we ask, let him be long-lived, fortunate and prosperous... ...Queen Mother of God, the beloved angel of God, you... help your petitioner and have mercy on him, give him a little of great things, for two- legged and four-legged, for those with caps and with veil [*mandili*] (i.e. for men and women), be helper and give us solace, protect, save and help us, have mercy. (Z.Kiknadze.1998:63-64).

According to the material presented by Al.Ochiauri, in Ardoti commune, Khevsureti, on the Virgin-Mary feast day, at baptizing a son of a family, the chieftain used to take up the child, bring him to flags ... ( both the priest and the child were bareheaded and barefoot) and roll him in to the shrine of the Mother of God. He used to take the child up three times and roll him in three times, little by little nearer to the flags and say: “Our Mother of God, you we implore to take care of (the name of the child follows), let be asked to take [this child] in the lap of your dress, protect, shield him in the daytime and at night...” (Ochiauri. 2005: 375).

Lamaria/Mother of God is the protector of childbirth. She was considered to separate a newly born and its mother. If the childbirth was complicated, Lamaria was asked for her benevolent help, to save the mother and child. It is to be noted that worn-out clothes and straw were spread for the woman-in-labour.” Childbirth in a new bed offends Lamaria”. (Davitiani. 1939: 46-47).

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Why is the Mother of God to give a woman a child? Because "she herself is a mother", "the mother of God is the blessed among all mothers", that is why she fully appreciates labour pains of other mothers. Mothers' prayer to the Mother of God is also witnessed in Georgian fiction: "You Mother of God, our mother, do not give offence to those who look up to you! Let us endure the pains in body and bones as your son endured it!" (Leonidze.1990:138-139).

That female deities are ancient and universal is confirmed with the multitude of clay figurines discovered at archaeological excavations. "In the times of the eneolithic period in the Caucasus the cult of the Great Mother - the deity of fertility and savior of life – is presented with figurines". (Kikvidze. 1976:157).

The ethnography of this aspect presents important results. Georgian ethnographers presume that the Mother-protector-of-the-place and the Mother of God are syncretic (V.Bardavelidze; T.Ochiauri, Mz.Makalatia, N.Jalabadze). According to ethnologist N.Jalabadze, "Ethnographic material doubtlessly confirms the homogeneous character of the above-mentioned deities of the two periods - pagan and christian." (Jalabadze.1988: 142). According to ethnographic material, in Pshavi and Khevsureti Mother-protector-of-the-place/ the Mother of God are characterized by almost all those elements that are the necessary attributes of the fertility Goddesses" – of "divine mothers", "great mothers" in the mythologies all over the world. In the mountainous regions of east Georgia the mother-protector-of-the-place is to a certain extent also the fertility deity (N.Jalabadze>1987:119).

In the mountains of east Georgia the mother-protector of the place is mentioned together with the mother of God: "You Mother of the place, Mother of God", "Mother of place, St.Mary", or Mother of God (N.Jalabadze.1985:178). In some places the shrine is called "The mother-protector of the place Mother of God" (Bardavelidze). In east Georgia in almost all villages there is only one common feminine deity shrine (Bardavelidze.1974).

There was the mother-protector of the place in every village, in most of them both shrines co-existed, and very often one and the same shrine is of both deities and is called the place-mother of God. The functions of both deities are absolutely identical, both protect the place, people and cattle.

Almost everywhere in Georgia mother/Mother of God was considered to be the protector of families, the rituals were still fulfilled not long ago in Khevsureti (N.Jalabadze.), in Svaneti

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(Chartolani.1981), where the prayers similar to the ritual carried out at the family hearth were said in the Lamaria's/St.Mary's churches. Svans ask for reproduction in people and cattle, fertility of ploughed and sown lands.

In Svaneti the rituals of the Mother of God and the so-called "land-prayer"/"Lamzir" were fulfilled on one and the same day, near one another: only the married women gather at the fest of St Thomas Sunday (Antipascha). They bake *tabla*-s. Three big *tablas* are donated to the Mother of God, three little ones are taken to the fixed place that is called "Lamzir" by Swans which means 'the shrine of land'.

According to Ivane Javakhishvili, "The shrine of land is for the deity protecting fertility and childbirth that accordig to pagan beliefs is presented as the earth, but according to Christian interpretation it is "the Mother of God" (Javakhishvili.1979:130-131)

There were festivals of Cristian shrines, - the Mother-of-God shrines among them - in Georgia. Every year, on the saint's day the man - head of the family - lighted a candle, then uncovered the wine-jar (kept in the earth), and with the first wine-vessel blessed the family, praised the deity, prayed for the well-being of his family, and took *tavghvino* [the wine-portion initially taken from the wine-jar] of the saint's festival to the shrine (Chkonია.1988:87).

"Into the wine-jar that was dedicated to the Motherof God the highly praised wine was poured. Those who did not have old wine made new fizzy wine.. ..the Mother of God wine-jar was not uncovered until the Mother-of-God festivity..." (Topuria, 1984:83).

In Samegrelo the wine-jar for women prayers was "*sadabado*" (for childbirth) that was separately dug into the earth not far from the family shrine –[*okhvameri*]. *Sadabado* was carried out by the family housewife: she kept a cow, and when it calved an ox-calf, she sacrificed it and prayed *sadabado*, asking God for health and happy life of her husband and children (MakalaTia.1941:323).

We have already mentioned that the Mother of God was asked for help in all troubles and despair.. Next to childlessness the greatest misfortune for the family is the illness of the child. At these times mother turnes to the Mother of God and asks her for help: in Racha – "You the mother of God, you I ask and implore, save my child, I will present you with a candle and kada [ritual pastry - *ganatexhi* ] (Burduli.1982); in Kakheti:"We prepared offerings at the Mother of God's festivities, in a woman's and a child's name we promised a lamb, lighted three candles,

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and prayed, only may my child be healthy and I will sacrifice a ram to you” (Burduli. 1998;); Meskheti: ”When I was a child my mother sacrificed calico and doves in my name to Vardzia Mother of God: may he grow up and I will bring him to Vardzia in white and with doves” (Burduli. 1998); in Imereti the Mother of God is the most reliable protector of the sick child: ’Mother of God, hear me, do not take my child away from me, may my prayers and medicine cure it” (Burduli, 1986-1991); in Svaneti childless women prayed to Lamaria, promised a cow, silver: ”Mother Lamaria, Lamaria, help me, give me a child, Lamaria, mother Lamria, mother Lamaria” (Burduli 1980-1984) , ect. It proceeds so almost everywhere in Georgia.

It is well-known that ”since the oldest times the idea of Christmas has been generally connected with fertility, and particularly to the life-giving abilities of the earth. Childbirth is also connected with the faith according to which all that is alive passes away only temporarily to be born to this world again. Accordingly childbirth and death are the events of the same kind; they are perpetually co-existing and belong to one and the same cycle, the same circle; consequently death conditions and produces fertility (N.Gambashidze.2004: 50-51)

True, the texts of prayers cited above differ from canonical texts, but mother’s prayer to the Mother of God must have had a positive effect. It is well known that the orthodox prayers have healing value, and if correctly used, the positive and rather interesting effects are achieved as the results. “Of a special interest is a common prayer of cosmic female energy “To the Holy Mother of God”. It is fast-healing and very effective in the case of various illnesses, also in healing childless women (Pirtskhalava, Turmanidze, Papiashvili.1999:48).

According to ethnographical material the auspicious appearance of the Mother of God in a dream before a relative of a sick child. “My nephew fell down from the first floor [of the house], was unconscious; it was taken to the hospital. His sick and disabled mother was kept in bed and we did not tell her about the accident. She told us, “why do you lie to me, The Mother of God told me: ‘I caught the child in my hands because you are so truthful, otherwise after such a fall he would not survive.” (Burduli.1990).

It is believed that the Mother of God punishes for some evil deeds. In the 30ies of the 20th century atheistic propaganda worked hard in Georgia, churches were destroyed. Ethnographic material supplies numerous facts of the offenders of church being severely punished, and respondents tell that none of offenders of church treasury remained unpunished. For example,

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communists destroyed the Mother-of-God church in Kvakude (a village in Imereti), and those who destroyed it, the families of those who threw a cross down from the church were destroyed, and the wives and children died off (Burduli.1987-1991).

The material presented above was intended to show the great importance of the Mother of God as the saint- protector of reproduction and the protector of mother-and-child relationship in the ethnographic traditions of the Georgian people.

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