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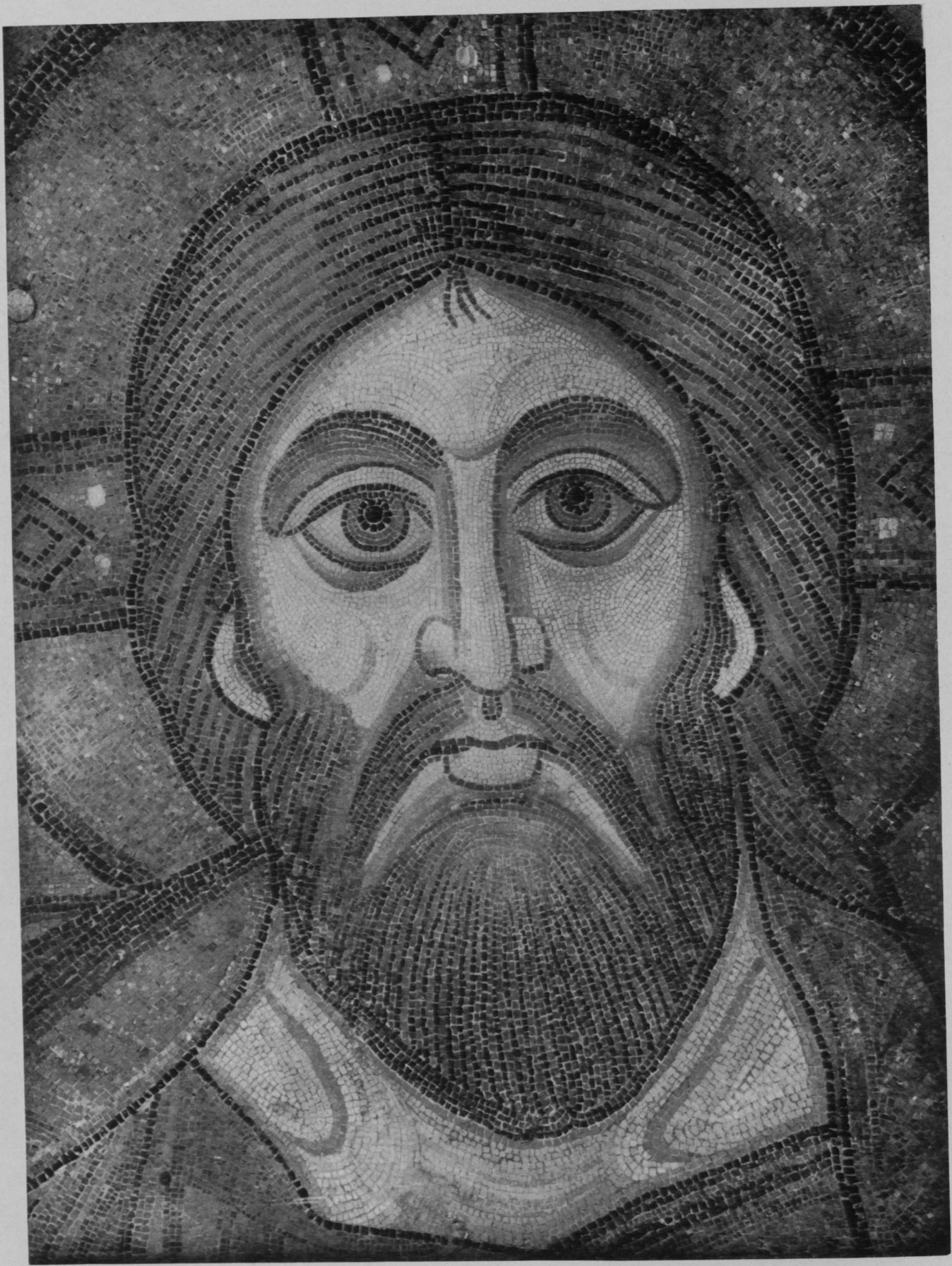
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14. Head of the Pantocrator. Detail of mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

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## KIEVAN RUS'

THE HISTORY of early Russian monumental painting begins in the age of Vladimir Svyatoslavovich, grand-prince of Kiev (978–1015). It was he, who having consolidated the political and military successes of his predecessors, made of Kievan Rus' one of the largest and most important states in Europe. In 988 after his marriage to Anna, sister of the Byzantine Emperor Basil the Second, Vladimir was converted to Christianity, an event which prepared the way for strong Byzantine cultural influence in Rus'. Henceforth Greeks and Russians shared the same religion, a fact which the patriarchs of Constantinople did not fail to exploit in an attempt to govern the Russian Church and through it to influence the secular authorities. This peculiar situation was the source of many conflicts which reflect the Russian people's struggle for ecclesiastical autonomy. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastical channels were destined to remain the principal source of Byzantine influence in Rus'.

After his conversion, Vladimir summoned Greek masters to Kiev for the construction and decoration between 989 and 996 of the stone Church of the Virgin. The structure, crowned by domes and having an obscured cross plan with three naves and a narthex, was known as the Desyatinnaya Church (*desyatina* meaning one-tenth) because Vladimir set aside for its maintenance one-tenth of the income of the principality. The interior of the church, which collapsed in 1240, was elaborately decorated with marble, slate, porphyry, mosaic and frescoes. In the dome was shown the half-length figure of Christ Pantocrator, and in the apse the Virgin in the Orans or praying position.<sup>83</sup> As regards iconography, the decorative scheme seems to have followed the standard Constantinoplian pattern. The few fresco fragments found in excavations do not permit us to deduce the origins of the master who worked in this church, but an examination of the best-preserved fragment—the upper part of the face of a young saint—reveals in the large eyes, sharp shadows and heavy lines the presence of archaic elements. However this is insufficient evidence for attributing the entire decoration of the Desyatinnaya Church to masters from Thessalonica, as did N. P. Sychyov.<sup>84</sup>

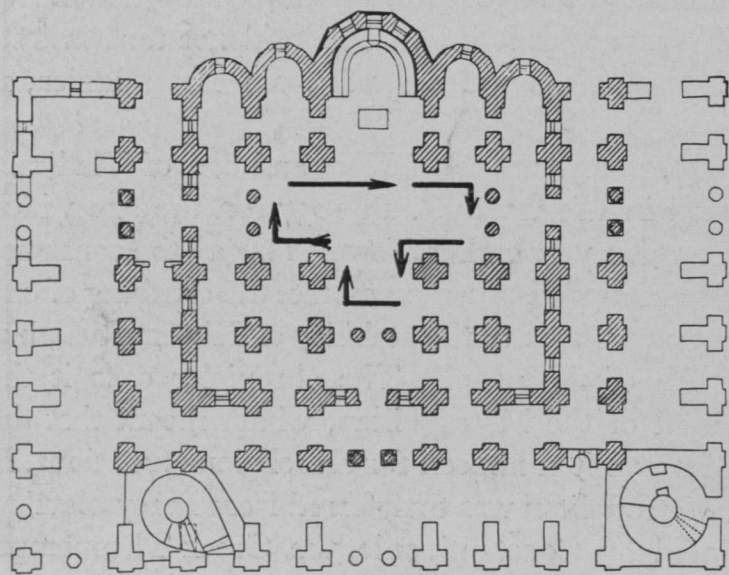
During the reign of Yaroslav (1019–54), grand-prince of Kiev and son of Vladimir, many fine religious buildings were erected in Kievan Rus'. In 1037, on the site which marked his decisive victory over the Pechenegs a year earlier, Yaroslav began the construction of S. Sophia. This, then, was a cathedral founded to commemorate the crushing of one of the nomadic tribes who represented a grave threat to the stability of Kievan Rus', but it also had another significance in the life of the people. The chronicler calls it the *Mitropol'ya*,<sup>85</sup> that is to say, the Cathedral of the Metropolitan, which meant that the church was destined to be used by the Metropolitan himself for all religious functions. It was just at this time that the seat of the Metropolitan was transferred from Pereyasavl' to Kiev, and the new Metropolitan appointed by Constantinople, the Greek Theopempt, arrived to take up his duties. S. Sophia thus became the principal church in Kiev; the

throne or cathedra of the Metropolitan was installed in the central apse; henceforth not only the highest dignitaries of the Church were ordained and consecrated within its hallowed walls but finally the enthronement of the grand-prince of Kiev was also solemnized here.

Although construction work was begun in 1037, the interior of S. Sophia was not ready for decoration until 1042. The mosaics [16–27; 1–8] must have been executed between 1043 and 1046, the year in which the first consecration of the cathedral took place.<sup>86</sup> This period also saw the creation of the frescoes for the central nave, transept and gallery [28–30, 36–38; 9–11, 17–19, 21]. The frescoes in the side-naves [31–35, 39, 44, 49; 12–16, 20, 22–25] may date from a little later though they must certainly have been completed by 1061 or 1067 when the cathedral was consecrated for the second time. Finally, the frescoes in both towers [40–43, 47, 48, 50; 28–33], in the Baptistry [39], and in the outer gallery [34–38] are still later in date, as these sections of the building were not constructed until the first quarter of the twelfth century.

The cathedral of S. Sophia is an enormous multi-domed building, having an obscured cross plan with five naves and an open gallery of three sides of its interior. (In the first quarter of the twelfth century an external gallery which included the two towers at the angles was also added.) The original area of the cathedral measured *c.* 486 m. Owing to the extensive internal gallery, the sides of the church appear much lower in height than the central part, the latter standing out not only by virtue of its greater height but also because of its better illumination [2]. For this reason, the mosaics are concentrated in the main apse and in the area under the central dome. They adorn the conch and walls of the apse, the vault and wall of the bema, the central dome, its drum, and the arches and pendentives supporting the dome, thus drawing the eye to those parts of the cathedral where the sacred ceremonies were being performed. Dominating the altar, the iconostasis and the ambo (situated in the centre of the crossing under the dome), the mosaics contributed in some measure towards heightening the impact of the three basic acts of the liturgy. When following the latter, the gaze was inevitably drawn to contemplation of the mosaics.

Although in S. Sophia the most conspicuous points were reserved for the mosaics, in



15. Plan of the Cathedral of S. Sophia, Kiev

quantity it is the frescoes—adorning the central and side naves, the transept and the gallery—which predominate. This arrangement of the frescoes enabled the architect to guide the circulation of people within the church. In the side naves the frescoes are distributed in such a way that the spectator is encouraged to move from west to east, that is, from the entrance gallery to the apses. Entirely different, on the other hand, is the arrangement of the frescoes in the central cross: here they are superimposed in three tiers (the upper tier covers the vaults

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16. The Virgin of the Annunciation.  
Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



17. The Virgin, from 'The Deesis'. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

of the arms of the cross; the middle tier, the semicircles over the arches of the gallery which has three bays; the lower tier, the wall over the ground floor arches, which also has three bays [6, 7; 26]). Within the frame of each tier, the evangelical story unfolds in a clockwise direction [15], so that the spectator has to circulate three times around the area under the dome in order to take in all the Gospel scenes. This arrangement of the frescoes, calculated to make the spectator move in a circle, is radically different from that which we find in the basilica-type church, where the mosaics or frescoes appear as linear compositions over the arches of the central nave, thus encouraging the onlooker to move in a straight line from the entrance in the west wall to the altar.

The principle of the circular arrangement of the frescoes is not difficult to comprehend: it derives logically from the central-domed plan and from the nature of the liturgical action which took place round the ambo situated in the centre of the square under the dome. The spectator will fully appreciate the architectural beauties of S. Sophia of Kiev



18. John the Baptist, from 'The Deesis'. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

if he moves in the space leading from one branch of the central cross to another; only then will he perceive all the magnificent perspectives contained in this interior. By moving from the central nave to the side naves, and thence returning from their semi-obscurity to the brilliantly illuminated area under the central dome, he can thoroughly appreciate the originality of the architectural conception of S. Sophia of Kiev, with its wealth of form, light and shadow.

This cathedral is undoubtedly the greatest of the religious buildings of ancient Rus', not only on account of its vast size but in the complexity of its planning. It shares, however, one important feature with all other Russian churches, that is the obscured cross plan with the crossing surmounted by a dome, and for this reason the early Russian system of church painting was based on the same principle, i.e. the circular arrangement of the frescoes around the central square under the dome. It should, however, be stressed that nowhere is the principle so rigorously followed as in S. Sophia; in other churches, especially in



19. Christ the Pantocrator. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

those of Novgorod and Pskov, deviations from the strict chronological sequence of the Gospel story occur. From this point of view the decoration of S. Sophia is exceptional for its deep inner logic; in fact, without the advice of highly-cultivated members of the clergy it could never have been created.

Pride of place among the mosaics is occupied by the enormous figure of the Virgin in the conch of the apse [20] and the half-length figure of Christ in the dome [14, 19]. The Virgin is shown full length in the attitude of praying (*Orans*) with uplifted arms. As





20. The Virgin Orans.  
Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



21. The Apostles, from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

representative of the Church Militant, she dominates the cathedral together with the Pantocrator before whom as mediatrix she intercedes for the human race. Situated at the highest point in the building, Christ, the head of the Church Triumphant reigns supreme in space, His powerful half-length figure seen in an aureole of diagonal rays of sunlight which penetrate the windows of the drum. The book which He holds in His left hand is to remind us of the terrible Day of Judgement when, according to the apocalyptic prophesies, it will be opened. Enclosed within a medallion, Christ is surrounded by a retinue of four archangels in festive attire covered with pearls; only one of these, much damaged, now remains [1]. Lower down, between the windows of the drum, the apostles, the propagators of Christ's teaching were shown; only the half-figure of S. Paul remains [2]. On the pendentives appeared the seated figures of the evangelists; the figure of S. Mark is the only one still intact [3]. Their position on the pillars supporting the dome was not fortuitous since in medieval theology they were regarded as the four pillars of the teaching of the Gospels.

Above the triumphal arch we see the *Deesis*—three medallions containing the half-length figures of Christ, the Virgin [17] and John the Baptist [18]. This is an allusion to the approaching Day of Judgement; the Virgin and John the Baptist are depicted with arms



22. The Eucharist. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

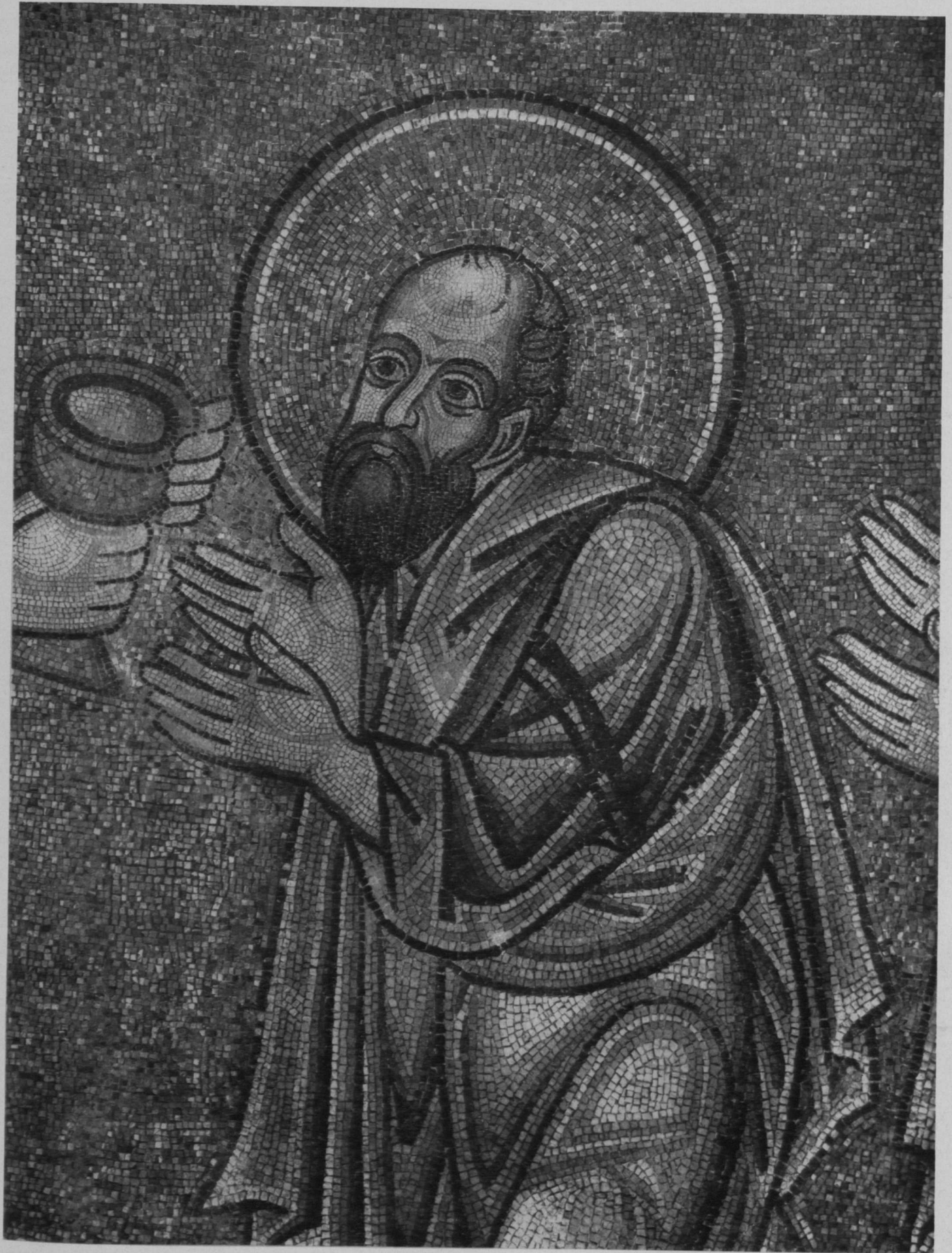
raised towards Christ as they intercede for the *gens christiana*. Above the eastern and western arches, between the evangelists, there are medallions containing half-length figures of the Virgin and of Christ, the latter portrayed in the guise of a priest [4]—a rare iconographical feature. The pillars of both sides of the triumphal arch are decorated by figures of the Virgin and the Archangel Gabriel who announces to her the birth of a Son—the future Saviour of the world [16].

In the middle register of the apse is the great monumental composition of the *Eucharist* [21-24]. In it we see the ciborium above the altar and the angels bearing rhipidia (liturgical fans) standing next to Christ, who is depicted twice. He is engaged in administering the Holy Sacrament to the apostles approaching Him from the right and the left. This composition is intimately related to the fundamental sacramental act in the liturgy in the course of which, according to the teaching of the Christian Church, bread and wine are miraculously changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The frieze containing the *Eucharist* is flanked by figures of the High Priests, Aaron and Melchisedek (not preserved), who were regarded as the Old Testament prototypes of the priestly dignity of Christ.\* This theme was further developed in the lost mosaics of the bema which portrayed the Old

\*See the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, v, 4-10. [Tr.]



23. Angel, from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



24. The Apostle Paul, from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

Testament kings and prophets, regarded as the biblical prototypes of Christ the King and Christ the Priest. In the keystone of the vault of the bema, was probably represented the *Etimasia* which symbolized Christ in Glory after the Resurrection, and Christ as Judge in the Second Coming.<sup>87</sup>

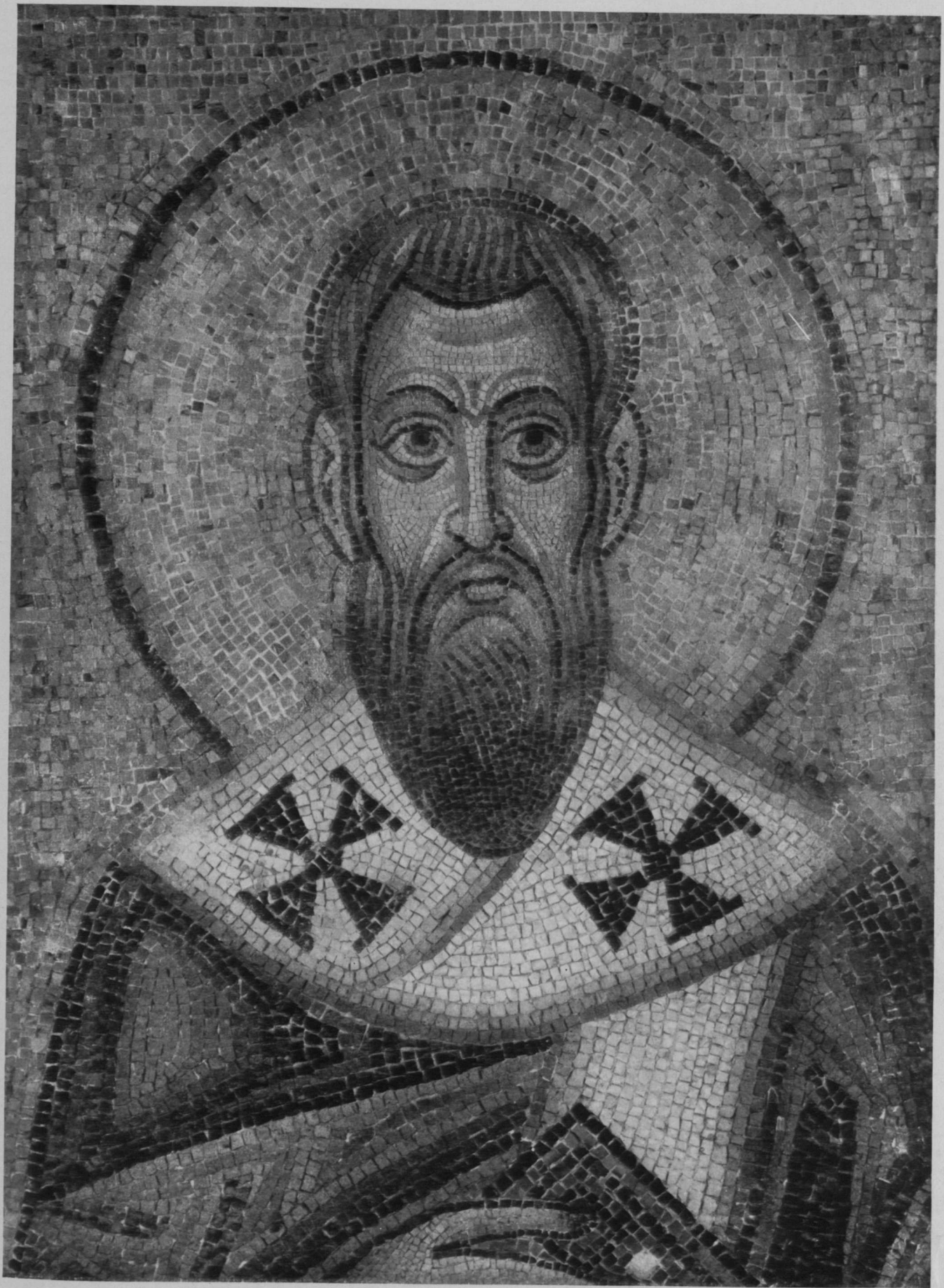
The lower part of the apse is occupied by a frieze with two archdeacons and eight saints (the lower half of the figures is lost), which is one of the most impressive parts of the whole ensemble [25, 26; 6-8]. Finally, the arches supporting the dome are decorated by medallions with half-length figures of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste [only fifteen medallions remain, e.g. 27, 5]. The aim of the various saints portrayed in the apse would seem to be that of redirecting our thoughts to earth after contemplation of heavenly matters (as symbolized by the celestial world in the dome and vault). Earth was the platform of their heroic deeds, and as the consolidators and organizers of the Church Militant they were purposely placed in the lower registers. In this way, the decorative scheme of the cathedral is subordinated to a strict hierarchic principle.

The mosaic decoration of S. Sophia has its logical continuation in the fresco-paintings which, in the nineteenth century, ignominiously disappeared under a layer of oil-colours. Their uncovering was begun in 1936, but owing to the tremendous area involved and the very bad state of preservation, the work is still going on today.

In respect of subject matter the mosaics of S. Sophia follow exactly the standard system of Constantinople. (Only two images were dictated by local interests in Kiev: the figure of



25. Order of Saints. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



26. Basil the Great, from the 'Order of Saints'. Mosaic, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



27. Nicolas, Martyr of Sebaste.  
Mosaic, 1043-6.  
Kiev, S. Sophia

Pope Clement, whose relics were deeply venerated in Kievan Rus', and the image of Christ the Priest, which diverges from the orthodox canon.) The frescoes on the other hand, are far less conventional. They reveal a much greater degree of freedom both in the choice of subject and in the manner of their arrangement on the walls and vaults of the church. In the first place, this freer approach influenced the Gospel cycle which shows several major deviations from the system of 'Feasts' accepted by the Byzantine Church.

The cycle of the Gospel story began on the vault of the northern arm of the central cross and, unfolding clockwise, was continued in the vaults of the southern and western arms, finally descending to the two lower registers, and, within the limits of each, again describing a full circle. On the three great vaults, the following scenes which have not



survived were probably shown: the *Nativity*, *The Presentation in the Temple*, *The Baptism of Christ*, *The Transfiguration*, *The Resurrection of Lazarus*, and *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*. From the vaults the Gospel story moved to the upper register of the walls (lunettes above the three bays of the arches of the gallery). Here, in a poor state of preservation, are the scenes from Christ's Passion: *Christ before Caiphias*, *The Denial of Peter* [28; 9], *The Crucifixion* and *The Descent from the Cross* or *Entombment* (which has not survived). The spectator saw the continuation of the story in the lower register (i.e., the walls above the three bays of the first-floor arches), where scenes from another cycle are depicted: *The Resurrection*, *The Holy Women at the Sepulchre*, *The Descent into Limbo*, *Christ appearing to the Holy Women*, *The Incredulity of Thomas*, and *Christ appearing to the Eleven Apostles* [29]. This last episode, comparatively rare in the iconography of the time, was taken from the Gospel of S. Matthew (xxviii, 16-20), and the reason for its inclusion at S. Sophia was that it clearly illustrated the words of the Risen Christ to the apostles: 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . .' Undoubtedly it is an allusion to the recent conversion of Rus' to Christianity and the consolidation of Christian belief in the young nation. A further allusion to the conversion of Rus' is provided by the scene of *The Descent of the Holy Ghost* [11] which concludes the Gospel cycle. The apostles, having miraculously acquired the faculty to speak in diverse tongues, spread the Christian teaching through all the countries of the world, including Rus' where, according to the oldest chronicle *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, the apostle Andrew preached.<sup>88</sup> In this way the Gospel cycle, as portrayed in S. Sophia at Kiev, laid emphasis on the three basic dogmas of Christian teaching; the Sacrifice of the Cross, the Resurrection, and the teaching and missionary role of the apostles.

From the evidence of the mosaics in the apse and the representation of Christ the Priest above the eastern arch under the dome, it is clear that an enormous significance was attached to the mystery of the Eucharist, and we find the same theme once more reiterated in the series of frescoes for the gallery where the Eucharistic sacrifice and its Old Testament prototypes form the main theme.<sup>89</sup>

On the southern and northern walls of the gallery two Gospel scenes, whose symbolism is directly related to the sacrament of the Eucharist, are shown facing one another: *The Last Supper* at which Christ instituted this sacrament, and *The Wedding at Cana* [10] when he changed the water into wine. Since it is known that the medieval theologians drew a close parallel between the miraculous occurrence at Cana and the Eucharistic transformation of wine into Christ's blood, the placing of these scenes close to one another assumes an added significance. One other scene, now almost totally lost, originally accompanied them—*The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes*; painted beneath *The Last Supper*, this subject had a close symbolic connexion with the Eucharist, the loaves being regarded as foreshadowing the sacred bread. In a similar way, it is easy to explain the presence of the four Old Testament scenes also in the gallery. *The Sacrifice of Isaac* and the *Hospitality of Abraham* were generally considered in the Middle Ages to be the Old Testament prototypes of the Eucharistic sacrifice; the two other scenes of *Three Angels appearing to Abraham* and the *Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace* were allusions to Christ as one of the three Divine Persons, and as God who took on Himself the sufferings of mankind in order to atone for sin, and who rose again after His death.



28. The Apostle Peter, from 'The Denial of Peter'. Fresco, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia

The collocation in the gallery of the scenes relating to the Sacrifice on the Cross and the Sacrament of the Eucharist was not just accidental. It is known that in Byzantium when the emperor and empress attended service in their court churches, they sat in the gallery, and there received Communion. Similarly, in Kievan Rus', the gallery was reserved for the family of the grand-prince, who during the receiving of Communion could contemplate the allusions to the mystery of the Eucharist contained in the nearby scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Thus an intimate relationship was established between the decoration and the religious rites being performed before the grand-prince and his family.

In S. Sophia a very special place was given to the group portrait of Yaroslav's family [30, 36; 27]. As recent research has shown,<sup>90</sup> this was situated on the western wall of the central nave and on the adjoining southern and northern walls. The reconstruction of this



29. Group of Apostles, from 'The Apparition of Christ to the Eleven'. Fresco, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



30. Son of Prince Yaroslav. Fresco, about 1045. Kiev, S. Sophia

unique eleventh-century portrait has been aided by a surviving copy of it made in 1651 by the Dutch artist Abraham van Westervelt. On the western wall Christ was shown enthroned, approached on His right by the grand-prince Yaroslav and his eldest son, the former bearing a maquette of the cathedral, and on His left by the grand-princess Irene and her eldest daughter. Four other daughters bearing candles were portrayed on the southern wall, while on the northern wall were the figures of four younger sons. Both the grand-prince and princess wore crowns of the Byzantine type. Yaroslav, referred to in a graffito from the year 1054 as *tsar*,<sup>91</sup> is here depicted as a worthy rival to the Byzantine emperor. Also significant in this group portrait is the inclusion of his daughters, Elizabeth, Anna and Anastasia, who were shortly to become the respective Queens of Norway, France and Hungary.

This family portrait must have been painted in 1045, before any of Yaroslav's daughters was yet married, otherwise Elizabeth, Anna and Anastasia would have been shown wearing crowns. At any rate the frescoes of the central crossing were completed by May 11, 1046, the date of the first consecration of the cathedral.

There is good reason to believe that the choice of themes for the frescoes in the side naves originated in a programme devised by Yaroslav and his advisers, but the carrying out of the programme could have persisted right up to the second consecration of S. Sophia which took place on November 4, 1061 or 1067.

The prothesis was dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul. Scenes from the life of S. Peter adorned the apse. Of these only four scenes in a very damaged state survive as well as some insignificant fragments of a fifth. (So far only one episode has been deciphered, that of *S. Peter's Delivery from Prison*.) The apse of the diaconicon contained scenes from the proto-evangelical cycle [31-35; 12], and the reason for this unusual siting of them was that Yaroslav, in dedicating the diaconicon to Joachim and Anna, wished to commemorate his mother Anna, who had died in 1011, and his wife Irene, who on entering a religious order had taken the name of Anna. The death of Irene which took place on



31. Mary and Elizabeth. Detail of fresco in the diaconicon, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



32. The Annunciation to Anna. Fresco in the diaconicon, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



33. The Annunciation at the Well. Fresco in the diaconicon, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



34. The Presentation of Mary in the Temple. Fresco in the diaconicon, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



35. The Presentation by Mary of the Temple Veil to the Priest. Fresco in the diaconicon, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



36. Daughter of Prince Yaroslav.  
Fresco, about 1045. Kiev, S. Sophia

February 10, 1050, provides us with circumstantial evidence for determining the precise date of these diaconicon frescoes.

The subjects of the paintings in the two most lateral naves are even more closely linked with Yaroslav's personal life. The northern nave is dedicated to S. George, the patron of the grand-prince whose Christian name was Yury (George). The handsome figure of the martyred saint adorns the conch of the apse, while on the vault six episodes from his life were shown, of which only one, *The Interrogation of S. George by Diocletian*, is fully preserved. A further scene from this cycle of the saint's life, *The Flagellation of S. George*,



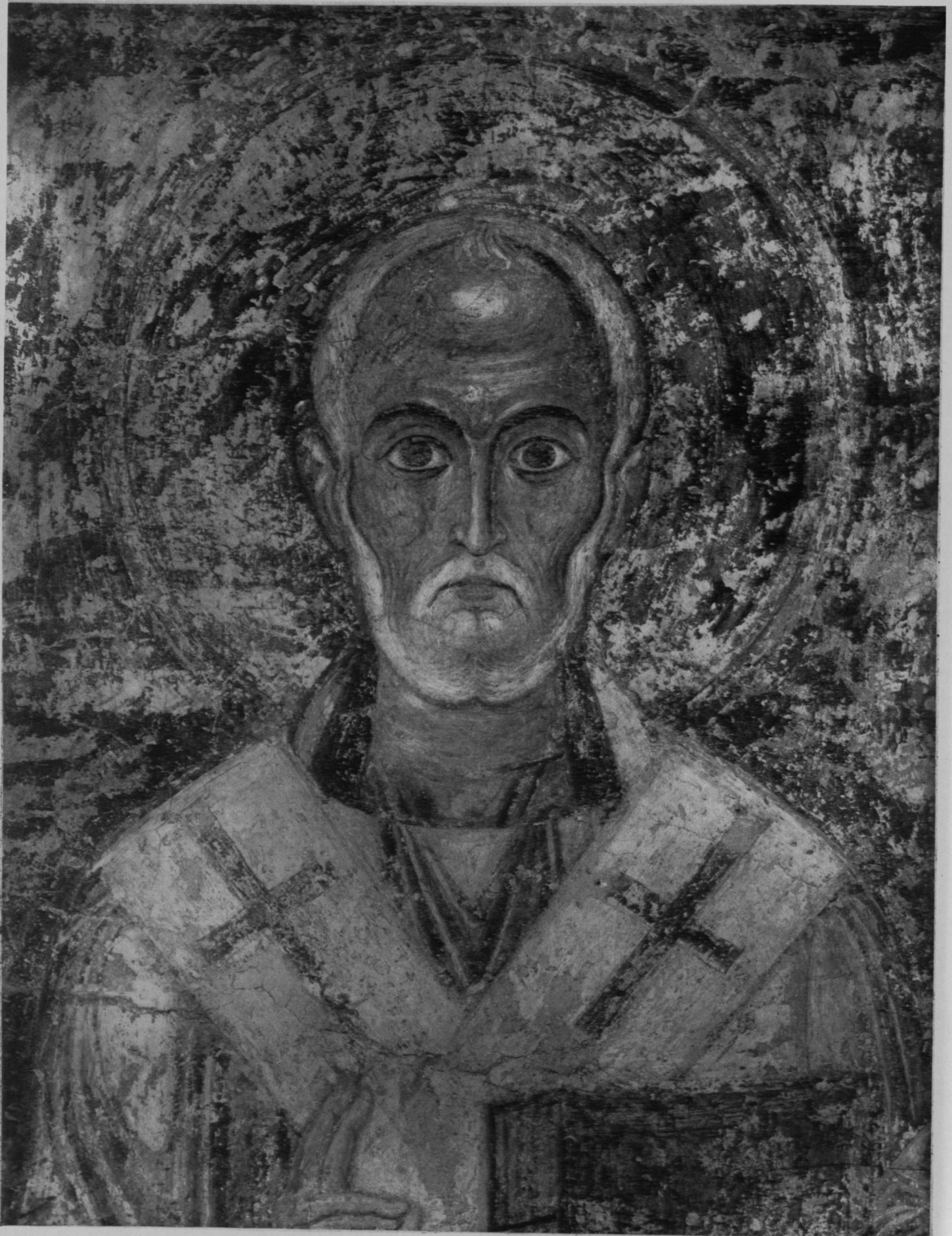
was recently uncovered on the northern wall. The outer nave on the right honours the name of the archangel Michael, revered in Rus' as the patron of princes and warriors. His half-length figure fills the apsidal conch, while on the vaults are shown six scenes commemorating the exploits of archangels: *Jacob wrestling with the Angel*; *The Overthrow of Satan*; *Gabriel appearing to Zacharias*; *The Archangel appearing to Balaam*; *The Archangel appearing to Joshua*; and one other scene now lost.

Our examination of the iconographical scheme of S. Sophia of Kiev would not be complete without a mention of the single figures [37-39; 14-23], which are placed either round the apertures of the arches or else adorn the arches and cruciform pillars. Their distribution does not follow any logical pattern—they alternate in a haphazard way with bands of decorative motifs and crosses. Since the massive pillars of S. Sophia are cruciform in section, each of them provided the fresco-painter with twelve vertical surfaces which were ideal for the representation of standing saints—a fact which partially explains the abundance of such figures in the cathedral. Compared with these images of individual saints, literally overwhelming the spectator by their numbers, the scenes from the Gospel and the Old Testament occupy in the total scheme of decoration a relatively modest place. On entering the cathedral, the spectator is confronted on all sides with a host of saints, who with their grave and penetrating gaze seem to pursue him relentlessly and fill him with a sense of his own helplessness.<sup>92</sup>

Hitherto, the frescoes in the two towers of S. Sophia have generally been studied in direct relation to the overall decorative ensemble of the cathedral, but recent architectural research has revealed that the south-west tower was erected contemporaneously with the outer gallery and the superstructure of the inner one<sup>93</sup>—most probably during the reign of



37. Unknown Saint. Fresco, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



38. S. Nicolas. Fresco, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



39. The Prophet Elijah. Fresco, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



40. The Palace of Kathisma with the Galleries. Fresco in the south-west tower, 1113-25. Kiev, S. Sophia

Vladimir Monomakh (1113-25). The north-west tower was erected a little later, following on the frescoing of the pillars and flying buttresses of the outer gallery. These conclusions arrived at by the architectural historians are confirmed by an analysis of the paintings in both towers, where the style of the frescoes, the work of several teams of painters, is very different from that which prevailed in Yaroslav's time.

One of the themes illustrated in the paintings of the south-west tower is undoubtedly borrowed from Byzantium and possibly expresses Vladimir Monomakh's great love for the Greek world (his mother was the daughter of the Byzantine emperor, Constantine X Ducas, and one of his own daughters married Leo, son of Romanus IV Diogenes). On the walls of the tower are depicted the various sporting activities of the Hippodrome at Constantinople. On the right, dominating the east side of the arena is the Kathisma Palace [40, 41; 28] from which the emperor and his retinue watched the games and contests; the emperor is shown sitting in the imperial box while his suite have taken their places in the open galleries. There is also a high wall built of massive stones; this is pierced by two windows through which the emperor's bodyguards are peering. Below stretched the arena with two quadrigas (only their outlines are preserved). To the left of the palace we see the place set aside for the competitors (known as the carceres); the tympani of the porticos are

decorated with discs bearing half-moons which were regarded as talismans by the charioteers at the start of the race. From the carceres the chariots, representing the factions of the Blues, the Whites, the Greens and the Reds, emerge with their drivers standing erect in them. To the right of the palace could be seen a wild-horse hunt and dancing mimes and musicians. We may well ask why episodes from the life of the Constantinople Hippodrome should have found a place in the decoration of the towers of Kiev Cathedral, and the answer is that such scenes symbolized the triumph of the Basileus who claimed to be a direct successor to the Roman emperors.<sup>94</sup>

In such a centralized state as was Byzantium, it was not so much the charioteers and gladiators who gained kudos from their triumphs, no matter how brilliant, as the emperor himself who always presided at the Hippodrome: he was considered the principal victor and was hailed as 'Ever victorious'. These scenes were therefore a symbol of triumphant imperial power, and, understandably, they occupy a very important place in Byzantine art (in consular diptychs, the marble base of the obelisk of Theodosius, several paintings in the imperial palaces no longer preserved but described by contemporaries). Kiev borrowed these subjects from Byzantium and very skilfully adapted them to glorifying the power of her own grand-princes. When the Kievan princes mounted the stairs to the gallery and saw the various arena scenes, the association uppermost in their minds was not the power of the Byzantine emperors but rather the concept of political power as such.

Not that all the paintings in the south-west tower are concerned with the activities of the Hippodrome at Constantinople; on the contrary, a considerable if not the greater part of them are devoted to hunting scenes—another variant of the 'triumph' motif. It is well known that Byzantine artists frequently commemorated with their brush the valiant hunting exploits of the emperors.<sup>95</sup> Thus for instance Nicetas Choniates tells us that Andronicus Comnenus ordered his palace to be decorated with pictures of his valorous deeds 'with bow, sword, and at the Hippodrome'.<sup>96</sup> In the famous 'Precepts of Vladimir Monomakh', a great deal of attention is given to the hunt. Vladimir tells his sons how in the dense forests near Chernigov he bound with his own hands thirty wild horses, how aurochs twice attacked him, how deer butted him and elks trampled him, how a wild boar



41. Spectators at the Hippodrome of Constantinople. Fresco in the south-west tower, 1113-25. Kiev, S. Sophia

wrenched his sword from his hip, how a bear bit his knee, how a savage beast jumped at him and brought him and his horse to the ground.<sup>97</sup> References to princely hunts appear continually in the chronicles.<sup>98</sup> These hunts, which were one of the chief pastimes of feudal nobility, lasted for several days, sometimes even weeks. It is not surprising that in the *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*, out of a total of two thousand eight hundred and fifty-three words, no less than sixty-one hunting terms are found.

An attentive study of the paintings in the south-west tower shows that nearly all the beasts portrayed belong to the northern fauna. We see the hunting of wild boars and squirrels with dogs, the hunting of wild horses (*tarpany*) with cheetahs and also with the lasso [31]. In a niche and on the walls there are scenes of a fox running, a wild boar being pursued [29]<sup>99</sup> and a hunter on horseback being attacked by a wolf.

Just as many hunting exploits are to be found on the walls and vaults of the north-west tower, among them a rider tussling with a bear [9, 42], a hound in pursuit of a deer; also portrayed are different species of hunting birds such as falcons, gerfalcons and hawks in collars. These birds are skilfully inserted into medallions, one of which contains a



42. Mounted warrior fighting a bear. Fresco in the north-west tower, about 1120-5. Kiev, S. Sophia

complete scene of a hawk attacking a hare. N. V. Charlemagne, who made a special study of the various species of animal depicted on the walls and vaults of both towers, came to the conclusion that the majority of these belonged to the local fauna. In his opinion the empty spaces where the frescoes have completely disappeared, probably contained scenes of the hunting of aurochs, elks and beavers, as well as the trapping in nets of swans, geese, ducks and cranes.<sup>100</sup>

Unfortunately the surviving frescoes in both towers are not only very badly preserved but also very fragmentary. The existence of numerous gaps, which originally contained more complex compositions makes it impossible to trace a meaningful connexion between the surviving pieces. Scenes from court life were apparently also portrayed in the north tower. Against an architectural background, we see the seated emperor with his body-guard [33] and the empress standing with ladies of the court; also a representation of the emperor on horseback. But the precise significance of these scenes, and in what way the fragments are linked, remains uncertain.<sup>101</sup> The presence of nimbuses around the heads of the principal personages suggests that the artists were describing scenes from Byzantine, rather than Kievan, court life.



43. Warrior fighting a masked man. Fresco in the north-west tower, about 1120-5. Kiev, S. Sophia

We have deliberately examined in great detail the iconographical content of S. Sophia of Kiev. The decoration, taken as a whole, is a unique ensemble in eleventh-century art. Nearly all the essential elements for piecing it together are there, and what has been lost can be imaginatively reconstructed with a reasonable degree of probability, enabling us to form an idea of the entire scheme—amazing in its wealth of images and in its complexity.

Though the chronicles do not mention the summoning of Greek masters by Yaroslav, there can be no doubt that they participated in the building and especially in the decoration of the Cathedral of S. Sophia. But the participation of local artists is no less certain, since otherwise it would be hard to explain the presence in the Kievan decorations of many features not usually found in purely Byzantine monuments; one of these is the bold use of mosaic as well as fresco in the one building, a combination generally avoided by the Byzantines.

A characteristic of Byzantine sacred buildings is the combination of mosaics with walls faced in marble. As a rule the mosaics were reserved for the upper part of the interior—domes, vaults, conchs, squinches—while the walls were covered with marble, strong and monolithic, presenting a brilliant polished surface to the eye. This surface, contrasting with the picturesque glimmer of the mosaic tesserae, served to emphasize still more the peculiar beauty of the mosaics.<sup>102</sup> Such a contrast is absent from S. Sophia of Kiev, where the walls right down to the floor are covered in frescoes conveying a totally different texture to that of marble—uneven, porous, with only the barest sheen, like that on an egg-shell. Though the frescoes are placed in tiers one above the other, the symmetry of the arrangement is frequently disregarded; the levels of the borders do not always coincide, the figures often alternate with ornamental bands, the pillars embracing the apertures of the arches are fitted into the scheme of decoration in a variety of different ways. All this deviates from the strict and rigorous principles of Byzantine tectonics.

The purely ornamental elements in the S. Sophia frescoes are also non-Byzantine in character,<sup>103</sup> and since they occupy a very important place in the general decorative scheme, they must be regarded as a specifically Russian contribution. They undoubtedly reflect the influence of Russian folk art with its primordial taste for pattern. This wealth of ornamentation gave to S. Sophia of Kiev, both internally and externally, an essentially indigenous stamp, considerably tempering the austere character of the religious images imported from Byzantium.

Local stylistic traits are also clearly discernible in the mosaics with which the decoration of the interior was begun. Next in order of execution came the frescoes of the central cross, the work of a mixed Byzanto-Russian workshop which later, assimilating an increasing number of local masters, embarked on the painting of the side naves and the interior gallery. We are now able to recognize the hand of no less than eight mosaicists, among whom the most eminent was the author of the figures of the saints on the south side of the apse [25, 26; 6, 7]. He was apparently the chief master, and there is every reason for connecting him with the school of Constantinople. He has the gift of sharp individual characterization, his drawing is highly expressive, with ease he creates the most subtle effects of colour. The other mosaicists work in a different manner, from which we may conclude that the team of Greek artists who came to Kiev was also composed of provincial masters who brought with them different artistic traditions. These traditions are clearly



manifest in the composition of the *Eucharist* [21–24] where the apostles approaching Christ are portrayed in stiff almost identical poses, their thick-set figures with massive limbs drawn in sharp heavy lines. The same heavy lines are also used in the faces with their strong features and lack of individuality. There is little subtlety in the transitions from light to shadow, and because there is no indication of a horizontal ground plane, the figures give the impression of floating in air. The execution of the composition is exaggeratedly two-dimensional. Equally archaic are the representations of the Pantocrator [14, 19], the Virgin Orans [20] and S. Mark the Evangelist [3]. In their general approach, the mosaics of S. Sophia at Kiev are very different from the art of Constantinople with its sense of grouping, its fine colour harmonies, its efforts to suggest a third dimension. The nearest stylistic affinities to the mosaics of Kiev are found in the mosaics of Hosios Lukas, dating from the beginning of the eleventh century. Both reveal pronounced archaic trends. In Kiev



44. Archangel. Fresco, 1046–61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia

these trends were largely conditioned by the fact that Russian monumental art was then in its infancy and naturally archaic, so that local artists participating in the creation of the mosaics were bound to be closer in spirit to the provincial Greek masters than to the chief master from Constantinople. The truth of this is borne out by the evidence of the mosaics done by Kievan masters, such as the images of two of the martyrs of Sebaste: Nicholas [27] and Aetius. In them the archaic tendency is clearly expressed in the flatter forms, the heavier lines, and the stiff countenances devoid of personality.

Owing to their bad state of preservation, it is difficult to judge the style of the frescoes. It seems that work on the mosaic decoration was prematurely interrupted (on the western arch under the dome the medallions with the half-length figures of the Martyrs of Sebaste are not in mosaic but fresco)—perhaps due to the sudden departure for home of the Greek mosaicists. But certainly some of the Greek masters remained and continued to collaborate with the local artists, and from this Byzanto-Russian workshop came all the frescoes which decorate S. Sophia. The team of painters working on these frescoes must have been very large, otherwise it would be hard to explain the many differences in the manner of painting.

The frescoes for the central crossing, very monumental and finished not later than May 1046, the year of the first consecration of the cathedral, form the earliest group [28–30, 36–38; 17, 19, 21]. Many-figured compositions, compact and impressive in scale, fit very nicely into their allotted space. As a rule they are orientated in the plane of the wall, and often have a definite central axis on either side of which the parts are equally distributed. The large imposing figures are placed in a row and the architectural background is always



45. The Centurion Cornelius from 'The Apostle Peter with the Centurion Cornelius'. Fresco, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia



46. A Hebrew Youth. Fresco, 1043-6. Kiev, S. Sophia



47. Musician. Fresco in the north-west tower, about 1120-5. Kiev, S. Sophia

on a plane parallel to the surface plane. This treatment lends to the Gospel story a majestic epic quality. Similarly treated are the representations of the single saints which adorn in vast numbers the walls and pillars of the central cross. Firmly anchored on their feet, these saints are distinguished by their monumental scale and the grave and steady gaze of their robust countenances. The rather summary treatment accorded to these faces is a far cry from the detailed linear elaboration of form characteristic of the painting of the mature twelfth century; they are rounded rather than elongated; the lines defining the brows, eyes, nose and mouth are pleasing because of their expressive simplicity and clarity; the planes of forehead and cheeks are not broken up, but presented as uninterrupted, generally fairly strongly-lit, surfaces. The modelling of the faces is achieved through the use of dense and heavy green shadows. In these stylistic features there is an echo of the Roman portrait-painting of the late Empire. It is no mere coincidence that some of the faces recall the portraits of Fayum for, in fact, representations of male and female martyrs occurred very frequently in the martyria of Palestine,<sup>104</sup> from whence they passed into church painting at a later date and so kept alive the traditions of antiquity.

By the sixties of the eleventh century, when the second consecration of the cathedral took place, the painting of the side-naves and the interior gallery must have been completed. Dating from the twelfth century are the frescoes which adorn the outer gallery, the towers and the baptistry. These were primarily the work of Russian artists, as is evidenced not only by the Slavonic inscriptions but also the style which is flatter and more linear in character. The frescoes for the towers come into a category of their own; their archaism and abundance of oriental motifs is astonishing. The artists responsible were obviously

very familiar with oriental silverware and patterned silks, from which they copied the exotic motifs of griffons [50; 30, 32], leopards, camels [48] and other animals. Another curious feature is that the beasts of their own native fauna give the impression they had been taken from a Sassanian plate or a precious Byzantine fabric. Once again we see how complex are the sources of artistic culture in Kievan Rus'.

Apart from a single fresco-fragment [40] dating from the late thirties of the eleventh century<sup>105</sup> and belonging to the Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Saviour (Spasso-Preobrazhensky Cathedral) at Chernigov, all the remaining works of monumental painting in Kievan Rus' belong much later—in the twelfth century. This was the time when, besides the Kievan court, other centres of culture began rapidly to develop, among which the monasteries were to play an important role. The chief of these monasteries was Pechersky. Founded about the middle of the eleventh century, it enjoyed the intellectual support of the first Russian Metropolitan, Ilarion, and to it gravitated all who were opposed to the 'Constantinople party', a faction which demanded unconditional obedience to the Greek clergy. The priors and monks of the Pechersky Monastery did their utmost to establish closer relations with Slav countries and with Athos, in order that Russians might come in contact with Greeks, Serbs and Bulgars. Through these channels the models of Greek provincial and Slavonic art made their way into Kievan Rus', though, we should add, the cultural connexions of the monastery were not restricted to Athos alone—its Statutes were in fact received from Constantinople, from the Monastery of the Studion. It was also from Constantinople that the artists were invited who, between 1083 and 1089, decorated the great Church of the Dormition, the principal church of the Pechersky Monastery (cf. pp. 27, 29, 72). As the statement of Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo shows,<sup>106</sup> the system of decoration employed in this church followed the tradition of Constantinople and was very similar to that adopted for S. Sophia of Kiev (e.g. the Virgin in the Orans position and the *Eucharist* in the apse, the *Pantocrator* in the dome). Unfortunately nothing from this church has survived, and hence we are unable to comment on the style.



48. Camel with driver.  
Fresco in the north-west tower,  
about 1120-5. Kiev, S. Sophia



49. Seraph. Fresco, 1046-61/7. Kiev, S. Sophia

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50. Griffon. Fresco in the south-west tower, 1113-25. Kiev, S. Sophia

Until recently, a source of much discussion has been the question of the date of another Kievan mosaic ensemble, of which only some scattered fragments remain. This ensemble was commonly thought to have adorned the Church of the Archangel Michael founded in 1108 by Svyatopolk (Michael), Grand-prince of Kiev, but this view was strongly contested by M. K. Karger who maintained that it belonged to the Church of S. Demetrius in the Dimitriyevsky Monastery, founded by the Grand-prince Isyaslav (Dmitry) Yaroslavich, and finished not later than 1062. This church was subsequently confused with the Church of the Archangel Michael.<sup>107</sup> However, the plan of the Church of S. Demetrius (whose foundations were excavated by A. S. Annenkov in 1838) was recently discovered by Yu. S.



51. The Eucharist. Mosaic, about 1108. Kiev, Church of the Archangel Michael

Aseyev,<sup>108</sup> and clearly shows that under no circumstances can this church be identified with that of the Archangel Michael. Thus M. K. Karger's theory is refuted, and the surviving fragments of mosaic can safely be attributed to the Church of the Archangel Michael. According to the testimony of Paul of Aleppo,<sup>109</sup> the decoration of the central apse in the Church of the Archangel Michael differed only slightly from that adopted in the apses of S. Sophia of Kiev and the Church of the Dormition in the Pechersky Monastery. In the conch was represented the Virgin Orans, below which was a register containing the *Eucharist* and lower still a frieze with figures of saints. In common with S. Sophia of Kiev, the mosaics were combined with frescoes. From this splendid decorative ensemble only part of the apsidal mosaics has survived, plus several fragments of frescoes. The mosaics show the *Eucharist* [51–54, 57]; the figures of Demetrius of Thessalonica [56] and the archdeacon Stephen [55] which adorned the inner sides of the pillars in the apse; the figure of the apostle Thaddeus (in this church four apostles were portrayed on either side of the *Eucharist*); the frescoes show the *Annunciation*, *Zacharias*, fragments of saints [41] and some excellent ornamental motifs. After the demolition of the Church of the Archangel Michael these mosaics and frescoes were transferred to one of the upper chapels in S. Sophia in Kiev, and the mosaic with the figure of Demetrius of Thessalonica was given to the Tret'yakov Gallery in Moscow.

A comparison between the composition of the *Eucharist* in S. Sophia of Kiev and the same theme in the Church of the Archangel Michael reveals a greater degree of freedom in the structure of the latter. In S. Sophia the apostles approaching Christ are depicted in

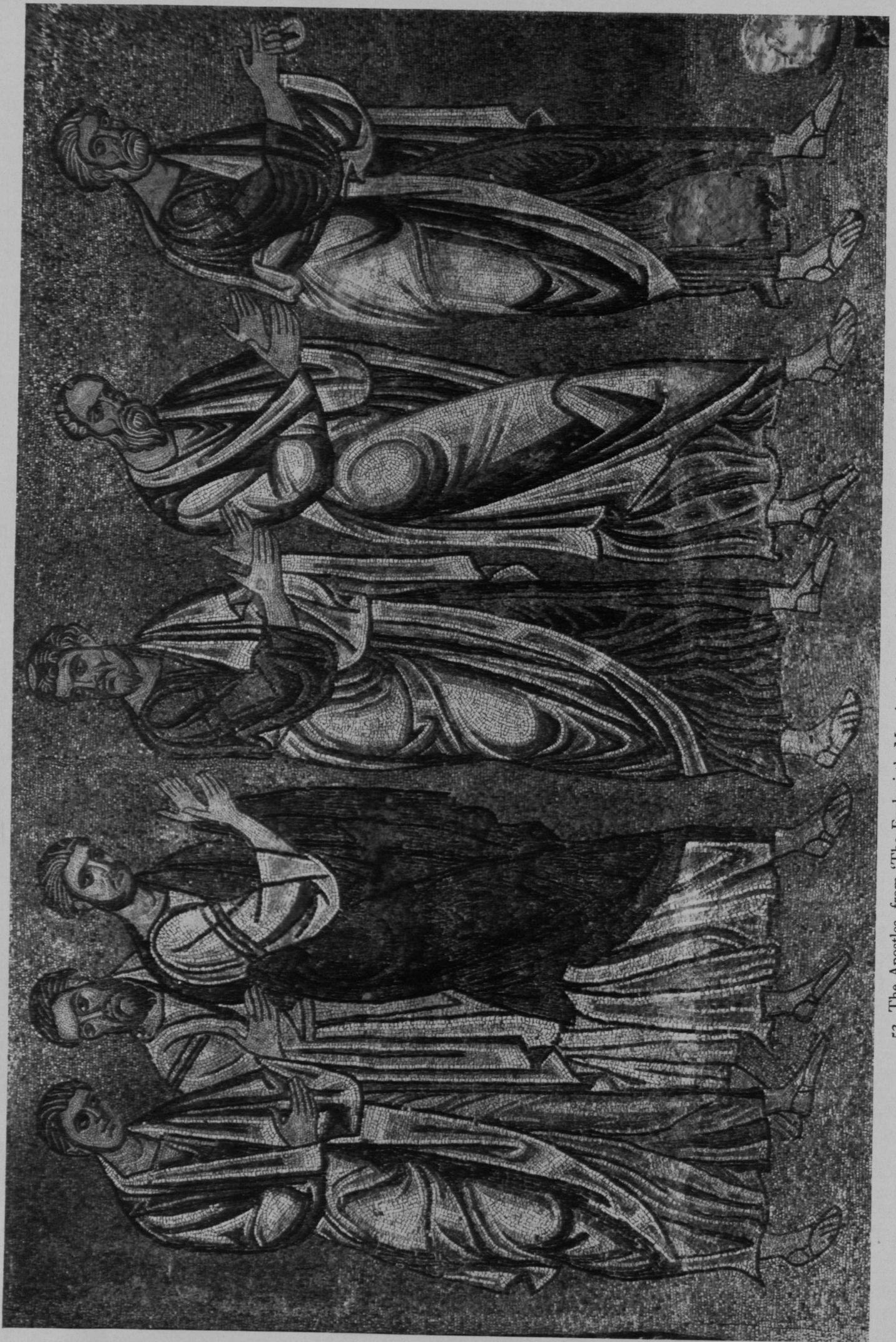


very similar attitudes, and are placed almost equidistant from one another, thus producing a composition of a solemn and measured character. In the mosaic in the Church of S. Michael, on the other hand, the figures of the apostles, more elegantly and less rigidly portrayed, form loose and pleasing groups. The artists are not afraid to place figures behind one another instead of side by side at regular intervals, and show a taste for intersections and asymmetric arrangements. The attitudes and gestures effectively express the reactions of the apostles to the most solemn moment in the rite: Andrew, dignified, contains his emotion while Simon, turning towards Philip, openly registers his amazement; Bartholomew, arms upraised, is deep in prayer, while Paul, leaning forward is about to drop to his knees. In the treatment of the faces, these mosaicists do not exaggerate the eyes (as did the mosaicists of S. Sophia), but aim at a harmonious balance in which no one feature is allowed to predominate. By varying the arrangement and shade of the hair, the colour of the skin, the shape of the eyes, the line of the nose, the contour of the face, the artists gave to each of the apostles a distinctive personality.

Many art historians, puzzled by the excessive elongation of the figures in these mosaics, have been tempted to attribute this feature to a lack of experience on the part of the artists who created them. In reality, however, this elongation serves a definite artistic purpose. In the Church of S. Michael, the frieze with the *Eucharist* was located very high up and, in addition, covered a highly concave surface. Owing to the laws of perspective, the figures would consequently have appeared sharply foreshortened to the spectator's eye had not the mosaicists deliberately lengthened them (with the exception of Christ and the angels, who were given normal proportions since they appeared in the centre where the wall of the apse was least concave). By this means the artists made allowances for optical distortions, and thereby revealed their familiarity with traditions going back to antique art.

The mosaics of the Church of the Archangel Michael, like those of S. Sophia, are remarkable for the exceptional beauty of their deep rich colours, among which a whole series of greens, ranging from emerald to muted dark green predominate. The extensive use of gold in the folds of the chitons and cloaks lends to the draperies an air of pageantry. White, pink, grey and red tesserae are utilized in the faces. Dark greys and olive-greys were widely used for the shading. Hair is either light grey, white, dark grey or dark brown. Especially effective, however, is the gamut of colours used in the draperies, striking in the subtlety of its nuances: white and grey merge imperceptibly into emerald green, brownish-red, violet, steel blue, and delicate pink—forming a remarkably iridescent colour range, controlled with great virtuosity by the Byzantine masters. Each colour is treated not as a separate entity but in intimate relationship with its neighbours with which it combines to form an indivisible whole. Each drapery is a finished symphony of colour, but from the harmonious juxtaposition of all the draperies together there arises a new synthesis, an even more perfect unity. In this respect the mosaics of the Church of the Archangel Michael occupy a distinctive and honourable place in the history of medieval monumental painting.

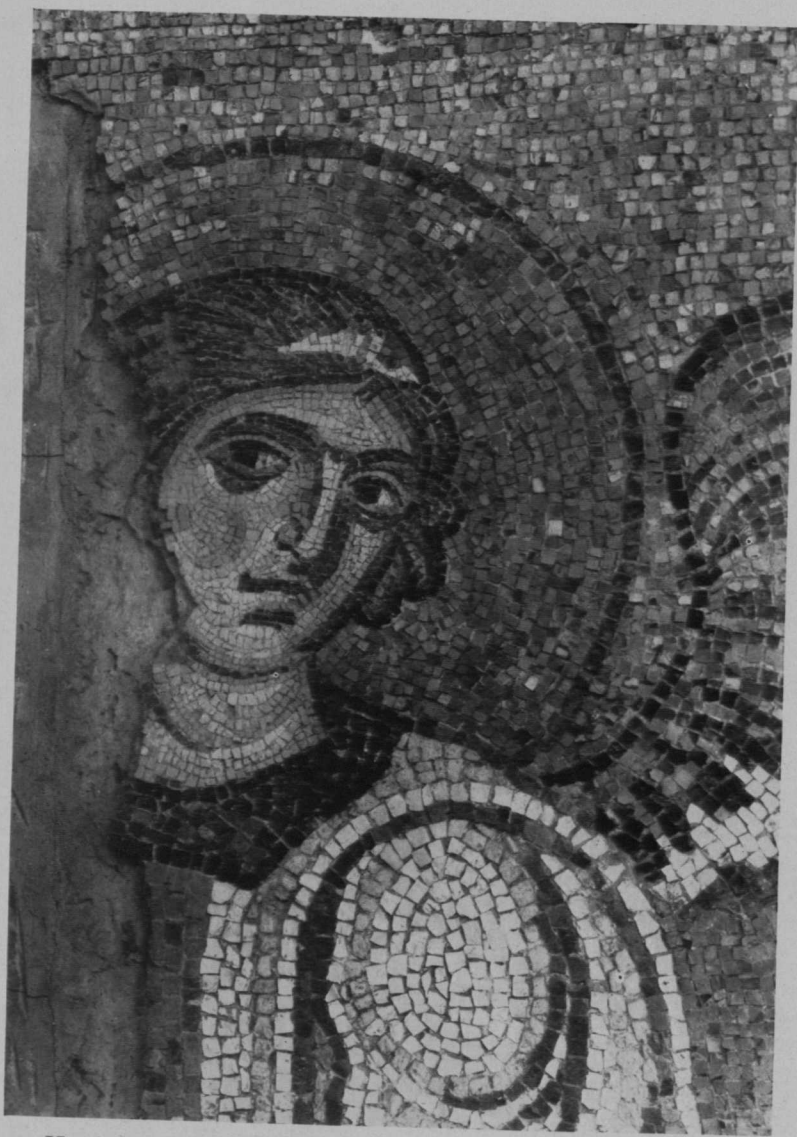
If one compares the mosaics of the Church of the Archangel Michael with those of S. Sophia, the perceptive eye will at once detect in the former a greater fervour in the application of linear principles. The lines which cover the draperies with an almost web-like tracery have acquired an elegant calligraphical character. Not only do they follow the



52. The Apostles, from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, about 1108. Kiev, Church of the Archangel Michael



53. The Apostles, from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, about 1108. Kiev, Church of the Archangel Michael

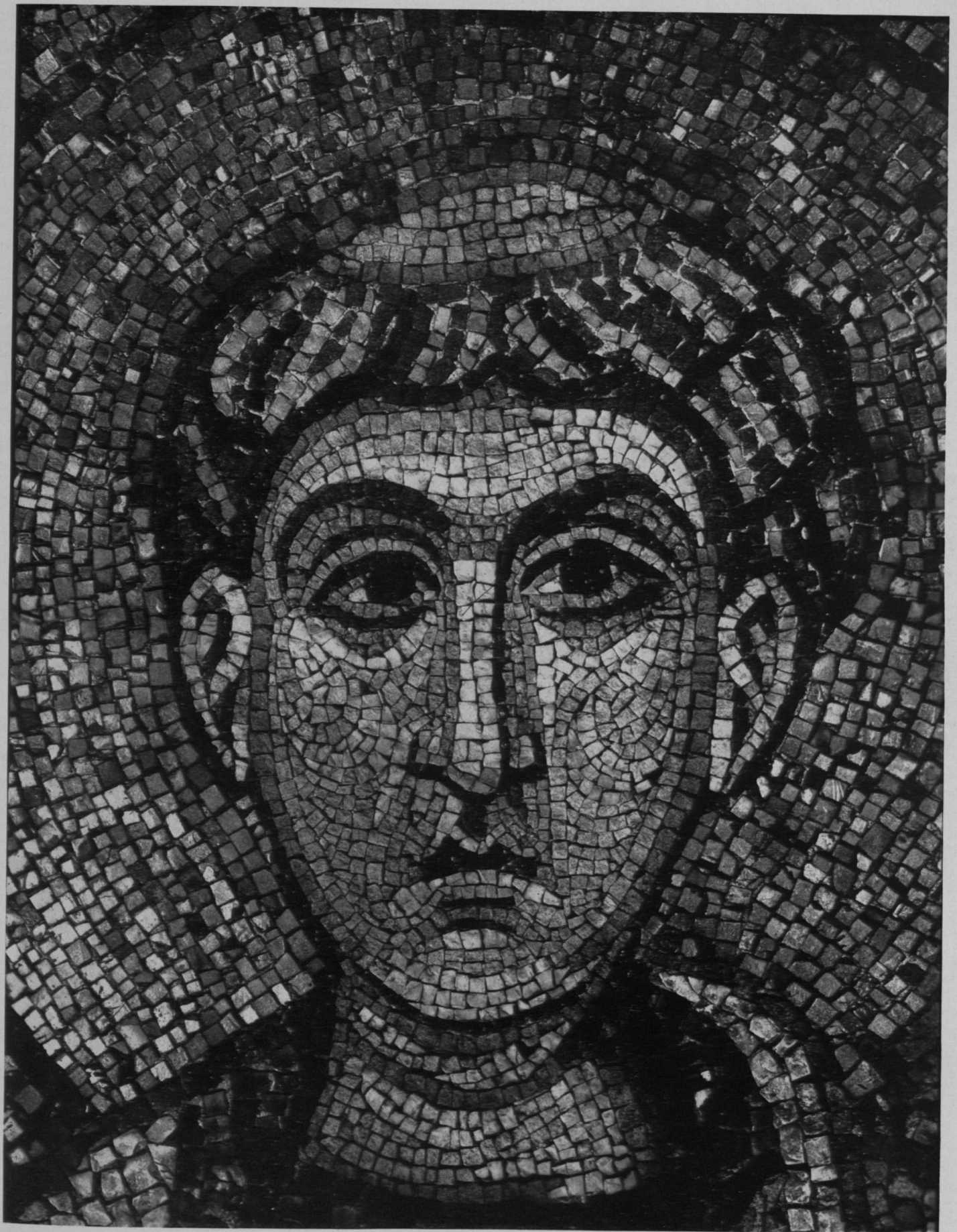


54. Head of Angel, from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, about 1108. Kiev, Church of the Archangel Michael

rhythmic movement of the form, they also have an intrinsic ornamental significance. The mosaicists no longer adopt the large smooth planes so much favoured by the masters of S. Sophia, but instead divide up the planes with lines, sometimes breaking them, sometimes forcing them to wind, sometimes placing them in parallel rows. This new approach points to the influence of miniature-painting, which first established the basic principles of the linear-calligraphical style. Although the mosaics of the Church of the Archangel Michael definitely gravitate towards the monumental painting of the twelfth century, they nevertheless contain several persistent Hellenistic elements. The presence of this Hellenistic heritage brings them close to the famous mosaics of Daphni, which out of all the works of eleventh century monumental decoration is the one which most closely approximates to the great works of antiquity. In style the mosaics of the Church of the Archangel Michael mark a transitional phase between, on the one hand, the mosaics of Nea Moni (1042-56), those of the narthex of the Church of the Dormition at Nicea (1065-67) and the cycle at Daphni (second half of the

eleventh century); and on the other the mosaics of the southern gallery of S. Sophia of Constantinople (1118-22) and those in the Gelati Monastery (c. 1130).

Since a period of seventeen years was all that divided the completion of the great Church of the Dormition from the building of the Church of the Archangel Michael, the artists who created the latter's mosaics could easily have come from the ranks of craftsmen who worked on the Pechersky Monastery. This theory becomes even more credible in the light of the evidence of the *Pechersky Paterik*, which states that the Greek masters from Constantinople who built and decorated the Church of the Dormition did not return home but remained in Kiev, where they died and were buried under the name of 'the twelve brethren'.<sup>110</sup> D. V. Ainalov was therefore right to connect the mosaics of the Church of S. Michael with the Constantinople school.<sup>111</sup> As was the case in S. Sophia of Kiev, these Greek masters were undoubtedly assisted by the indigenous artists who, however, in this case contrary to what Galassi thought, did not play a substantial role.<sup>112</sup> Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the errors occurring in the Slavonic inscription over the mosaic of the *Eucharist* (here the word *Zaveta*—Testament—is repeated twice!).<sup>113</sup> A mistake of this



55. Archdeacon Stephen. Detail of mosaic, about 1108. Kiev, Church of the Archangel Michael

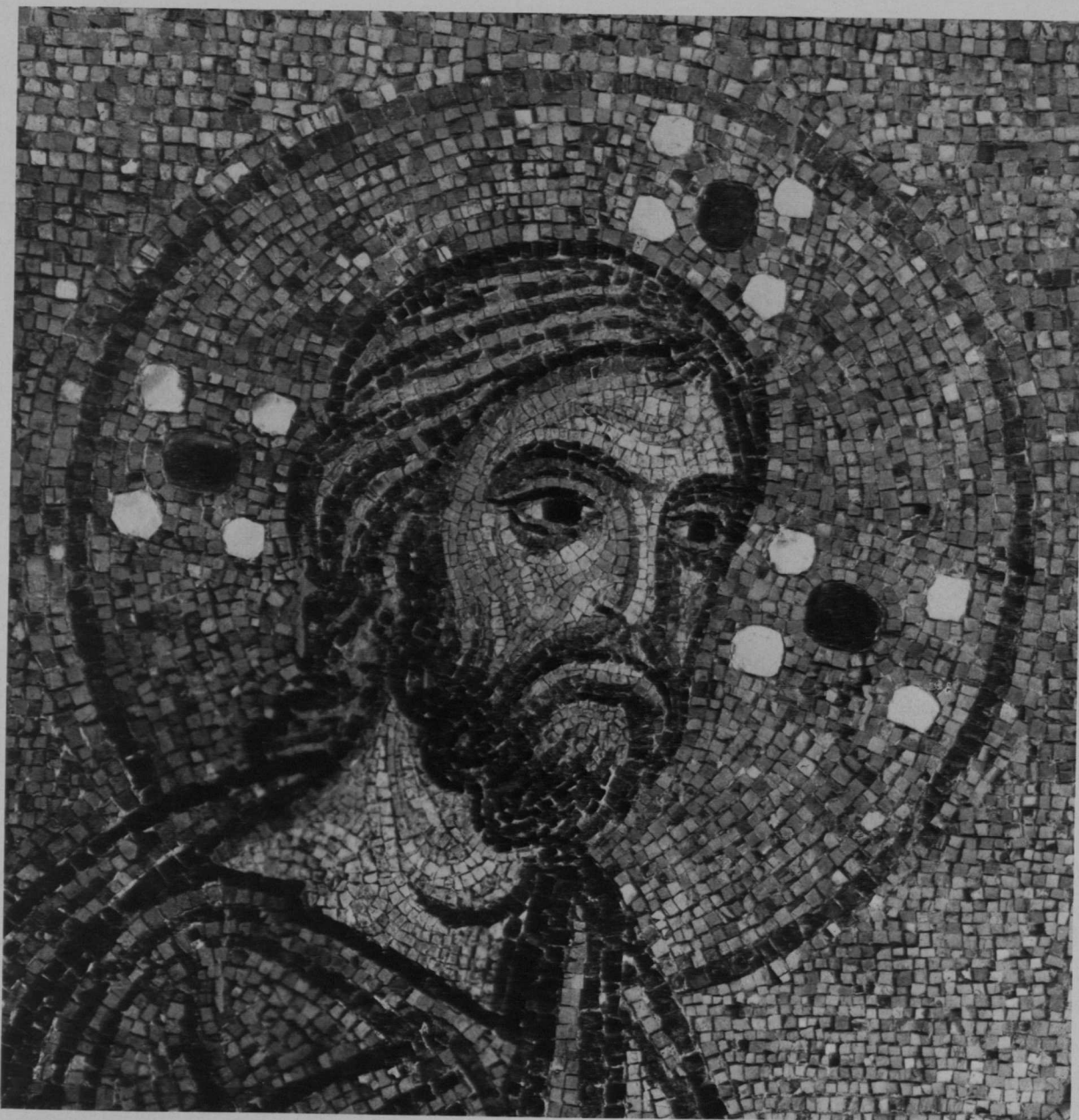
kind could only be made by someone unacquainted with the Slavonic language. As usual, several craftsmen participated in the mosaics for the Church of the Archangel Michael. The part of the composition which is most truly 'Greek' is the central part with the figures of Christ and the angels, whereas in the treatment of the apostles' robes (particularly Andrew's) a certain negligence is evident in the drawing, denoting less experienced hands. Much larger pieces of tesserae are employed for the figures and the faces than were used in S. Sophia and there are also differences in the colours used in both schemes; the principal emphasis in the Church of S. Michael being on shades of emerald green. All this proves that the workshop of mosaicists who decorated the Church of the Dormition and the Church of the Archangel Michael was in no way connected with the workshop responsible for the decorations in S. Sophia, also that the masters of the Church of the Archangel Michael followed different and later artistic traditions.

The mosaics in the Church of S. Michael were the last to be executed on Russian soil. This branch of art, indivisibly connected with the heyday of the political and economic power of the Kievan state, was so costly that in the succeeding period it was omitted altogether from the decoration of sacred buildings. The rulers of the small principalities could not afford to use mosaic in the decoration of their churches, but a curious reminder of the art is found in the gilded backgrounds of some fresco fragments found among the ruins of the church built in 1197 by Prince Ryurik Rostislavovich.<sup>114</sup> Eager to impress the public with the splendour of his church, Ryurik Rostislavovich, though unable to use mosaic, remembered the technique—probably associated in his mind with the age of the 'great' Yaroslav—and as a substitute for the glittering splendour of the tesserae had gold backgrounds introduced into the paintings.

Not mosaic but fresco was the art form destined to live on and to enjoy great development in ancient Rus'. In the Cathedral of S. Sophia it already played an extremely important role, covering vast areas of the walls and vaults. In the subsequent period it was increasingly used, and through this medium the emerging national traits found rapid embodiment. The influence of the artistic heritage of Constantinople, so extensive in the age of Vladimir and Yaroslav, was by the twelfth century gradually losing its hold and under the impact of local traditions underwent a radical change. The refined picturesqueness of mosaic work gave way to a linear treatment of form—the artists preferring the graphic means of expression. The range of colours was reduced, thus producing effects of greater brilliance and saturation; the tender half tones gradually disappeared. What the images lost in elegance and refinement they gained in power and spontaneity. Along this path early Russian monumental painting developed its own artistic language, enriched by a variety of individual contributions from the various local schools.

Regrettably, the surviving examples of twelfth-century Kievan monumental painting are all either in a very poor state of preservation or not yet cleaned. To the first category belong the frescoes of the Church of S. Michael in the borough of Ostersk (the Virgin Orans between the archangels Michael and Gabriel, the *Eucharist* and figures of saints in the apse, executed between 1098 and 1125),<sup>115</sup> as also the twelfth-century frescoes from the baptistry of the church of the Dormition in the Monastery of Yelets in Chernigov (fragments of the *Baptism*, figures of saints, and the Old Testament subject of the *Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace*). To the second category belong the frescoes of the Monastery

56. S. Demetrius of Thessalonica.  
Mosaic, about 1108.  
Kiev, Church of the  
Archangel Michael



57. Head of Christ. Detail from 'The Eucharist'. Mosaic, about 1108. Kiev, Church of the Archangel Michael

of S. Cyril, dating from the 'seventies or later, and the frescoes of the Church of the Archangel Michael in the Vydubitsky Monastery, probably dating from 1199. Among these the most important is the large ensemble of frescoes in the Monastery of S. Cyril, which are urgently in need of careful restoration.<sup>116</sup> These paintings are notable not only for the complexity of their iconography (the Virgin Orans, the *Eucharist*, figures of saints in the apse, scenes from the Gospels on vaults and walls, scenes from the life of S. Cyril and S. Athanasius of Alexandria in the diaconicon, the *Last Judgement* on the western wall, many saints, especially warrior saints on the pillars), but also for their affinities with southern Slav works. A connexion with the Balkans is further suggested by the presence of large numbers of saints of Balkan origin, such as Cyril, Methodius, Clement of Bulgaria, John of Macedonia, Joseph of Thessalonica and others. It would be premature to pronounce any judgements on the style of these frescoes in the Monastery of S. Cyril until they have been thoroughly cleaned and restored, but even at this stage it is evident that they were painted



by local masters, not only on account of the Slavonic inscriptions but also because of the rather archaic style, which has close affinities with the style of Romanesque painting.<sup>117</sup>

Kievan Rus', which bore the full brunt of the nomadic onslaught paid a high price for it and exhausted herself in a prolonged and wearisome struggle for survival. By the end of the eleventh century the process of feudal disintegration had already begun. This process was particularly intense in the southern principalities, in Pereyaslavl', Chernigov and Kiev. Obligated to rely increasingly on their own resources, these principalities were unable to resist the pressure exerted on them from all sides by the Polovtsy (Cumans). In that remarkable poetical work entitled *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*, Southern Rus' has left to us a bitter lament on her fall. Unable to resist the pressures from without, Kievan Rus' finally collapsed at the end of the twelfth century. However, her great cultural traditions lived on in the works of the architects and painters of Novgorod and Vladimir-Suzdal', and were carried to the western principalities and to Pskov. Everywhere they served as a basis for the development of local schools which flourished widely in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. And though fine art in ancient Rus' was never to recapture the monumental quality which was the hallmark of Kievan art in the tenth–eleventh centuries, it developed in later ages a greater diversity of forms. Thanks to the growth of the centrifugal forces, the cultural legacy of Kiev had a chance to reach out to the bulk of the Russian people. Fertilized by contact with the living art of the masses, it acquired even more vivid and vital traditional elements. With the consolidation of the small feudal principalities, many local schools arose with their own masters who proved worthy rivals to the architects and painters who arrived from Kiev. Russian art in the period between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries moved in the direction of decentralization; making full use of the Kievan tradition, it became not only more varied in its manifestations but also more deeply rooted in the Russian soil.

# ICONOGRAPHICAL INDEX

- Aaron: pp. 39, 259, fig. 61  
 Acathistus hymn: see Virgin, types  
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