The post-resurrection appearances of Christ are a series of apparitions described in the four canonical Gospels and the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. In the absence of any canonical description of Christ’s actual moment of resurrection, these apparitions became a visual and literary synonym and evidently confirmed the reality of Christ’s resurrection. The events described in this literature do not correspond; for example, the number of angels and women differ in each Gospel, the time of Christ appearance to them differs as well, and while Paul mentions Peter as the first to see Christ resurrected, the Marys or Myrophores, are the individuals described by the Gospels as first at the tomb. Even though not an actual apparition, the Marys at the Tomb are considered as part of the post-resurrection narrative, as they demonstrate that Christ had risen. Beside the Marys, some of the most popular apparitions were the Chairete an event described only by Matthew; the Incredulity of Thomas and the Noli me Tangere, two events exclusive to John; the Appearance to the Eleven described by all four Gospels and sometimes fused with the

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2 Not all the women who visited Christ’s tomb were named Mary; the term is used only because the main characters of these events were Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleopas and Mary the mother of James. The latter, according to some ecclesiastical authors, should be identified with the Virgin (for this argument see below). The other individuals mentioned in the Gospels as being part of the Myrophores, are Joanna and Salome. For the absence on any reference to an appearance of Christ to women in Paul’s list, see R. Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the named Women in the Gospels (London & New York, 2002) 304-310.

3 The longer ending of Mark (16: 9-20) contains a brief reference to Noli me Tangere and the Road at Emmaus.
Mission of the Apostles; and the Road and Supper at Emmaus, described in Luke. These appearances, as we will see, were not of equal importance; rather some prevailed over the others.

The post-resurrection appearances emerge very early both in the theological literature and in art. In literature, their use varies, from arguments against heretics to Gospel commentaries and from catechetical lectures to efforts at harmonizing the post-resurrection narrative. In the artistic production of the Early Christian era these appearances were the sole reference to the resurrection, something that changes only in the Middle Byzantine period where they were often replaced by the image of the Anastasis. The use of these apparitions as visual synonyms of the resurrection will nevertheless survive well into the eleventh century, and they will appear either side by side with the Anastasis, as in the case of Hosios Lukas and Daphni or in place of it, as in the case of the ninth-century manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. gr. 510. This article will examine the appearance and development of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ in their literary and artistic context, from the first century onwards, giving emphasis to their argumentative and visual power. Special attention will be given to Mary Magdalene, whose treatment by the ecclesiastical authors was very inconsistent.

First let us examine the use of the post-resurrections appearances in the context of the theological literature. One of their earliest and most successful functions was their use in literary polemics defending the official dogma against various heresies, which started to emerge as early as the first century. The earliest example comes from Ignatius of Antioch in the late first and early second century. Ignatius on his way to martyrdom passes through Smyrna where he comes into personal contact with the heresy of Docetism.

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immediately tackles the reality of Christ’s death and resurrection. The author refutes the idea expressed by the heretics that Christ took on only an illusion of flesh, by using Christ’s Appearance to the Eleven (Luke 24: 36-43), which demonstrates that Christ after the resurrection was still made of flesh and bones and the fact that he also ate and drank with his disciples further demonstrates this. Another example demonstrating the importance of Christ’s bodily resurrection in the anti-heretical arguments of the early ecclesiastical authors is provided by Irenaeus of Lyon, a second-century author, who in his treatise commonly called Adversus Heraeses, deals particularly with the general resurrection and the resurrection of the flesh, which was denied by the Gnostics. Quotations from the Road and Supper at Emmaus are used to illustrate the significance of Christ’s bodily resurrection. Again the importance of his argument lies on the fact that it denounces the heretical teachings that considered Christ to have only assumed a human body after the resurrection.

But what did heretics and pagans think of these post-resurrection appearances? We are lucky enough to have a series of questions posed by a third-century pagan philosopher named Celsus. The latter’s writings are preserved in a work by Origen titled Contra Celsum, a polemic consisting of eight books which stands out “as the culmination of the whole apologetic movement of the second and third centuries”. The importance of this work lies in the fact that it gives us a glimpse of how non-Christians felt about Christ’s resurrection. For example Celsus believed that Mary Magdalene was “a hysterical woman” who had a vision of Christ and never actually saw him resurrected and that the others who also saw Christ “were deluded by the same sorcery.” Furthermore Celsus states that Christ never suffered on the cross and that
his wounds were fictitious. To this Origen replies by referring to Christ’s appearance to Thomas, where the latter is invited to touch Christ’s wounds.\(^{13}\) Another question brought up by Celsus is why Christ did not appear to those who accused and sentenced him to death and to somebody else besides his disciples.\(^{14}\) In reply Origen notes that after the resurrection Christ appeared to his disciples for a forty-day period and that he also appeared to more than five hundred people.\(^{15}\) Origen believes that every detail about Christ’s burial and resurrection written in the Gospels has its importance.\(^{16}\) Sadly for him, later ecclesiastical authors regarded the majority of his theology as opposing the Orthodox faith.\(^{17}\)

The use of Christ’s apparitions in arguments against heretics continues in the fourth century, as for example in the *Panarion* or “medicine chest” written by Epiphanius of Cyprus (c. 315-403). Here the author refutes the teachings of eighty sects from the very beginnings of Christianity up to his own time.\(^{18}\) *In Adversus Herodianos*, Epiphanius describes Christ’s sojourn in the underworld and his resurrection.\(^{19}\) He explains that with Christ, the body is also resurrected, thus both body and divinity are connected into one.\(^{20}\) Epiphanius then employs the Appearance of Christ to the Eleven to show that after the resurrection Christ was still made of flesh and bones. A similar view is also expressed in the *Ancoratus* probably one of Epiphanius’ most celebrated works; here the trinity and the dogma of resurrection are predominantly discussed by the author as he attacks Arian and Origenist positions.\(^{21}\) In discussing Christ’s resurrection, Epiphanius states that not only Christ’s spirit left the tomb but also his body. To support his arguments the author quotes Mark 16:6 and John 20:24 that is the Marys at the Tomb and the Incredulity of Thomas, respectively.\(^{22}\)

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13 *PG* 11, col. 892
15 *Acts* 1:3 and *I Cor.* 15:5-8 respectively.
16 *PG* 11, col. 903-905.
17 One such adversary was Epiphanius of Cyprus. See below note 21.
19 *PG* 41, col. 276
20 *Ibid*, col. 276-277
22 *PG* 43, col. 184.
It is John Chrysostom, however, who makes explicit the importance of the post-resurrection appearances both as proof of Christ’s resurrection and also as arguments against the heretics. On a sermon based on the question of why Christ did not show himself to everybody after the resurrection, Chrysostom starts by saying that the truth in Christ’s resurrection lies in his appearances to his disciples, as described in the Gospels: “της δε αναστάσεως απόδειξις εστι τα σημεία τα αποστολικά, των δε σημείων αποστολικων διδασκαλειον εστι τουτο το βιβλιον.”

And in his sermon In Ascensionem, Chrysostom demonstrates the importance of Christ appearance to Thomas by saying: “ότι του Θωµά δάκτυλος εγένετο κάλαµος ευσεβείας ανατρέπων τα αιρετικά δίκτυα και εµφράττων αυτων τα στόµατα των τολµώντων λέγειν, ότι σχήµατι ενεδύσατο σωµα ο Κύριος και σχήµατι απέθαναν”.

Another response to a heretic is given by Theodoretus of Cyrus (c.393-c.457). In his dialogue between an Orthodox and a heretic the author tackles the question of the bodily resurrection of Christ. The heretic asks how we know that it was actually the body of Christ that was buried and thus resurrected and not his spirit. Theodoretus in reply, cites Matthew 27: 57-60 and Luke 23: 50, which describe Joseph of Arimathea’s request for Christ’s body. The author also cites the angel’s words to the Marys at the Tomb as described in Matthew 28: 6: “Come see the place where the lord lay”. Finally the Appearance to the Eleven is used soon after by Theodoretus to demonstrate that the body that had suffered on the cross is now resurrected.

It becomes obvious that the utilization of these appearances in arguments made by various ecclesiastical authors against heretical teaching enjoyed a widespread use. Different appearances were used against different

24 Ibid, col. 779. “‘Thomas’ finger was transformed into a pen of reverence knocking over the heretical nets and shutting the mouths those who dare to say that the Lord was only disguised in a human body and that he never really dies’.
26 Ibid, 227.
27 Ibid, 231.
heresies with much success; one of them however, prevailed. This was
the Incredulity of Thomas, “whose finger became a pen against heretical
teaching”, to quote Chrysostom. This apparition figures in a great number
of ecclesiastical authors up to and after the sixth century.28 Besides the
doctrinal power of these post-resurrection appearances, they were also
employed in sermons and orations on Easter, on Ascension and on
various other subjects. Here follows a selection of the most popular
beliefs as recorded by a number of church authors.

Probably one of the most widespread ideas expressed by ecclesiastical
writers regarding two of Christ appearances, namely the Chairete and the
Noli me Tangere, was the idea that Christ appeared first to the women to
destroy the devil’s influence over Eve. One of the earliest references is
found in Athanasius of Alexandria’s Sermo in Sanctum Pascha.29
According to the author Christ appears to the two Marys (Chairete) to
destroy the influence of devil over Eve, and he explains: “Γυνη γαρ της
παραβάσεως αιτία και της Αναστάσεως κήρυξ· ή τον πρώτον Αδαμ προς
την πτωσιν χειρισμοῆςα, τον δεύτερον Αδάμ αναστάντα
μαρτύρεται”.30 Hence Eve was the cause of man’s fall, but by becoming
the bearer of the good tidings of the resurrection she was redeemed. In
the second oration on Easter, Gregory of Nyssa (c.330-c.395) deals with
the discrepancies of the Gospel narrative regarding the post-resurrection
events.31 While describing Christ’s appearance to the two Marys, the

28 Not discussed here but also referring to the Incredulity of Thomas on more
than one occasions are: Athanasius of Alexandria in Discourse II & IV Against
the Arians, Gregory of Nazianzus in Oratio XLV: In Sanctum Pascha, Ambrose
of Milan On the Holy Spirit (To the Emperor Gratian), and Leo the Great in
Letter XXVIII. The popularity of Thomas is possibly twofold: firstly because of
Christ’s actions and secondly because of Thomas’ words. Christ enters through
the doors beings shut, that is, as a spirit, but he also let Thomas touch him to
show his human nature. The same applies for Thomas’ exclamation: “My Lord
and my God” (John 20:28). The ecclesiastical authors believed that Thomas
words meant that the latter perceived Christ as both being human and a God.
That means that the Incredulity of Thomas could have been easily employed in
arguments against heretics who were trying to emphasize one of Christ’s natures
over the other.
29 PG 28, col. 1084.
30 Ibid, col. 1084; in free translation: “A woman was the cause for the lost of
paradise but now she brings the good tidings of the resurrection; she pulled the
first Adam to the fall but now she announces the resurrection of the second
Adam”.
31 PG 46, In Sanctum Pascha et de triduano festo Resurrectionis Christi; Oratio
Secondo, col. 627-652
author repeats Athanasius’ ideas, on why Christ appeared first to the women,\textsuperscript{32} but moves a step further to identify the other Mary as the Virgin: “Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἄλλη ἀριθ. ταῦτην δὲ εἶναι τὴν Θεοτόκον πιστεύειν”.\textsuperscript{33}

An echo of Athanasius’ explanation is also found in Ambrose of Milan (c.340-397). The author, in a sermon dedicated to the Holy Spirit, makes a reference not to Christ’s appearance to the two Marys, that is, the Chiarete, but to Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene, commonly titled \textit{Noli me Tangere}.\textsuperscript{34} Gregory of Nazianzus also prefers Magdalene to the two Marys in his forty-fifth oration, on Easter.\textsuperscript{35} Both authors choose to use the \textit{Noli me Tangere}, instead of the Chiarete, is most likely based on the fact that is much easier to imagine a parallel between Mary Magdalene and Eve, than between two Marys and Eve.

Another common belief expressed by various authors is that Thomas’ incredulity serves a purpose and is not actually disbelief but rather a desire. Again this view appears, initially in Athanasius’ writings and then migrates to other authors.\textsuperscript{36} Athanasius notes about Thomas’ incredulity: “Μαλλον δὲ οὐ τὴν απίστιαν ἔλυσεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ενέπλησε”.\textsuperscript{37} The author very eloquently turns Thomas’ disbelief into an aspiration and adds that Thomas touches Christ’s wounds not for his own sake but for us all.\textsuperscript{38} Chrysostom in his sermon \textit{In Sanctum Pascha} repeats the idea that Thomas’ incredulity serves to make the resurrection even more convincing: “ἵνα η ἐκείνου αμφιβολία ενεργέστερον παραστήση τὴν ανάστασιν”.\textsuperscript{39} Gregory of Nyssa not only believes that Thomas’ incredulity serves a purpose but he also sees a purpose in Mary

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, col. 632.
\textsuperscript{33} “The other Mary, we believe to be the Theotokos”: \textit{ibid}, col. 633. The same idea is also expressed by Ambrose of Milan in \textit{Liber de Virginitate}, \textit{PL} 16, col. 283. For the Virgin being part of the post-resurrection sequence see below.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{PG} 36, \textit{Oratio XLV: In Sanctum Pascha}, col. 657-58.
\textsuperscript{36} Of course that does not necessarily mean that succeeding authors did not reach the same conclusions independently.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{PG} 28, col. 1085: “He did not reply to Thomas disbelief but he fulfilled his wish”.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid}, col. 1085.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{PG} 52, col. 778: “in order his incredulity to show even further the reality of the resurrection”.
Magdalene’s luck of understanding and questioning. The author explains the Magdalene’s reluctance to accept the reality of the resurrection in the same manner as the incredulity of Thomas, that is to make our faith even stronger, but he does not fail to add: “ουκ άδηλον γαρ το της γυναικείας ευόλισθον φύσεως.” ⁴⁰ That last remark from Gregory of Nyssa is in fact another common idea that features in the writings of many ecclesiastical authors. But how do early Christian authors portray Mary Magdalene whom Christ bestowed with a special apparition? Do our sources universally paint her as gullible? Let us see what the literature records about her.

One of our first references to the Magdalene comes, from Celsus, as presented in Origen’s *Contra Celsum*.⁴¹ Celsus believes that the Magdalene was a mad woman, who never actually saw Christ resurrected but instead had a vision of him. Was the Christian point of view any different? Cyril of Alexandria in his *Commentariorum in Joannem* does not fail to repeat that the Magdalene’s understanding was slow and adds that this was common female behaviour.⁴² Cyril though, like Gregory, is not totally negative and he adds that the fact that it was still night could have had a role in Magdalene’s failure to understand.⁴³ He even goes further to add that the dialogue between Christ and the Magdalene serves a purpose. The words spoken from Christ to Magdalene serve as the antidote to the words spoken by God to Eve, when he told her that she would give birth in pain.⁴⁴

In his fifty-fifth homily on the Gospel of John, John Chrysostom comments on the crucifixion and burial of Christ.⁴⁵ According to Chrysostom, Mary Magdalene fails to understand that Christ is resurrected, which is why she asks where the body is placed.⁴⁶ In the next

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⁴⁰ PG 46, col. 633: “και δια της εκεινου [Θωµά] πολυπράγµονος απιστίας και επαφής, ἡμεῖς εἰς τὴν πίστιν εὐβεβαιώθηµεν... τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ τὴν Μαγδαληνήν Μαρίαν πρὸς απιστίας ὑπονοστήσασαν... πιστότερον εργάσατο το θαυµα τῆς αναστάσεως.”
⁴¹ See above note 12.
⁴² PG 73, col. 1082: “Βραδεία μεν πως εις σύνεσιν ἡ γυνη, μάλλον δε συµπαν το θηλειων γένος” and col. 1083: “δυσµαθέστεραι γαρ αι γυναικων εισι φρένες”.
⁴³ Ibid, col. 1082-1083.
⁴⁴ “Εν λοιπας τέξη τέκνα”, Gen. III: 16. Again here we have a connection between Magdalene and Eve.
⁴⁵ PG 59, *Homilia LXXXV in Joannem*, col. 459-468
⁴⁶ Ibid, col. 464; the same idea is expressed again in *Homilia LXXXVI* below.
homily, the author explains in detail when exactly Mary Magdalene became conscious of Christ’s resurrection.\(^{47}\) Not the empty tomb, nor the two angels, in fact not even Christ himself were enough evidence for the Magdalene to comprehend Christ’s resurrection and only when Christ called her by her name did Mary understand. Chrysostom’s explanation is not very flattering to Mary: “Επειδή γαρ οὐκ υψηλή της γυναικός η διάνοια, ώς από των συνδαρίων υποδέξασθαι την ανάστασιν”.\(^{48}\) Ammonius, a presbyter from Alexandria (†458), is not so harsh on Magdalene. The author repeats that she fails to understand Christ’s resurrection from the linen clothing, whereas Peter and John did, but further on Ammonius justifies her inability to recognize Christ by observing it was still night and that a mystical power was covering him: “θεοπρεπει δυναµει εκάλυπτεν ευατόν”.\(^{49}\)

The popularity of these ideas is well attested not only in literature but in hymnography as well. In the sixth kontakion On the Resurrection, by Romanos Melodos (6\(^{th}\) c.), we come across a blend of both the Magdalene’s inability to understand and also of her important role as a redeemer of Eve’s sin. This kontakion On the Resurrection is considered to be one of Romano’s finest.\(^{50}\) It contains two proœmia referring to the Chairete and Mary Magdalene respectively. The latter’s words (John 20:13) are attributed by Romanos to all Marys.\(^{51}\) From this point on, the kontakion has a narrative structure reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa’s effort at harmonization.\(^{52}\) Another similar point between Gregory’s

\(^{47}\) Ibid, col. 467.

\(^{48}\) “Because Magdalene’s intelligence was not very high, in order to understand Christ’s resurrection by the linen clothing”: ibid, col. 467; Peter and John, who had visited Christ’s tomb moments before, had realized the Christ had been resurrected only by looking at the linen clothing lying inside the tomb; the Magdalene fails to do that.

\(^{49}\) PG, 85, Expositio in Evangelium S. Joannis (Fragmenta), col 1517.


\(^{52}\) Because of the different number of women, angels and other details, many ecclesiastical authors felt the need to reconstruct the Gospel narrative into one continuous description. One such effort was made by Gregory of Nyssa, In Christi Resurrectionem Oratio II, PG 46, col. 628-652. Grosdidier de Matons sees a similarity not only with Gregory of Nyssa’s effort of harmonization but also with Eusebius’: Romanos le Melode, p.358-359. Though quite plausible to have been influenced by both writers, Eusebius complex structure and language render him as a less likely candidate. Furthermore while Eusebius’ effort of
harmonization and Romanos’ kontakion is the important role that Mary Magdalene plays in both.

The narrative begins with a nameless group of women ready to make their way to Christ’s tomb, but at the last minute they decide to send Mary Magdalene instead and request her to inform them whether Christ had been resurrected. Mary visits the tomb, finds the stone removed and turns back to inform Christ’s disciples. The first to arrive at the tomb are Peter and John; the latter, even though first at the tomb, waits for Peter to enter first as he is the “first” of the apostles. Peter and John find the tomb empty and think that Christ did not appear to them because they were not worth it. The Magdalene listens to them, and replies by saying that they have to be patient as Christ will appear first to the women as they were first to sin. This is the first time that Mary Magdalene speaks these words. Romanos had moved a step forward and instead of explaining why Christ ought to appear first to the women, he actually put this words into Magdalene’s mouth.

At this point Romanos inserts a stanza describing three events from the gospels: a) the raising of Lazarus, b) the “woman who was a sinner” and c) the raising of the daughter of Jairus. It is obvious that the two “raisings” are connected with Christ’s rising that follows this stanza. The inclusion here of the “woman who was a sinner” could possibly serve as a parallel with Magdalene or could be an indirect connection between Magdalene and the “woman who was a sinner”. The narrative continues...
with Christ’s apparition to the Magdalene. The latter fails at first to recognize him but then, after listening to her lord’s voice, she realizes he is Christ and tries to touch him. At that point Christ shouts, *Noli me Tangere* (John 20:17). Romanos finds here the opportunity to explain why Christ refuses to allow the Magdalene touch him: “Don’t touch me, or you conceive of me only as a human? I am God, touch me not”. After having seen Christ resurrected the Magdalene returns to the other women and informs them of Christ’s resurrection. In the following stanza the Magdalene explains what happened to the other women, who run to the tomb. There they see an angel seated at the entrance who advises them not to be afraid, as his manifestation was to intimidate the guards and show them that “he whom they guard is the lord of angels”.

The final stanza is a Romanos’ hymn to the resurrection.

A completely different view of the Magdalene comes from an *Anastasimon Sticheron Anatolikon* published by Tillyard. The hymn attributed to the shadowy figure of Anatolios (6th or most probably 8th c.), reads in part: “After finding Peter hiding, Mary Magdalene shouted:


Verse ια΄ p.228: “Μη µου απτού· η µόνον βρωτόν µε νοείς; θεός ειµι, µη απτού µου”. This explanation does not correspond with the one given in the previous kontakion on the resurrection (no. 28, verse ιε΄ p.216), where Christ instructs Magdalene not to touch him: “do not touch the flesh that suffered on the cross, I have not yet raised it to heaven”. This explanation is closer to the gospel narrative. A similar, with the former (verse ια’), idea is also expressed in Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium Liber Duodecimus* (PG 45, col.884-885). Gregory believes that we can touch Christ’s human nature, as in the case of the Appearance to the Eleven, but we cannot touch Christ’s divine nature, as in the case of *Noli me Tangere*, where Magdalene is instructed not to touch Christ.

Verse ιθ΄ p.231; (Math. 28:1-10). A similar view is expressed by Cyril of Jerusalem, in *Catechesis X: On “and in one Lord, Jesus Christ”* where the author explains how Christ the son of God is the Lord, by using (among others) the argument the he is the Lord of Angels, as in the case of Marys at the Tomb (Math. 28:7) where “an angel announced the good news, and like a true servant told the women”; Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem*, 123.


Tillyard neither verifies nor challenges Anatolios’ authorship of the stichera anatolica, but he is happy to say that these “are commonly ascribed to Anatolius
‘Why did you leave Christ suffer alone and not suffer with him as friends ought to do, why did you not entomb him as your teacher deserves? Even his death has not moved you? Go and see the empty tomb, of him who sits in the embrace of the Father, and bow to the giver of mercy’”.

The words put into Magdalene’s mouth differ substantially in terms of vocabulary and sentiment from those of John 20: 2: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him”. The Magdalene is not the oblivious woman of the gospel, not the gullible woman of the commentaries and orations, not even the polite Magdalene of Romanos’ sixth kontakion “On the Resurrection”. Mary Magdalene is depicted here as a strong individual who had perceived the reality of Christ’s resurrection and is ready to lecture the “first” of the apostles, Peter, about his cowardice. The variations of our authors’ perceptions of the Magdalene should be seen in the light of the different genres their texts belong to, which subsequently allow a different amount of freedom to the writer, and also in the light of the authors’ preferences and whether those preferences were influenced by current trends.

From Mary Magdalene let us move to the “other Mary”, the Theotokos. The kontakion “On Mary at the Cross” written by Romanos, is a dialogue between the crucified Christ and his mother, which takes place under the cross. Christ promises his mother that she will be the first to see him after the resurrection: “Θάρσει, μητέρ, οτι πρωτη µε ορας απο του τάφου”. The Younger”; Tillyard, Octoechus, for the quotation see page XII and pages 3-106 for the stichera. A number of this stichera are also published by Christ-Paranikas, Anthologia, 113-115.

61 My translation. Tillyard, Octoechus, mode III, no.9, 34-35.

62 See the above-mentioned patristic examples.

63 See the description of the sixth kontakion “On the Resurrection”.

64 Is this an evolution that shows the growing importance of Mary Magdalene, which will reach its peak during the reign of Leo the Wise, or is it the invention of a poet whose treatment “has little originality” and whose examples showed “how narrow was the poet’s range” to copy here Tillyard, ibid, p.XIII.

65 Maas-Trypanis, Cantica Genuina, (no. 19), p.146, ιβ:10, “Be brave, mother, as you will be the first to see me of the tomb”. Anatolios on the other hand, in another sticheron anatolikon, believes that is Mary Magdalene who sees Christ first: “Επεθύµησαν γυναίκες ιδειν την ανάστασιν Χριστέ ο Θεός ήλθε προλαβούσα Μαρία η Μαγδαληνή...”, Tillyard, The Hymns of the Octoechus, p.46. The author repeats this idea in his Idiomelon on Mary Magdalene: “First to see the divine Resurrection of the First Cause of blessings, who in his compassion made our nature divine you were revealed as also the first herald of the Gospel, Mary Magdalene, as you cried to the Apostles, ‘Put away despair, regain good cheer, and come, look now on Christ who has risen again and grants...
The significance of this phrase lies on the fact that the Gospels mention nothing about an apparition of Christ to his mother on Easter morning; this however was a tradition active in Syria and Palestine in the sixth and seventh centuries. It seems that the growing importance of the Theotokos in the centuries that follow the establishment of the gospel canon made many ecclesiastical authors take the initiative and try to fill this gap by either identifying the Theotokos with the “Mary the mother of James and Joseph” (Math. 27: 56) or with the “other Mary” (Math. 28: 1). Romanos’ kontakion could either belong to the latter group of thinking or it could be a predecessor of the view that a special appearance was reserved for the Virgin.

That Christ’s resurrection was associated with baptism is well explained in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (6: 3-4): “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”. Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386) in a number of catechetical lectures explains the connection between the two. In a number of orations Gregory of Nazianzus (c.329-

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66 Beside Romanos’ kontakion, Theotokos appears as part of the scene of Marys at the Tomb in the mosaic description of the Church of St. Sergius in Gaza by Choricius (536 AD); Choricius, Laudatio Marciani, in R. Forester (ed.) Choricii Gazaei opera (Leipzig, 1929), 76. She also appears in fol. 13 of the Rabbula Gospels (586 AD); C. Cecchelli, G. Furlani, M. Salmi, The Rabbula Gospels (Olten and Lausanne, 1959). She is also depicted in the Sancta Sanctorum panel, which dates in the seventh century; G. Vikan, Byzantine Pilgrimage Art (Washington D.C. 1982) 15.

67 For a complete catalogue of these authors see J. D. Breckenridge, “Et Prima Vidit”: The Iconography of the Appearance of Christ to His Mother, ArtBull. XXXIX:1 (1957) 9-32, with previous bibliography.

68 George of Nicomedia firstly expressed this idea in the ninth century in PG, 100, col. 1489-1504.

69 See for example Catechesis III and Mystagogic Catechesis II & III in S. J. Edward Yarnold, Cyril of Jerusalem (London & New York, 2000) p.89, 174 and 177 respectively. See also A. J. Doval, Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The authorship of the Mystagogic Catecheses (Washington, D.C. 2001), where the author notes that in these catecheses “the water is associated more with the world his great mercy”. The translation was taken from www.anastasis.org.uk. It becomes obvious that Anatolios’, if he is the author of this idiomenon, had no reservations to ascribe Christ’s first appearance to Magdalene.
c.390) also makes a connection between baptism and resurrection based on the afore-mentioned quotation.\textsuperscript{70} So does Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in his \textit{Enchiridion}, commonly dated ca.421, which occupies a place of great importance among the author’s theological writings.\textsuperscript{71} There the author explains that Christ made his resurrection the symbol of our new life by dying in the flesh, which symbolizes sin, and rising up clean of any sins: “such is the meaning of the great sacrament of baptism”.\textsuperscript{72} We also know that the baptism of the catechumens took place during the celebration of Easter and was directly connected with Christ’s resurrection.\textsuperscript{73} A number of pictorial examples point also in that direction.

The earliest iconographical evidence, which is also related with the sacrament of baptism, comes from the baptistery in Dura Europos, a typical private house built ca. AD 232 and modified slightly between AD 232 and 256 to adopt it to religious use.\textsuperscript{74} One of the walls of the baptistery contains the earliest depiction of the Marys at the tomb. This depiction had long been debated because of its incomplete state and “the unusual iconographic conventions and forms of the Biblical traditions”.\textsuperscript{75} The five pair of feet for example could have been an obstacle for identifying the scene as Marys at the Tomb as the Gospels mentions nothing about five women being at the tomb at the same time.\textsuperscript{76} Of course the Christians of Mesopotamia did not have the version of the New Testament we have today, instead they used the \textit{Diatessaron} of Tatian, a

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Oratio XXX: \textit{De Spiritu Sancto}}, & \textit{XL: \textit{In Sanctum Baptisma}} in \textit{PG} 36, col.165 & 569 respectively. Other writers following this tradition were Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom.


\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid}, 407; the same idea is repeated in pp.412-13.

\textsuperscript{73} G. Bertonière, \textit{The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and related Services in the Greek Church}, OCA 193 (Roma, 1972) 65-67. The author’s exhaustive research on all available manuscripts renders this book as one of the most valuables on the development of the Paschal Vigil.


\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid}, 81. For an identification of the fresco as being the Marys at the Tomb see A. Grabar, “La Fresque des Saintes Femmes au Tombeau à Dura” \textit{CA VIII} (1956) 9-26.

\textsuperscript{76} Of course the total number of named women is five; see above note 2.
fragment of which was discovered *in situ* during the excavations.\(^77\) Furthermore the fact that the women are depicted carrying lamps, could indicate that it was still very early in the morning, something that corresponds with the Gospels.\(^78\)

Thus the scene of the Women at the Tomb is best explained in the light of the events of Easter morning and the repetition of the five women in such prominence on the walls of the Baptistery could have been influenced and inspired by the liturgical processions of the Easter festivals though, according to the author, “this is by no means necessary”.\(^79\) That Romans was used in the third century, in connection with the interpretation of baptism is well attested in a number of Christian authors, such as Tertullian and Origen.\(^80\) Finally the scene representing the Women at the Tomb is essentially different from any other subsequent scenes of the same subject and it stands alone as the sole examples of its time thus making any comparative study almost impossible.\(^81\)

Another example where post-resurrection appearances and baptism are connected is in the small baptistery near the Cathedral of San Giovanni in Naples erected in the final years of Bishop Severus’ episcopate (362-408) and decorated with fine mosaics.\(^82\) Humidity and many restorations have taken their toll on the mosaics.\(^83\) The compartment that contains the Marys at the Tomb is one of the least well preserved. However we can securely identify the main characters of the scene, which are the angel, the two Marys and the tomb. The angel is depicted seated on a stone in front of a tomb in the shape of a small building made up by blocks of tiles

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\(^78\) There is a fine troparion of the Easter Canon by John of Damascus that points in that direction. 5th Ode, 2nd Troparion: “With torches <lamps> in our hands let us go out to meet Christ as he comes from the grave like a bridegroom, and with the festive ranks of Angels, let us together feast God’s saving Passover”. The translation was taken from Father Ephraim’s website: [www.anastasis.org.uk](http://www.anastasis.org.uk) (13/05/05).

\(^79\) *Ibid*, 178 & 192

\(^80\) *Ibid*, 193.

\(^81\) *Ibid*, 213; in its development the theme acquires two different forms in which the tomb plays a prominent role. In the one, the tomb is represented by the Jerusalem Anastasis and in the other is represented by an open sarcophagus.

\(^82\) J. L. Maier, *Le baptistère de Naples et ses mosaïques* (Freiburg, 1964), p.16; The mosaic decoration is limited in the dome and the octagon. Architecturally the dome is superimposed upon an octagon that in turn rests on a square.

\(^83\) *Ibid*, 18.
and flanked by polygonal pillars. The two women are visible on the left; one of them is standing while the other, whose head is depicted substantially lower, is probably kneeling in front of the sitting figure.\textsuperscript{84}

The next compartment, which is divided into two, contains a scene identified by Maier as the Miraculous Draught of Fishes (not the post-resurrection appearance)\textsuperscript{85} and the Walking on the Water.\textsuperscript{86} It is quite plausible though that this compartment illustrates John 21: 1-14 the Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Besides the connection between Christ’s resurrection and baptism two other details point in that direction. The first is that the Miraculous Draught of Fishes is placed between the Marys at the Tomb compartment and the Mission of the Apostles thus the scenes follows a chronological scheme that starts with the Miracle at Cana (considered to be Christ’s first public miracle) and finishes with the Ascension. The second point is that Peter’s dive in the waters could be seen in the light of being rebirth after having denied Christ. The fishes themselves could also be a visual synonym of the newly baptized; the latter argument would have fit perfectly with the function of a baptistery.\textsuperscript{87}

But the commonest use of these post-resurrection appearances was as visual synonyms of the resurrection. The Marys at the Tomb and the Chairete were the most popular with the Incredulity of Thomas closely following. From the fourth to twelfth centuries, the Marys appear in all artistic evidence where more than one appearance is present. The earliest evidence comes from the front part of a sarcophagus dated in the fourth century, now in the church of S. Celso.\textsuperscript{88} Here the Marys are paired with the Incredulity of Thomas. The two apparitions are present again on two

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p.36; according to the author, this is a typical Palestinian garment. This scene resembles the one on the Castello Sforzesco ivory, identified recently as not depicting the scene of the Marys at the Tomb but the Chairete; see \textit{Age of Spirituality} no. 453.

\textsuperscript{85} From Luke 5: 1-11, part of the Calling of the First Disciples.


\textsuperscript{87} In \textit{Adversus Ebrosios et de Resurrectione}, \textit{PG} 50, col. 549, Chrysostome makes a connection between Christ’s death and resurrection, and baptism. The author sees an analogy between the draught of fishes from the water and the exit of the newly baptized from the baptistery’s pool.

\textsuperscript{88} J. Wilpert, \textit{I Sarcophagi christiani antichi}. 3 vols. (Rome, 1929-36) 330, tav. CCXXXIII: 6. The front of the sarcophagus also represents the Nativity, Christ between two Disciple and the Marys at the Tomb.
Ivory plaques, part of a casket, now in view at the British Museum. The same applies for the churches of S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna and S. Maria Antiqua, Rome. In the last two monuments we have a fully developed post-resurrection cycle with three and five apparitions respectively. What is striking though is that no Chairete scene appears in any of the above-mentioned examples. Furthermore when the Marys and the Chairete are present, the Incredulity scarcely appears. The Chairete and the Incredulity appear side-by-side only in really extensive cycles where all, or the majority of these apparitions are present.

The post-resurrection appearances of Christ shared a great deal of popularity in art and theology. They were not all of equal importance but rather some prevailed over the others. The Incredulity of Thomas for example became very popular in the theological literature as a powerful argument against heretics. The Marys at the Tomb were by far the most celebrate image in the artistic tradition in the centuries that follows the establishment of the gospel canon and up to the crystallization of the Anastasis image. Marys’ and Thomas’ popularity is visible in the ecclesiastical calendar, were a Sunday is dedicated to them. Further research will provide us with a good insight of the relationship between word and image, and elucidate why Magdalene, who features so prominent in theology and hymnography, is absent from any work of art.

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Abbreviations

❖ CA: Cahiers Archéologiques.
❖ CSCO: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.
❖ OCA: Orientalia Christiana Analecta.
❖ PG: Patrologia Greaca.
❖ PL: Patrologia Latina.
Abstract

The post-resurrection appearances of Christ are a series of apparitions that took place after the resurrection. These are described in the New Testament, in the four canonical Gospels and in the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The post-resurrection appearances emerge very early in theological literature and continue up to the seventh century in an uninterrupted sequence. Their use varies from arguments against heretics to Gospel commentaries and from catechetical lectures to efforts at harmonizing the post-resurrection narrative. It will become obvious from the examples mentioned in this presentation that the primary use of these appearances was in arguments against the different heresies that start to emerge as early as the first century. In art these post-resurrection scenes appear as early as the third century in Dura-Europos. The Marys at the Tomb (Οι Μυροφόρες), the Chairete (Το Χαίρετε/All Hail) and the Incredulity of Thomas (Η Ψηλάφηση του Θωµά) are far the most popular. In my presentation I will examine the evolution and development of this literature and monitor its use and effectiveness against various heresies. In art an emphasis will be given in the connection between baptisteries and post-resurrection appearances. Furthermore, special attention will be given to Mary Magdalene as her case is very interesting. In theology views about the Magdalene were inconsistent, while the Noli me Tangere scene (Μή µου Άπτου) appears very late in art.