Paths of Perception in the Last Judgments of Byzantine and Lusignan Cyprus

Annemarie Weyl Carr

This chapter pursues our theme of paths of attention by looking at images of the Last Judgment in the painted churches of Byzantine and Lusignan Cyprus. It argues that the scene's arrangement within its architectural setting responds to and can tell us about the activities that took place there.1 We have long related the powerful vault imagery of the Last Judgment at St. Savior in Chora to the static site of Theodore Metochites' burial beneath it,2 but we have rarely related the Last Judgment to the patterns of intentioned movement within the spaces it adorns. The theme had a remarkably stable body of iconographic motifs in Byzantium, but they are assembled in ever variable ways that make a stable interpretation of them elusive. Theology is of limited help, for Byzantine theologians were notoriously reticent to speculate about the relation of post-mortem to end-time judgment, regarding the so-called "middle state of souls" between them as a mystery.3 Marcello Angheben, on the basis of 2-dimensional paintings in icons and manuscripts, argued that the scene as it crystallized in the Middle Byzantine period in fact embraced two judgments, one at death, when deeds were weighed in a scale, leading to the temporary assignment of souls to Paradise or Hades, and the other at the end of time, when souls united with their resurrected bodies were judged by Christ for assumption either into Heaven


itself or into the fire prepared for the Devil. But his scheme quickly meets challenges. In Paris, BnF, ms. Grec 74, fol. 51v, one can, indeed, read the seemingly idiosyncratic, mid-level location of the resurrection of bodies from the Sea as showing the intervention of end-time resurrection between Paradise below, and Heaven above. Yet on the sinister side, we find resurrection – now from Earth – at the very top, inviting us to read all below it as belonging to the end of time. And indeed, the chambers that Angheben associated with the interim state of souls in Hades were given biblical epithets referring to eternal damnation. Thus the “otherworldly terrors”, as we tend to call them, seem to imply eschatological, not interim conditions. Yet they are not the “fire prepared for the Devil”, either. Moving from image to image soon leads one to concur with Nancy Patterson Ševčenko that “[o]ne thing is sure: the disjunctions we experience here are intentional. The usual conventions for depicting time and space in Byzantine painting have been deliberately ignored.”

More recently, Fr. Maximos Constas suggested instead, that “the lack of spatial and temporal coherence arose when the originally monumental image (...) was transposed to the surface of a painted panel.” When arranged in three dimensions, he suggests, the image was readily understood. The overwhelming majority of Last Judgments in Byzantine tradition are indeed monumental. But are they really more consistent? Every monumental Last Judgment has its own selection and distribution of motifs, and asks to be examined in its own right. An attentive examination of the varied Last Judgments in the frescoed churches of Cyprus suggests that their imagery was inflected – among other factors – by the patterns of activity and use within the spaces that they adorn. Thus the Last Judgments would seem well suited to our project of parsing the paths of perception in medieval painted spaces. One Last Judgment of Byzantine date, and six of the Lusignan period (1191-1489) are known in Cyprus, all in fresco. Most are incompletely preserved; moreover, the Byzantine texts most usually relied upon for guidance in interpreting them are distant in both date and place of origin from the villages where our paintings were used. Nonetheless, this article proposes that pursuing the paths of eye and body can yield useful insights into the ways the paintings aligned their messages around the activities in the spaces they adorned.

5. Ibid., p. 106, fig. 1.
6. They include the sleepless worm (ὁ σκώληξ ὁ ἀκοίμητος), the gnashing of teeth (ὁ βριγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων), Tartarus (ὁ Τάρταρος), outer darkness (τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον), and the inextinguishable fire (τὸ πῦρ ἄσβεστον). The worm appears in the apocalypses of both Peter and Paul; the others are biblical: Matt. 8:12, 22:13 and 25:30 (outer darkness, gnashing of teeth); Matt 25:41 (eternal fire); 2 Peter 2:4 (Tartarus).
9. Recent publications have significantly expanded the number of the available texts: see Marinis, ‘He Who is at the Point of Death’ (cited in n. 3), p. 79-84; Id., Death and the Fate of the Soul in Byzantium (cited in n. 3); D. E. Sullivan, A.-M. Talbot, and S. McGrath, The Life of Saint Basil the Younger. Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version, Washington DC 2014 (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 45); J. R. Baun, Tales from Another
The monastic church of St. Nicholas of the Roof near Kakopetria

This correlation emerges already in Cyprus’ earliest surviving Last Judgment, painted in the early 12th century at the monastic church of St. Nicholas of the Roof near Kakopetria.10 Only very partially preserved, it adorns the barrel-vaulted ceiling and upper walls of the narthex. Its fulcrum, above the narthex’s east door into the naos, is the figure of Christ, enthroned in a mandorla between his mother and the Baptist, and beneath two angels furling the scroll of the heavens (fig 1). As seen in the plan (fig 2), the composition continues to either side, with the apostles filling the eastern faces of the barrel vault to both the north and the south. Beyond this, however, only isolated segments remain, all in the narthex’s north arm. At the north end of the east wall, beneath the six apostles in the vault, the corpulent and naked Rich Man of Luke (16:19-31) sits amid flames. Turned toward the south and gesturing to his mouth, he is labeled, in a confusion customary in Byzantine imagery, as “the rich Lazaros”. Opposite him on the south wall is the Sea, perhaps more an image of sinister depths than of resurrection, since her waters contain no sea creatures vomiting rising bodies. In the soffit of the blind arch beside her is the bust of the somber “weighing angel” who tests souls’ deeds in the balance. In the vault above them, opposite the apostles, one sees the outcome of the judgment (fig 3). To the left, a decorous cluster of well-dressed males turns southward beneath the words: “the angel leading the blessed into Paradise”. To the right, a crimson angel thrusts a far more agitated group in the opposite direction beneath the words “the Fiery Angel leading the damned into Hell”. While the word Paradise might intimate the interim state of souls after death, the fire engulfing the latter figures makes it clear that this is the Last Judgment, and that they are the damned. Engulfing fire was Byzantium’s signature image of damnation, based on both Matthew 25:41 and Daniel 10:7.11 Except in their comportment, the two groups of the righteous and...
the condemned are conspicuously similar; the same kind of people belong to both. But it is also starkly clear that there is no middle condition: one is either and only saved or damned.

The damned are driven right into the corner where vault meets the north wall. The original north wall no longer exists, so we cannot know what mediated the transition between the full-clothed damned being driven into Hell on the one side, and the naked abjection of the Rich Man who already is in Hell on the other. Nonetheless, as a glance at the plan reveals (fig. 2), the placement of the damned is puzzling. Biblically, and in most iconography, the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels flows as a river from beneath the throne of the Most High. One would expect to see it unfold in the south arm of the narthex, to the left side of Christ. Yet here it is diagonally distanced from him. A telling detail casts light on this disjunction. Over Christ’s right shoulder, above the head of his interceding Mother and his own right hand, runs a lengthy inscription giving his condemnation of the damned from Matthew 25:41: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.” These words should by all rights be over his left hand. Something, in short, made it so important to place the imagery of condemnation on the north rather than the south side of the narthex that the whole composition was wrenched to accommodate it.

12. Πορεύομαι ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ (οἱ) κατηραμένοι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον τὸ ἠτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ.
Figure 2 - Plan, St. Nicholas of the Roof, Kakopetria (A. Papageorghiou, The Narthex of the Churches of the Middle Byzantine Period in Cyprus, p. 445). 1: the Rich Man; 2: the Sea; 3: the “weighing angel”.

Droits numériques non obtenus.
This turns attention to what little we know of the space below (fig. 2). We have no evidence of tombs there, and no record of the choreography of the rites performed there. We know, however, that the narthex had by the early 12th century become a standard component of monastic life, accommodating many of its non-Eucharistic rituals. With the typikon of the twelfth-century Cypriot monastery of Makhairas as a guide, one can imagine the community at St. Nicholas entering the narthex each morning after their services in the church, departing thence to their day’s work, and then returning at intervals to sing the hours and vespers. Thus they approached it sometimes from the church, through the east door, but quite as often from their activities outside. We know that the narthex here had no western portal in the 12th century, for a fresco of that date covered the whole span of the central bay with a mural icon of the equestrian St. George. As the naos did not, the narthex did have a door on the south; given the demolition of the original wall, we do not know if there was also a north door, though there was one in the naos. The cramped placement of the church against the mountainside to its south, and the ample space to its north, make it clear that the monastic buildings – and thus a major portion of the monks’ life – must have lain at its north. This makes it very plausible that the narthex did have a north door, and that the Last Judgment was so designed to offer a severe reminder to departing monks of the dangers they confronted in the world beyond. The scene was shaped to echo and inform their movements.

How the Last Judgment embraced the movements of the monks once they were within the narthex can only be surmised, but the murals still visible in the north do offer some clues. Both the somber weighing angel and the gesturing Rich Man turn their attention toward the south. The bosom of Abraham in Paradise, which the Rich Man craves, and the bliss to which the righteous above the angel were being led, must have filled both the central and southern portions of the narthex. If admonition and ejection monitored the monks’ departure, inclusion and enjoyment of the community of the blessed may well have dominated the space within. Yet over the central door was a God who hurled damnation over his own blessing right hand. Monitoring the monks’ movements as they departed the space apparently was more important than maintaining scene’s compositional consistency.


16. On the issue of the north wall and door, see Papageorghiou, Νικόλαος, Αγίου, της Στέγης (cited in n. 10), p. 248.
The church of the Transfiguration in Sotira

Cyprus’ next surviving Last Judgment, a thirteenth-century fresco in the village church of the Transfiguration in Sotira, Famagusta District, is today almost totally effaced.17 As at St. Nicholas of the Roof, it occupied the barrel-vaulted ceiling, in this case of the whole western end of the narthex. Just a narrow sliver remains, on the transverse arch at its far eastern edge. Cyprus had been governed by French Crusader kings for a good sixty years by the time it was painted, but the imagery remains firmly and familiarly Byzantine, and introduces us to an important addition to the Last Judgment’s repertory. This is on the south side, where we see, at the top, the Patriarchs with souls in their bosoms, familiar from Byzantine images of Paradise, then the figure of Sea with her fishes yielding their dead, and at the bottom a lively naked figure dangling above a little fire.18 He is labeled “the falsifier of weights”. He is one of a genre of specifically labeled peasant sinners that became widespread in both monastic and secular programs in the later 12th century.19 He dangles opposite the apostles and the blessed, so would seem to belong to Hell. Yet he is clearly distinct from the abbots, emperors and archons being herded into Hell at St. Nicholas, and though he shares the nudity of the Rich Man there, he is not immersed in the fire that engulfs him, either. If anything, he seems more closely related to resurrection and Paradise. He seems to represent some intermediate state or class.20 Lacking the rest of the composition, it is hard to interpret him here. But such


18. Ibid., image on p. 32.

sinners abound in the third of Cyprus’ Last Judgments, and this is – at last – intact. This is at the church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa near Asinou.

The church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa of Asinou

Asinou once again is a monastic church.21 Built around 1100 CE, perhaps as a private chapel, it had by 1115 become the *katholikon* of a monastery, and at some point, thereafter acquired the requisite narthex. The narthex was adorned only very slowly with paintings, and they reflect a shift in the kind of audience that we had assumed for St. Nicholas of the Roof. One senses this already in the earliest fresco, the magnificent late twelfth-century mural icon of St. George in the south apse (fig 4).22 Painted over the closed south door, rather like its counterpart at St. Nicholas, the dashing image bears the donor inscription of a lay person, one Nikephoros, a physician of horses. The name of another Nikephoros, Nikephoros maker of horse-shoes, added below his on the mural, suggests that the narthex was accessible not only to lay patrons, but to lay pilgrims, as well.23 Their presence confirms the tendency over the course of the 12th century for the narthex of monasteries to become a kind of selvage between lay and cloistered communities, where the two converged. By the time the next paintings appeared at Asinou a century later, this process had evolved, for these record the patronage of lay women, one a local widow who seems to have financed major repairs to the church,24 the other a Frankish noble lady led by *noblesse oblige* or the lack of an accessible Latin church to support this one.25 Both portraits cluster close to St. George, the local patron behind him and the Latin lady above. The view (fig 4), imagined with these three paintings only, is what would have greeted the monks when they came into the narthex from their monastic buildings on the north: they would have faced the portraits – and petitions – of their benefactors. The interaction of lay and monastic implied here was then sealed in 1332/33, as we learn from an inscription over the east door, when the fathers of the monastery and “the common people” joined together to sponsor the fresco program that still clothes all the remaining surfaces of the space.26 It included ten further portraits – three more lay people here, and seven monks.


25. On this figure, see *ibid.*, p. 122-130.

26. Communal patronage was not uncommon in areas under Latin control, but it is rare in the context of a monastic church. On such patronage, see *ibid.*, p. 178-179; S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Collective Patterns of Patronage in the Late Byzantine Village: The Evidence of Church Inscriptions*, in *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin. Actes du colloque international organisé à l’Université de Fribourg*, Fribourg 13-15 mars 2008, ed. J.-M. Spieser and E. Yota,
PATHS OF PERCEPTION IN THE LAST JUDGMENTS

Figure 3 - The blessed and the damned, west face of north vault of narthex, St. Nicholas of the Roof, Kakopetria (photo by the author).

Figure 4 - Narthex looking south, Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (photo: Gerald L. Carr).
Their chosen theme was the Last Judgment (fig 5). It fills the vaults above a densely populated sanctorial cycle. Once again, Christ is central. He is not enthroned; instead, in the guise of the Pantokrator, he presides from the dome. The Pantokrator gazing from the dome characteristically dominated the naos of churches. Here, he lends to the narthex the solemnity of a naos, as if to confer on the space accessible to the laity the aura of a church interior. The apostles and angels encircle him, emphasizing his centrality, but he himself establishes an east-west axis. He faces not the monks, but the western door, the portal used especially by the laity. From him, the program unfolds in two perspectives. When seen looking eastward (fig 5), Paradise with the Mother of God and Patriarchs appears to the north at Christ’s right, while Asinou’s famous sequence of eight sinners are at his left. Serried ranks of the blessed are assembled around Paradise, with the arriving righteous below, and the choirs of the saints arching above. Between them are both Earth and Sea, their surroundings busy with creatures yielding up resurrected bodies. Linked with Hell at Kakopetria and with Paradise at Sotira, Sea and Earth are associated here at Asinou with the sites of beatitude, binding resurrection to redemption. Paradise itself lies immediately over the door to the monastic buildings. Arching above it are Christ’s words from Matthew 25:34: “Come unto me, blessed of my father; receive the kingdom prepared for you.” The eastern wall itself, beneath the Pantokrator, is centered on the orant Mother of God; the Deesis, image of intercession, flanks the portal below her. But the imagery is not symmetrical. Christ clearly dominates the Deesis, and two white forms flanking the orant Virgin guide attention firmly to the right. A prayerful priest-monk in his white vestment closes the left side; to the right, surprisingly, are two white hunting dogs. They belong to the tall monk, probably the hegumen Theophilos, who is portrayed above them in the soffit. Monks were not supposed to hunt, and engaging as the dogs are, they do intimate temptation – their alert noses point the eye onward to the figures on the sinister side.

These are the sinners, pointedly lined up at Christ’s left, on the side of the lay portraits (fig 7). They radiate physicality. Bound and wriggling, they dangle from meat hooks, emphasizing their carnal nature. Their transgressions are civic, not private, and dominated by greed. At the top, the man who ploughs over borders is paired with the deceitful miller; the thief, hooked by the cupidity of his eye, and the slanderer with a snake at his tongue follow. The usurer and falsifier of weights – familiar from Sotira – is next, punished with particular ferocity as he dangles head-down in fire. The bad nun beside him, unique in Byzantine imagery, may lend weight to the intimation in Asinou’s Synaxarion that the monastery was associated in this period


27. Δεῦτε, οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρός μου, κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ωμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.
Droits numériques non obtenus.

Figure 5 - Narthex vault, Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (photo: Gerald L. Carr).

Droits numériques non obtenus.

Figure 6 - Narthex looking east, Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (photo: Gerald L. Carr).
The snake at her ear suggests sins of eavesdropping, gossiping, or meddling. By contrast, the sin of the bad monk who dangles below her may be spelled out by the female figure who hangs at his side, gazing at him: she is “the one who turns away her children”, aborting or abandoning them. She suggests the baleful fruits of monastic lust.

The sinners lie opposite Paradise. If Heaven opposes them, they must be in Hell. Unquestionably, they are in punishment. One notes, however, that Christ’s condemnation of the damned does not accompany them. The fathers of the Church were firm that post-mortem suffering was possible only after the resurrection of the body at the end of time, and that even then, what was suffered was remorse, not punishment.29

By contrast, popular imagination was emphatic that sinners did suffer punishment after death, but it also reserved latitude for their eventual remission at the end of time. Thus the sinners seem to dangle ambiguously between death and damnation. Here at Asinou, they respond less to the categorical condemnation of end-time judgment than to the very pragmatic theme of rewards. As those in Heaven reap benefice, these reap punishment. Naked and labeled, they speak to behavior in the world. As Rossitza Schroeder has argued, confession was among the rituals that took place in the narthex of monastic churches. The depicted sinners surely afforded the clergy compelling pictures of the wages of sin. Thus, they must have elicited fear. But they must also have invited a gratifying measure of retributive scorn on the part of those who gazed at them.

The sinners function opposite Paradise, in a dialectic of reward and retribution. A very different vista opens when one turns to the narthex’s other, westward perspective (fig 8). Here the sinners literally vanish from view, to be succeeded on their soffit by the compartments of otherworldly terrors. Eerie and ambiguous, the terrors seem to convey only terminal gloom, and attention slips from them to the energetic activity of the west lunette (fig 9). Here, as angels trumpet gossamer souls from their tombs, the river of fire boils from the Throne prepared for the end of time, engulfing a cowering crowd. A rightward current courses across the tympanum, surging from the angels across the Prepared Throne and river of fire to close in the angel with the scales of justice on the north soffit. Far from reaching back to the lively, labeled sinners, the scene of final judgment opens a different dialogue.

It, too, is vengeful: no Heaven appears here to counterbalance the flood of fire. Judgment here is condemnation: to be mortal is to be culpable. Rituals of death, like those of confession, drew lay people into Asinou’s narthex, for the narthex was the customary place for funerals. But the issues of death exceeded retribution. Retribution was for activities one could amend in life; the western tympanum evokes the terrifying paralysis of inescapable culpability. Yet relentless as it is, the river of fire remains small within the tympanum as a whole. Countervailing elements appear, especially Adam and Eve, who confront judgment with ardent prayer. Together, their urgent postures capture the visual diagonal that runs across the tympanum, carrying the eye over the river of fire and past it, to the weighing angel beyond.

30. BAUN, Tales from Another Byzantium (cited in n. 9), p. 312 – ”Both the fact that intercession can help, and the implication that the Last Judgment is just around the corner, indicate that our texts take place not in Hell or even in Hades, but in some third, less defined and more flexible location in the Byzantine religious consciousness” – and passim.
Figure 8 - Narthex looking west, Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (photo: Gerald L. Carr).

Droits numériques non obtenus.

Figure 9 - Tympanum of west narthex door, Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou (photo: Dumbarton Oaks B.F.T.As.K.8.2).

Droits numériques non obtenus.
As at St. Nicholas of the Roof, but in a way never encountered again, he turns not toward, but away from the river of fire. Thus, he directs attention onward, toward the procession of those approaching Paradise (fig 8). Somber as it is, then, the Hellfire of the end-time has its own visual dynamic within the whole, and is more closely linked with Heaven than it is with the lively personal hell of the exposed and identified sinners. Its language is not of retribution and reward, but of culpability and faith. Rather than a tidy bifurcation of saved and damned, Heaven and Hell, the Last Judgment at Asinou creates a series of triangulations across the space of the narthex, their messages calibrated to the vantage points of those within.

The frescoes here do not clarify the ambiguities inherent in the Byzantine Last Judgment imagery – whether one or more judgments were intended, how the wriggling sinners related to the otherworldly terrors, or what either sinners or terrors had to do with the river of fire. Like the Byzantine theologians themselves, the imagery shifts perspectives, reflecting more upon the valences of divine judgment than on apocalyptic finality. Yet distributed as it is in three dimensions around the physical movements of its viewers, it does speak responsively to the varied conditions and concerns of the people below. The monks are among those whom it addresses: one sees the way Christ’s raised right hand both blesses and admonishes them as they enter the space (fig 5), and the way the sins of lust and cupidity wriggle and cluster around the wealthy patrons (fig 4). But above all the murals speak to the lay community, who both entered and departed by way of the western door. At least two messages unfolded to them. One was based on the dialectic of reward and retribution and spoke to life and the satisfaction of seeing greed punished (figs 6, 7); the other was rooted in the dialectic of culpability and faith and spoke to awe in the face of mortality (figs 8, 9). It is not in its clarity, but in its flexibility that the imagery assumes the efficient functionality that r. Maximos Constan had affirmed.

The churches of Sotira, Lythrangomi and Kouka

Asinou’s is the last instance in Lusignan Cyprus of a Last Judgment distributed three-dimensionally around a vaulted space. All ensuing examples were concentrated on a single, usually flat surface, though portions sometimes spilled onto an adjacent jamb or pier, evoking the old three-dimensionality. The growing preference for gabled rather than vaulted structures was certainly a factor in this change, but a more determinative stimulus is exemplified in the diminutive, late fourteenth-century funerary chapel of St. Mamas in Sotira, just yards away from the Transfiguration church that we saw earlier. Like Asinou’s narthex, this is a domed space, but the Last Judgment does not spread across its apex. Instead, it is compressed onto the

34. See Mark Eugenikos’ assessment, quoted by Constas, Mark Eugenikos (cited in n. 29), p. 459: ‘‘Faith’ will rule over the present world, and ‘Hope’ over the period between death and resurrection, but ‘Love’ will reign after the final judgment, and through it the saints will be united to God.’

tympanum of the south wall. Facing it from the north tympanum is the Dormition of the Mother of God. Together, they yield a powerful funerary program. The effort to integrate the Last Judgment into the visual ministry of the church interior, as seen here, was surely the more significant impetus drawing it onto the wall. Of the three remaining versions from the Lusignan period, two were, like this one, located inside the naos, responding to the imagery around them. The Last Judgment in the village church of the Panagia Kanakaria in Lythrangomi, today almost totally vanished, spread over the north wall of the naos, complementing the scenes from the Christological narrative that faced it on the south.\textsuperscript{36} The Last Judgment in the monastic church of the Holy Cross, Kouka, in turn, confronts scenes of the trial of Christ, the earthly trial of God by men facing the awesome trial of humankind by God on opposite sides of the barrel vault over the south arm of the cruciform naos (fig 10).\textsuperscript{37} Drawing the Last Judgment in this way into the Christological narrative, rather than setting it apart in the narthex – or at the west of the naos as in Sotira’s Transfiguration church – was an innovation. It had an inevitable impact on the scene’s content and performance. The imagery at Lythrangomi is too abraded to diagnose, but that in St. Mamas and the Holy Cross is clear. Its components are fewer, and they are composed symmetrically around a strong central axis, balancing beatitude and condemnation. Rather than discursive multiplicity, unity dominates. This affects the scene’s relation to viewers, bringing them to a standstill at the middle, where they can turn from one to the other of the confronted subjects, eschatological

Droits numériques non obtenus.

Figure 10 - Last Judgment, Holy Cross, Kouka
(photo: Gerald L. Carr).


or Christological, and interpret each one fully from the vantage point of its center. In time, this symmetry would flatten the Last Judgment into a planar composition, focused on the end of time, without its earlier, ruminative, diachronic three-dimensionality. But first, one final Last Judgment of Lusignan date retained its place in the narthex, and though painted like those at Sotira, Kouka, and Lythrangomi on flat walls rather than enfolding vaults, preserved an element of discursive mobility.

**The church of St. Herakleidios, monastery of St. John Lampadistes**

This is in the church of St. Herakleidios, *katholikon* of the monastery of St. John Lampadistes, Kalopanagiotis.38 My perception of this fresco was radically reshaped three years ago, when I saw the narthex for the first time with its long-disused south door open (fig 11). This made it harder to photograph, but far more instructive. The Last Judgment occupies the east wall of the narthex's initial, south bay, spilling over also onto the adjacent wall on either side of the south door. When the south door was disused, the Last Judgment had lurked awkwardly in the dark corner beside the door leading into the church. Opening the south door made evident the

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narthex’s function as a pathway, giving access to both St. Herakleidios itself, and then to the immediately adjacent pilgrimage chapel of St. John Lampadistes.\(^9\) The Last Judgment is poised to address all who entered this space. This very fact helps significantly to clarify the question of who actually did pass through it. The pilgrimage chapel was unquestionably accessible to the laity; the status of the church, on the other hand, is complicated.\(^40\) An early twelfth-century fresco of two supplicating monks in the apse suggests that St. Herakleidios served a monastery at that time; it did so again in the 17\(^{th}\) century, when it is documented for the first time in surviving written sources. It is generally assumed to have been monastic throughout. This assumption is challenged, however, by the patrons of the Last Judgment, who are portrayed within the painting. They are a family of four, a married couple with two sons in clerical garb, who are identified as the priests of “this church,” using for “this church” the word *katholiki*, or village church.\(^41\) Thus the church must have spent some centuries serving the village community, with parishioners and pilgrims coming in and out of the south door. The placement of the Last Judgment around that door reinforces the likelihood that this was the case. Rather than serving monastic viewers entering the narthex from the church, for whom the image would have lain awkwardly around the corner, the scene functions forcefully and effectively for people coming and going through the south door. All who entered, parishioners or pilgrims, would have passed the Last Judgment, their eyes level with the lower figures on the east wall, before turning to enter the church through its west portal, or moving on to the chapel.

The mural one sees on entering rises cliff-like on one’s right (fig 12). Its compression onto one, major surface rather than multiple, curved ones imposed upon it the same kind of compositional symmetry and iconographic economy that have been pointed out already in the frescoes of St. Mamas, Sotira, and the Holy Cross at Kouka. Its elements are assembled bilaterally now, around a plummeting central axis. Plunging vertically from the pale mandorla of Christ – at the top of the photograph here – this falls past the Prepared Throne where the Protoparents adore the cross, sign of Christ’s mercy, to conclude in the scale of justice, where the deeds of souls are being weighed. It comes as a bit of a surprise to realize that none of the three-dimensional Last Judgments we’ve seen so far had actually assembled the blessed on one side and the condemned on the other in a strict bilateral confrontation, and none had placed the act of “weighing in the scale” at the compositional center. The scale had by this time come to serve as a summative metaphor of both end-of-life and end-of-time judgment, and its centrality here tends to draw the two judgments together into one.\(^42\)


40. Papageorgiou, The Monastery of Saint John Lampadistes (cited in n. 38), p. 9-11, suggests that the monastery was founded in the mid-16\(^{th}\) century. Given the early twelfth-century fresco of two kneeling monks in the apse, it seems likely that it was refounded at that time.

41. Ibid., p. 37 and fig. 31.

42. On the image of the scale, see Marinis, ‘He Who is at the Point of Death’ (cited in n. 3), p. 70-73; M. Jugie, La doctrine des fins dernières dans l’Église gréco-russe, EO 17, 1914-1915, p. 5-22, at 21.
Figure 12 - Last Judgment, St. Herakleidios, Kalopanagiotis
(photo by the author).
Its compelling visual centrality is clear as one enters through the south door and turns to face the soaring image at one's right. Directly before one is the scale itself, with the action at eye-level (fig 13). The scale hangs from the Prepared Throne; a single soul is being judged. As devils scramble to heap scrolls documenting transgressions in the left pan, angels gather at the right. One of them pokes the devils away with his pitchfork, while his companion, sheltering further souls at his feet, places records of beneficent deeds in the right pan. Though the soul being tried turns its face toward the devils, suggesting its condemnation, the scale clearly tips to the side of the blessed: the angels are winning.

The cant of the scale is not the scene's only asymmetry. The whole composition is eerily asymmetrical, as the river of fi e drifts to the right over an unstable void that contrasts starkly with the architectural solidity of the realms of beatitude on the other side (fig 12). With one's focus on the weighing, the diagonal of the scale guides one's eye away from the void. And even the diagonal of the fi e, rather than plunging attention downward, defines an ascending wedge, opening toward the story on story of Heavenly abodes on the left. In essence, the composition draws one forward toward Heaven and – just beyond it – the door into the church. This benign direction is underscored by the register beneath the weighing, where a host of the righteous, barely smaller than the visitor him- or herself, once marched toward the bosom of Abraham and the Patriarchs. They echo and accelerate the path of the entering viewers.

It is only as one turns to leave the narthex that the angled balance beam of the scale directs attention back to the unstable void of the composition's sinister side. The river of fi e to which it points is a densely gorged tumult, goaded by the fi y angel. Figures at its brink are identified in a ferocious caption as "the false priests, the fighters against the spirit and unbelievers, [those not speaking] the truth, the Jews, the Pharisees, the evil kings, and tyrants." They view the fi e with awe. But threatening as the cascade of condemnation is, it does not actually reach the bottom of the scene, and the area beneath it exposes a no less sinister process (fig 14). Tailring rightward across it, directly at eye level, is a long chain gang of naked souls being marched in shackles from the scale of justice into Hell. They are ordinary sinners, counterparts to the viewers facing them, who have been found wanting in the balance. Not only the demon who leads them, but the souls, too, have been hacked and abraded over the centuries, as if despised. They lead one relentlessly into and around the corner, to converge with the fi y river. It is at this point, finall , that

43. Though a scale is used here to sort the deceased person's deeds, rather than tollhouses cited there, the dramatic confrontation of protective angels and judgmental demons is very like the post-mortem judgment of Theodora described in the Life of Basil the Younger: Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath, The Life of Saint Basil the Younger (cited in n. 9), p. 227-269.

44. Η μη ἐρης η πνευματομαχη κε αποι / τοια.... την αληθηαν. Η Ιουδεη και Φαρισεη · οι βασιλεις οι κα/ και τυραννοι, read as οι μη ἱερεις, οι πνευματομαχοι και άπιστοι, [οι μη λέγοντες] την ἀληθειαν, οι Ιουδαιοι και Φαρισαιοι, οι βασιλεις οι και τυραννοι by A. Stylianou and J.A. Stylianou, Η βυζαντινὴ τέχνη κατὰ τὴν περίοδο τῆς Φραγκοκρατίας, in Ἱστορία τῆς Κύπρου, 6 vols., Tόμος Ε'· Μεσαιωνικὸν βασίλειον, Ἐνετοκρατία, Μέρος Β', ed. T. Papadopoulos, Nicosia 1996, p. 1229-1407, at 1323.
Droits numériques non obtenus.

Figure 13 - Last Judgment, scale of justice, St. Herakleidios, Kalopanagiotis (photo by the author).

Droits numériques non obtenus.

Figure 14 - Last Judgment, sinners led to Hell, St. Herakleidios, Kalopanagiotis (photo by the author).
one focuses on the south wall (fig 15). Both the Last Judgment’s asymmetrical conclusion, and one’s own point of departure from the church, lie before one here. Black and winged and engulfed in flame, the Devil himself astride the Dragon occupies the wall to the left of the door, cradling a naked Judas in his lap. On the wall to the right, a lone sinner – a woman – remains of what must have been a row of three. She is identified as the woman who rejects children (fig 16).

Her abjectness underscored by her gender, she stands as a minatory departing message to those who leave.

The residue of three-dimensionality gained by drawing the image around the corner enables a dynamic spatial interplay, as the east wall draws visitors inward toward Heaven and the door to the church, while the south one pulls them back toward the terror of condemnation to the Devil’s fi e. The dual focus resonates with the duality of the Last Judgment itself, see-sawing attention from redemption to the Devil’s fi e. The back-and-forth dynamic echoes the movement of visitors through the narthex. Thus, as at Asinou earlier, the Last Judgment appears shaped to the uses of the space it adorns. In its dualism, the program is less complex than that at Asinou, with its truly three-dimensional triangulation of reward and punishment, punishment and judgment, judgment and restitution.

45. On her inscription, only the word τα νήπια – children – remains. Several sins involve children; she may be the woman who refuses to nurture children, who refuses to breastfeed her children, or who aborts or abandons her children; see Kalopissi-Verti, The Murals of the Narthex (cited in n. 19), p. 145; M. Vassiliki, Οι παραστάσεις των κολαζομένων γυναικών στις εκκλησίες της Κρήτης, Αρχαιολογία 21, Νοεμβρίου 1986, p. 41-46, at 44; Maderakis, Η κόλαση και οι ποινές (cited in n. 1), p. 79.
Figure 16 - Last Judgment, sinful woman, St. Herakleidios, Kalopanagiotis (photo by the author).
This simplification is a result not only of its reduction to two surfaces, but of its
association on the south wall of sinners and Hellfire in close proximity. The location
of the sinners by the door, seen also in many Last Judgments on Crete, fulfilled a
pointed message: the sinners, after all, were the peasant players in the vast drama of
judgment. Their placement functioned explicitly to admonish the villagers and
pilgrims – themselves peasants – who came in and out of this door. Conjoined
with Hellfire, however, they amalgamate the “middle state” of the soul after death
with its fate at end of time, blurring a tension long honored in Orthodox tradition
and preserved at Asinou. Nonetheless, in two significant respects the Last Judgment
in St. Herakleidios does echo and affirm the ideas expressed at Asinou. The firs
of these concerns once again the figures on the south wall (fig 15). In Asinou,
the diagonal current sweeping across the scene of judgment in the western lunette
toward the outward-turned figure of the weighing angel had directed attention onward
from the river of fire to the procession of the righteous approaching Paradise. Thus it
held out the efficacy of faith in the face of inescapable culpability. In St. Herakleidios,
too, the south wall is tinged with hope. The late Lusignan Last Judgments had been
drawn down from the vaults and flattened onto walls in order to interact with imagery
around them. Here, the imagery of demonic fire and shackled sinners lies below a far
loftier register of very different scenes. Looming over the Devil and his fire, towering
figures of the Three Hebrews rise unscathed from the fire of Nebuchadnezzar’s
furnace, while a massive Daniel triumphs in the lion’s den above the shackled sinners
below. The alignment is surely intentional. Here again, then, faith is held out in
the face of implacable judgment.

In a second significant way, too, the imagery at St. Herakleidios accords with
Asinou. In both cases – here, where the Devil and sinners adorn the door, and at
Asinou where the river of fire cascades from the Prepared Throne with no Heaven
at its other side – the portal includes no image of salvation. There is no way to turn
one’s attention to the blessed side, or to decide that the minatory message is really
for someone else. The admonition is unequivocal and severe.

The Monastic Church of the Cross of Agiasmati

Only in the 16th century does one finally encounter Last Judgments at the
portal that are truly and comprehensively symmetrical. A good example is offered
by the image engulfing the steep east wall of the narthex in the monastic church of
the Cross of Agiasmati near Platanistasa. It rises over the east door into the naos
(fig 17). High in the composition, one can barely make out the scale of justice beneath
the Prepared Throne; far more accessible and clearly visible is the even-handed
balance at the bottom of the scene between the blessed being led to Paradise by
St. Peter on the left side, and the fire inhabited by the Devil on the right. It is a jolt

48. C. Argyrou and D. Myrianthefs, Ο Ναός του Τιμίου Σταυρού του Άγιασματι, Νικοσία 2004
( Guides to Byzantine Monuments of Cyprus); Stylianou and Stylianou, The Painted
to realize that no Cypriot Last Judgment had ever before offered such an unequivocal option of salvation and damnation in the register closest to the eye. Following the composition fully to the side of the blessed exposes an ample Paradise below a Heaven so gorged the blessed that there is no room for haloes. Following the composition equally fully to the right reveals a cluster of labeled and dangling sinners. They are now fully integrated into the Devil’s realm of fi e. The ambivalence still felt at St. Herakleidios is gone; we stand at the balance point between saved and damned.

With this image, we are in Cyprus’ Venetian period. The Venetians cultivated apocalyptic learning with keen fascination, and Last Judgment imagery flourished under their hegemony: fifteen of the twenty-two pre-Ottoman Last Judgments on Cyprus, or just over two-thirds, belong to the eight decades of Venetian rule. All but three are strictly confined to a single, framed surface, and characteristic throughout is the placement of the viewer squarely in the center between the saved and the damned. Given the importance accorded in this paper to portals, it is surprising to realize that no earlier Last Judgment in Cyprus had been composed so centrally around a portal, commandeering the viewer’s single vantage point. The symmetrical alignment feels more akin to the Last Judgments of western European than of Byzantine art, and must to some extent reflect them. Certainly it brings the variegated paths of perception that we have been tracing to a halt, muting the musing reflection on the vicissitudes of judgment that had emerged in the varied pathways of the earlier murals, and replacing them with a categorically focused and centered event.

49. Ibid., fig. on p. 49.
The earlier versions had relied, as Nancy Ševčenko had said, upon intentional disjunctions, in which “[t]he usual conventions for depicting time and space in Byzantine painting have been deliberately ignored.” But when given the freedom of three-dimensional composition, these very disjunctions had enabled the imagery of the Last Judgment – for all its ambiguity – to relate with remarkable cogency to the communities it addressed.

Annemarie Weyl Carr
Southern Methodist University,
Dallas, Texas