

## THE CANONICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN ORTHODOX ICONOGRAPHY\*

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### ABSTRACT

*The iconography of the Holy Trinity represents an extremely important issue, considering that the icon must fully express the truth of the Church's faith, and current at the same time, since in church painting we can easily observe deviations from the canon of orthodoxy. That is precisely why, appealing to both the Orthodox and the Catholic bibliography, the present study aims to bring to the attention of theologians, clergy, iconographers and, why not, the laity alike, in a succinct presentation, the question of iconography and, implicitly, of the iconology of the Holy Trinity, to understand which representations are canonical and which are not, to correctly choose the icon of the Holy Trinity that can be painted and honored, in churches or in the home of every Christian.*

**Keywords:** *icon; orthodox iconographic canon; Holy Trinity; Philoxenia of Abraham; Andrei Rublev.*

### INTRODUCTION

Captives of the “dilemma”<sup>1</sup> according to which the icon represents either the divine nature of Christ or the human nature separated from His Godhead, the iconoclasts denied the possibility of representing the Savior, which is why the Fathers gathered in the 7th ecumenical council in Nicaea, from the year 787, showed that nature is not represented in the icon, but the Person<sup>2</sup> who hypostasizes and unites the two threads as „unmixed and unchanged, undivided and unseparated”<sup>3</sup>. Resolving the issue of the iconic representation of the incarnate Son of God, the synodals did not explicitly address the issue of the possibility of the iconic representation of the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity.

However, this did not go unanswered either. In one of the epistles addressed to Emperor Leo III Isaurus (717-741) on the subject of honoring holy icons, Bishop Gregory II of Rome wrote: „Why don't we realize the icon of God the Father? Because the divine

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<sup>1</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, ediție integrală, prefață de pr. Nikolai Ozolin, traducere de Ciprian Vidican și Elena Derevici, Ed. Renașterea/Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 113; F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, ”Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident de l'époque carolingienne au IV<sup>e</sup> Concile du Latran (1215)”, în: *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 37<sup>e</sup> année (nr.147), juillet-septembre, 1994, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> SFÂNTUL TEODOR STUDITUL, *Tratatul III contra ereticilor*, cap. I, 34, în: *Despre sfintele icoane: contra ereticilor*, traducere, introducere și indici de protos. Teodosie Paraschiv, Ed. Fotini, Galați, 2008, p. 95; SFÂNTUL TEODOR STUDITUL, *Antireticul III*, cap. I, 34, în: *Iisus Hristos prototip al icoanei Sale – tratatele contra iconomahilor*, studiu introductiv și traducere diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Ed. Deisis, 1994, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, t. III, première partie, l. XVI, chap. II, 322, Paris, 1909, pp. 508-509.

nature cannot be represented. If we had seen the Father as we saw the Son, we would have been able to represent him”<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the synod showed clearly, albeit indirectly, that the Person of the Father cannot be represented in the icon because He did not manifest Himself in visible form, and the divine nature cannot be represented. It follows, by way of consequence, that it cannot be an icon of the Holy Trinity; or, in any case, not imagined anyway, because, at the time when the Church, gathered in the VII Ecumenical Synod, theologized about the icon, there was an iconographic representation of the Holy Trinity, whose tradition goes down in history to in the era of early Christianity.

## 1. THE ICONOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE HOLY TRINITY UNTIL THE VII ECUMENICAL SYNOD

The first iconographic theme of the Holy Trinity, called the Triandric Trinity, since the Persons of the Holy Trinity are represented under the image of three men, is based on the episode of the creation of the protoparents Adam and Eve (Gen 1, 26-27) and that of the reception of the Three Guests by Abraham at the Mamre Oak (Gen 18, 1-5). Each of the two biblical episodes has its own iconographic composition, the common elements being the way chosen to represent the Persons of the Holy Trinity, symbolized as three youths or three bearded men, and the era in which they were made, both belonging to the 4th century.

The first compositional type, called *The Creative Trinity*, because it narrates the creation of the progenitors Adam and Eve, has been preserved on the friezes of two sarcophagi, one dating from the first half of the 4th century, now in the Museum of Antiquities in Arles (fig. 1), the other dated two decades later than the first, exhibited in the Pio Cristiano Museum in the Vatican<sup>5</sup> (fig. 2). Although they show some differences in the arrangement of the characters in the composition, the scene depicted on the two friezes shows three adult men, dressed in Roman clothes. On the frieze of the Arles sarcophagus, two figures have identical faces and wear beards, while the third has the face of a young, beardless Jesus, with whom he appears on the same frieze and in another composition, between adult Adam and Eve, on the left being the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the serpent coiled upon it. On the Vatican sarcophagus all three men have identical faces. The one in the center of the composition, who sits on a robed throne in majesty, and is turned to his left, with his right hand raised as if speaking, symbolizes God the Father. Behind the throne, symbolizing the Person of the Holy Spirit, is the second man. In front of the throne, with his right hand on the naked head of Eve, slightly turned on his right shoulder to the one who sits on the throne, is the one who symbolizes the Son. The scene, by the arrangement of the three, and especially by the orientation of the gaze of the two men on the side towards the central figure, whose raised hand suggests the expression of a thought, seems to capture the moment of the advice of the Persons of the Holy Trinity regarding the creation of man: „Let us make man after image and after Our likeness [...] And God made man in His own image [...] male and female He made them” (Gen 1, 26-27).

<sup>4</sup> C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, t. III, deuxième partie, l. XVIII, chap. I, 332, Paris, 1910, p. 665.

<sup>5</sup> Robin M. JENSEN, „The economy of the Trinity at the Creation of Adam and Eve”, in: *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 7:4, 1999, p. 530; Adelheid HEIMANN, „Trinitas creator mundi”, in: *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1938, pp. 43-44.

Although not all researchers agree<sup>6</sup> that the scene on the two sarcophagi represents the Holy Trinity creating Adam and Eve, the arguments presented by R. Jensen in this regard are indubitable<sup>7</sup>, so it can be stated with certainty that the scene in question narrates the biblical episode of the creation of the forefathers of the human race. As for the doctrine transmitted through this scene, considering the context of the other biblical episodes carved on the friezes of the two sarcophagi, the Birth of the Savior Jesus Christ, which appears in both cases exactly below that of the creation of Adam and Eve, the healings and resurrections performed by the Savior Jesus Christ, with whom he obviously must have an organic unity, is most likely that of the role of the Holy Trinity in the economy of salvation and the restoration of human nature in and through Jesus Christ<sup>8</sup>.

I believe that there remain, however, some unanswered questions regarding the iconological significance of the composition and the birthplace of this iconographic type. The first of them is whether through the way of representation of the one who symbolizes God the Father, the plastic transposition and transmission of heretical subordinationist Arian ideas was pursued or only the highlighting of the Person of the Father from the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity. Considering that on the frieze from Arles the person of the Son is highlighted not only by the gesture of placing his hand on the crest of Eve, like the one in the Vatican, but also by the figure with the face of a young beardless Jesus, and also taking into account the fact that halfway in the 4th century, Arles was the center of Arianism in the West, here the Arian emperor Constantius established his residence, between the fall of 353 and the spring of the following year, the bishop being the Arian Saturninus<sup>9</sup>, we could believe that the goal pursued was the representation and transmission of Arian ideas.

However, given the fact that the Arian heresy was never received in Rome, and it is difficult to believe that the sarcophagus discovered in Rome comes from a workshop in Arles, the most plausible hypothesis is rather the opposite, considering the similarities in regarding the arrangement on the two friezes of the three men who symbolize the Persons of the Holy Trinity, I think the second hypothesis is required, i.e. that of highlighting the Person of the Father from the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The second question concerns the source from which the creators of the two sarcophagi were inspired to symbolize the Persons of the Holy Trinity in the form of three men. R. Jensen, analyzing the similarities between the *Adoration of the Three Magi* scene on which the creation of Adam and Eve is juxtaposed, concludes that the three Magi represented the model for the three persons who symbolize the Holy Trinity<sup>10</sup>, a hypothesis also supported by A. Grabar<sup>11</sup>. I think, however, that it is much more likely that the source of inspiration for the symbolization of the Persons of the Holy Trinity as three men was the biblical episode of the reception of the Three Guests by Abraham. This hypothesis seems to me all the more probable since this episode was the source of another iconographic composition dealing with the theme of the *Triandric Trinity*, in which also the three Persons are symbolized in the form of three similar men. Opining in this sense, I think we implicitly

<sup>6</sup> L. DeBRUYNE, "L'imposition des mains dans l'art ancien", în: *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 20 (1943); A. GRABAR, *Christian iconography: A Study of Its Origins*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968.

<sup>7</sup> R. M. JENSEN, "The economy of the Trinity...", pp. 542-546.

<sup>8</sup> R. M. JENSEN, "The economy of the Trinity...", pp. 527-528.

<sup>9</sup> C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, t. II, l. V, 73-76, Paris, 1869, pp. 32-45; Carl L. BECKWITH, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity, from De Fide to De Trinitate*, Oxford university Press, 2008, pp. 9, 30, 45-46.

<sup>10</sup> R. M. JENSEN, "The economy of the Trinity...", pp. 544-545.

<sup>11</sup> A. GRABAR, *Christian Iconography*:..., p. 113.

answer the question regarding the place of origin of this iconographic type, because it is hard to believe, if not impossible, that the same iconographic type appeared almost at the same time in two places far from each other the other one. Therefore, this iconographic type most likely appeared in Rome, having as a source of inspiration for the representation of the Persons of the Holy Trinity in the form of three persons the *Filoxenia of Abraham*. As for the source of inspiration for the iconographic scheme, A. Heimann believes that it should be sought in the classical pagan imaginary of the time<sup>12</sup>.

Better known as the *Philoxenia of Abraham*, as it is based on the biblical account of the reception of the Three Guests by Abraham at the Oak of Mamre (Gen 18, 1-5), the representation of this biblical episode is considered the oldest icon of the Holy Three. In the *Demonstratio evangelica*, a work written before the year 320, the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea testifies to the existence of a painted image of this biblical episode, which he briefly describes, showing that the angels „who were entertained by Abraham, as represented in the picture, sit one on each side, and He in the midst surpasses them in honour”<sup>13</sup>.

From the account of Eusebius of Caesarea, it is not clear if the image described was in the grove of Mamre, a place honored as sacred and where the Oak under which Abraham met the Three Young Men was still kept, as G. Bunge opines<sup>14</sup>, or if he saw it painted elsewhere in the East. Both hypotheses may be equally plausible. Although Eusebius does not specify the way in which the Lord was highlighted so as to illustrate the fact that he “exceeds in honor” the two angels, the information is important, because the representations preserved from the period of the 4th-6th centuries of this theme are all from the West and in the oldest of them, belonging to the 4th century, there is no such particularization of the Lord. Only in the following century did such a highlighting of the Lord appear in the iconography of the theme in the West. We could conclude, thus, that *Philoxenia of Abraham* had two slightly different iconographic representations in the East and in the West in the 4th century and that from the following century the Eastern version influenced this iconographic type in the West by particularizing the Lord.

The oldest representation of the biblical episode of the reception of the three Guests by Abraham that has been preserved is a fresco from a catacomb on the Via Latina (fig. 3), which dates from the first half of the 4th century. In this illustration of *Abraham’s Philoxenia* the three Guests are represented as three young men, whose size, gesture and clothing show that they are equal in honor, without any of them being individualized by any detail that suggests which of them is “The Lord” and who are the angels<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, in a mosaic located in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (fig. 4), dating from the first half of the 5th century, in which this biblical episode is reproduced in several successive scenes united in the same image, the three young men appear with nimbus, the one in the middle being represented in the upper scene, that of the worship of Abraham, completely enveloped in a mandorla, which separates him from the others and shows him to be “the Lord”. However, in the lower scene, that of sitting at the table, the three young men are no longer distinguished by anything, instead each has a specific gesture, the one on the left raising his arm to bless, the one in the center pointing to

<sup>12</sup> A. HEIMANN, “Trinitas creator mundi”, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> EUSEBIUS of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel being the Demonstratio Evangelica*, vol. I, book V, chap. 9, translated by W. J. Ferrar, London-New York, 1920, p. 254.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, cuvânt înainte și traducere de diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1996, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, pp. 22-23.



the calf, while the one on the right he points to the three loaves of bread on the table. In this representation, unlike the previous one, in which, apart from the three Guests, only Abraham appeared, with the sacrificial calf next to him, the other symbolic elements of the story also appear, namely the oak, the tent, the bread, the calf<sup>16</sup>.

A third representation of the *Filoxenia of Abraham*, dating from the first half of the 6th century, is preserved in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna. The mosaic in this church also brings together several scenes in a single image, one of which represents the sacrifice of Isaac, which gives the iconographic program a typological character, with an obvious reference to the Eucharistic sacrifice that it imagines<sup>17</sup>.

It can be said, therefore, that since the IV-VI centuries, the iconographic representation of the Holy Trinity was well determined and was based on the biblical account of the reception by the patriarch Abraham of the three Guests, the visit of the three men being understood not as „a display of To the Holy Trinity, but a prophetic vision of its mystery”<sup>18</sup>. The constitutive elements of the scene are also well defined and appear, with small changes, in all representations, besides the three young men, depicted with nimbus, to indicate their heavenly character, sometimes the one in the middle being individualized with a mandorla, to indicate Him on “the Lord”, representing Abraham, Sarah, their tent, the oak tree, the sacrificial calf and the loaves.

In addition to these typological representations of the Holy Trinity, at the beginning of the 5th century there were already two other symbolic images that referred to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The first of them is recorded by Saint Paulinus of Nola in *Epistle 32*<sup>19</sup>, in which he describes an image in the church of San Felix in Nola. He refers to the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and to the lamb as a symbol of the incarnate Son, without indicating whether the Father’s voice was symbolized in any way. In the 6th century this symbolic image would be completed by adding a hand emerging from a cloud, symbolizing the work of the Father. Such an image, first appearing in the *Gospel of Rabula*, from the year 586, is still preserved in the basilica of Sant’Apollinare in Cluse and in the basilica of San Marco in Rome (9th century)<sup>20</sup>. The source of this symbolic iconographic type seems to have been the representations of the Baptism of the Savior Jesus Christ in the catacombs of Rome<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> SANCTUS PAULINUS NOLANUS, *Epistula XXXII*, 10, in: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. XXVIII, S. Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani Opera, pars I, *Epistulae*, ex recensione Guilelmi de Hartel, 1894, p. 286: ”Pleno coruscet trinitas mysterio: / Stat Christus agno, uox patris caelo / Et per columbam spiritus sanctus fluit. [...] Habente et ipsa trinitate insignia: / Deum reuelat uox paterna et spiritus, / Sanctum fatentur crux et agnus uictimam, / Regnum et triumphum purpura et palma indicant.”; Susan BALDERSTONE, ”The Evolution of Trinity Images to the Medieval Period”, in: *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, 13 (2017), pp. 95-96; F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, ”Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 186.

<sup>20</sup> S. BALDERSTONE, ”The Evolution of Trinity Images to the Medieval Period”, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, ”Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 185; S. BALDERSTONE, ”The Evolution of Trinity Images to the Medieval Period”, p. 96; Frédérick TRISTAN, *Primele imagini creștine. De la simbol la icoană secolele II-VI*, traducere de Elena Buculei și Ana Boroș, Ed. Meridian, București, 2002, pp. 176-181; Robin JENSEN, ”Art”, în Philip F. ESLER (ed.), *The Early Christian World*, volume I-II, Routledge, London & New York, 2000, p. 756; J. STEVENSON, *The Catacombs. Rediscovered monuments of early Christianity*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1978, p. 89.

The second symbolic representation of the Holy Trinity was realized through the image of the *hetoimasia*, a symbol taken over by Christians from the Roman imperial ceremonial. The composition consisted of the image of a throne on the cushion of which the Holy Gospel is placed, behind the throne appearing the Holy Cross in glory, adorned with precious stones, framed by the spear with which the Savior's rib was pierced and the reed with a sponge from which He was given to drink vinegar. The dove is depicted either resting on the Holy Gospel or coming in flight above the throne. In a trinitarian sense, the Throne symbolizes God the Father, the Holy Gospel and the other instruments of the Crucifixion, God the Son incarnate, and the dove, the Holy Spirit<sup>22</sup>.

## 2. THE ICONOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE HOLY TRINITY AFTER THE VII ECUMENICAL SYNOD

As evidenced by G. Bunge, the scene of the reception of the Three Guests by Abraham, as it was conceived in the IV-VI centuries, constituted for a long time the almost unchanged model reproduced in the iconography of the Church<sup>23</sup>. It was, moreover, the only way in which the mystery of the Holy Trinity could be expressed through forms and colours, in accordance with the biblical revelation and the teaching of the Church about the uncircumscribing and, therefore, about the indescribability of the divine nature.

In the XI-XIII centuries, this type of representation of the Holy Trinity was enriched by the appearance of details that undoubtedly identify "the Lord". Although in the East this icon was called the *Holy Trinity*<sup>24</sup>, from a formal point of view it represents the "Christological" type, being „an icon of Christ, a distant echo of the Christological interpretation given by early Christianity to chapter 18 of the book of Genesis”<sup>25</sup>.

In the mosaics in the *Palatine Chapel* (Fig. 5) of the Norman palace in Palermo, Sicily, as well as in the Dome of Monreale (Fig. 6), both dating from the 12th century, the spiritual nature of the Three Youths is indicated by the presence of wings, and the nimbus of the One in the middle has a red edge, the way chosen to designate the "Lord". Also, the Three Youths carry staffs in their hands, in the case of the Palermo chapel, while in the case of the Monreale image only two angels carry staffs, the middle one holding a scroll, this being another way to identify the "Lord". An almost similar representation, dating from the 13th century, appears in the church of San Marco in Venice (Fig. 7)<sup>26</sup>.

Except for the representation in the catacomb on the Via Latina, in all other representations the three youths/angels are positioned behind the table on which the offerings are presented, standing side by side, with no element to give them unity in these linear compositions. As Alpatov observes, it was only in the San Marco scene that the unity of the three was suggested, by the tilting of the heads of the angels on the side towards the one in the center, but only to a certain extent, as they remained still positioned behind the table in a plane rectilinear<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> S. BALDERSTONE, "The Evolution of Trinity Images to the Medieval Period", pp. 104-105; F. TRISTAN, *Primele imagini creștine...*, p. 354.

<sup>23</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> Michel ALPATOV, "La «Trinité» dans l'art byzantin et l'icône de Roublev. Études comparatives", în: *Échos d'Orient*, tome 26, no.146, 1927, pp. 154-156.

If this iconographic type of the *Filoxenia of Abraham* specific to Italy, also called the Byzantine type, since it reflects Constantinopolitan art from the 6th century, does not visualize the unity of the Three, it is visually captured in another iconographic type, specific to the East, called the Oriental type. Thus, if the elements of the representation - Abraham, Sarah, the calf, the richly decorated table, the oak, the rock - are the same in both iconographic types, in the oriental one the three angels are no longer arranged shoulder to shoulder, along one side of the table, as in the Byzantine type, but grouped around it, whether it is semicircular or rectangular.

Along with the particularization of the angel in the center as the Lord, the arrangement of the Three around the table could be a second element specific to the composition reported by Eusebius of Caesarea in the 4th century, which was not taken over in the Byzantine type, but which perpetuated in the Oriental until the 11th century, when its oldest known representations date. Among these, the most famous are the miniature from a *Psalter* at the British Museum, the one from an *Octateuch* conserved at the Vatican, the frescoes from the Tokali churches, from the century 10th, and Çarikli, from the first half of the 11th century, from Göreme, in Cappadocia<sup>28</sup> (fig. 8), or the one printed on the coin minted by Mihail Trichas<sup>29</sup>.

In the late Byzantine period, from this second type of representation of the *Philoxenia of Abraham*, a third one developed, the "trinitarian" type, in which the frontal perspective not only of the two angels on the sides, but also of the one in the center, which is slightly turned towards himself, with his head bowed, he was looking towards the table, the scene giving the impression that the perspective closes in a circle. The angels are distinguished from each other only by gesture and mimicry, the central figure not being separated from the other two except by the symbol of the nimbus in the cross or by the inscription IC XC or O ΩN. For their part, Abraham and Sarah no longer appear in the bent position, bringing their gifts, but standing, among the angels<sup>30</sup>.

This last type of iconographic representation of the *Philoxenia of Abraham*, spread on the Greek line throughout the Orthodox space, constituted the model of the famous representation of the icon of the *Holy Trinity* or *Troika from the Old Testament* (fig. 9) by the no less famous Russian monk Andrei Rublev<sup>31</sup>.

### 3. THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE ICONOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF ANDREI RUBLEV

Unlike all the previous representations, in which either the three young men, undifferentiated by anything, were presented as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, or only the angel in the middle was individualized in different ways, to denote the "Lord", Andrei Rublev, „and only he”, as stated by G. Bunge<sup>32</sup>, wanted to connect each angel with one of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, which, from a theological perspective, meant a new

<sup>28</sup> Margarita KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God: Trinity Imagery in Eastern Orthodox Art*, Sofia, 2020 (în bulgară – *Ликът на Бога, изображенията на света Троица в православното изкуство*), pp. 32-33; Diacon Vasile DEMCIUC, *Cappadocia - Istorie, credință, artă și civilizație bizantină*, Ed. Basilica, București, 2020, pp. 178, 114.

<sup>29</sup> M. ALPATOV, "La «Trinité» dans l'art byzantin...", p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, pp. 29, 71.

<sup>31</sup> M. ALPATOV, "La «Trinité» dans l'art byzantin...", p. 174.

<sup>32</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 32.

approach, which uses the biblical account from chapter 18 of the book Making only as a pretext.

The three angels are no longer, as in the “trinitarian” type, „three identical figures and interchangeable with each other, [...] but three irreducible and unmistakable persons”<sup>33</sup>, both by the play of the hands, by the direction of the eyes, by the arrangement around the table, as well as through the symbolism of the colors of the clothes. Thus, the angel in the center points with his right to the chalice in the middle of the table and, further, to the angel on the left, the angel on the right blesses the chalice, looking towards the angel on the left, who is in front of him, while the angel on the left reaches out to the piece of bread on the table. The biblical background was reduced to the essential symbolic elements, the house, the tree and the rock, Abraham and Sarah not finding their place in the composition.

This is, by far, the best-known iconographic representation of the Holy Trinity, on which renowned theologians<sup>34</sup> have learned in an attempt to identify the “key” to the symbolic and theological understanding of this icon, which has been stated to „represent the most complete approximation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity”<sup>35</sup> or „the icon that fully expresses the meaning of the appearance of the three angels”<sup>36</sup>.

Going through even a partial bibliography on this topic highlights the fact that there is no unified interpretation, either from a symbolic or theological point of view, of Andrei Rublev’s *Holy Trinity* icon. Summarizing, Gabriel Bunge notes that, from a theological point of view, the icon can be interpreted as presenting „the timeless mystery of the intratrinitarian relations between the Father, the Son and the Spirit”, that is, the “theological” Trinity, or „the eternal counsel of sending the Son”, i.e. the “oikonomic” Trinity, or „the mystery of the Holy Eucharist and the role of each of the Three divine Persons in this sacramental actualization of the Son’s sacrifice”, i.e. the “liturgical-eucharistic” Trinity<sup>37</sup>.

In the interpretation of Gabriel Bunge, for whom the identity of the three angels is indispensable for a correct interpretation of the icon<sup>38</sup>, the angel on the left is the symbol of the Father, the one in the middle is the Son and the one on the right symbolizes the Holy Spirit<sup>39</sup>. These identifications of the Three Persons are justified, in Bunge’s view, both compositionally, by the location around the table, by the dynamics, by the gestures and by the mimicry of the three angels, as well as symbolically, by the color of the clothes and by the decorative elements behind each Angel.

<sup>33</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> M. ALPATOV, “La «Trinité» dans l’art byzantin...”, pp.150-186; Tomas ŠPIDLÍK, Marko Ivan RUPNIK, *Credință și icoană*, traducere de Ioan Milea, Ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 23-35; Daniel ROUSSEAU, *Icoana-lumina Feței Tale*, traducere de Măriuca Alexandrescu, Ed. Sophia, București, 2004, pp. 159-166; Egon SENDLER, *Icoana, chipul nevăzutului: elemente de teologie, tehnică și estetică*, traducere de Ioana Caragiu, Florin Caragiu și monahia Ilie Doinița Teodosia, Ed. Sophia, București, 2005, pp. 77, 108-109; Grigorie KRUG, *Cugetările unui iconograf despre sensul și menirea icoanelor*, traducere Carmen și Florin Caragiu, Adrian Tănăsescu-Vlad, Ed. Sophia, București, 2002, pp. 95-106; Michel QUENOT, *Sfidările icoanei: o altă viziune asupra lumii*, traducere de Dora Mezdrea, Ed. Sophia, București, 2004, pp. 124-129; Constantine CAVARNOS, *Ghid de iconografie bizantină*, traducere de Anca Popescu, Ed. Sophia, București, 2005, p. 162; Lev GILLET, “La signification spirituelle de l’icône de la Sainte Trinité peinte par André Roublev”, in: *Irenikon*, 26, 1963, pp. 133-139.

<sup>35</sup> M. QUENOT, *Sfidările icoanei*:..., p. 125.

<sup>36</sup> G. KRUG, *Cugetările unui iconograf*:..., p. 95.

<sup>37</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>38</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 74.

<sup>39</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, pp. 81-82.



As for the theological meaning of the icon, G. Bunge, excluding with solid theological arguments the interpretation of the *Trinity* in a “theological” sense, highlights, beyond the “oikonomic” meaning, which is imposed at first glance, a new, pneumatic emphasis, observable in the reverse perspective of the image, the key to interpreting the composition being the Person of the Holy Spirit, towards whom the Son sends with his right hand and towards whom the Father looks. From this perspective, in Bunge’s interpretation, Andrei Rublev’s *Holy Trinity* icon is rather an icon of the feast of Pentecost<sup>40</sup>.

An interpretation similar in all aspects to that of Gabriel Bunge is found in the monk Grigorie Krug<sup>41</sup> and Michel Quenot<sup>42</sup>. Instead, in Špidlík and Rupnik, the composition is interpreted in the “liturgical-eucharistic” sense, the identification of the three angels being the same<sup>43</sup>. The “oikonomic” aspect of Rublev’s *Trinity* is also highlighted by Lev Gillet, for whom „the icon therefore evokes the advice of the three divine persons with a view to the salvation of the human race”<sup>44</sup>. The identification of the three angels, however, is different from that of Gabriel Bunge. For Lev Gillet, the angel in the middle is the symbol of the Father, the one on the right symbolizes the Son, and the one on the left the Holy Spirit.

An identification similar to Lev Gillet’s of the three angels is also supported by Sorin Dumitrescu. The iconological interpretation that he makes of the famous Rublevian icon, however, is significantly different from that of the theologians mentioned above. According to him, the scriptural source from which Rublev was inspired is not the Old Testament text from *Genesis* (18, 1-5), but the theology of the Holy Apostle Paul from the *Epistle to the Hebrews* regarding the Archpriesthood of Christ (Heb 9, 11-12; 10, 12 ). Therefore, in Sorin Dumitrescu’s interpretation, the topos of the Rublevian *Troika* is not the Mamre Oak, but the Holy of Holies not made by human hands, into which Christ entered after dying on the Cross, sitting „on the throne of glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit”, the Father blessing and consecrating the Sacrifice and Resurrection of His Son, an act symbolized by the gesture of blessing that the Angel in the middle makes over the chalice on the table. In Sorin Dumitrescu’s view, this would constitute the true meaning of Andrei Rublev’s *Troika*<sup>45</sup>. However interesting this interpretation of S. Dumitrescu may be, it cannot be accepted because there is no scriptural or theological basis to justify the symbolic representation, in the form of angels, of the Father and the Holy Spirit „on the throne of glory”, just as the representation of the Son after the Incarnation can no longer be a symbolic one, in the form of an angel, but only with his human form, with which he died and resurrected. Moreover, the symbolic representation of the Savior Jesus Christ was forbidden by canon 82 of the Quinisext synod (691-692), which, even if it expressly refers to the symbol of the lamb, in reality has in mind any symbol referring to Him, as it specifies: „we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb - and any other symbol, we conclude – so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to our memory his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death, and his redemption[...].”<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> G. BUNGE, *Icoana Sfintei Treimi a Cuviosului Andrei Rubliov*, p. 84-91.

<sup>41</sup> G. KRUG, *Cugetările unui iconograf...*, pp. 95-106.

<sup>42</sup> M. QUENOT, *Sfidările icoanei...*, p. 125.

<sup>43</sup> T. ŠPIDLÍK, M. I. RUPNIK, *Credință și icoană*, pp. 30-35.

<sup>44</sup> L. GILLET, “La signification spirituelle de l’icône de la Sainte Trinité...”, p. 136.

<sup>45</sup> Sorin DUMITRESCU, *Noi și Icoana*, Ed. Anastasia, 2010, pp. 44-46.

<sup>46</sup> Arhid. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Note și comentarii, Sibiu, <sup>2</sup>1993, p. 151.

Constantine Cavarinos has a separate and contrary opinion to the one presented above in the interpretation of Andrei Rublev's icon, for whom the omission of some elements that appear in chapter 18 of the book of Creation, such as Abraham and Sarah, „is a serious error”, since it „suggests the idea that the Holy Trinity is a group of three angels”<sup>47</sup>. For Cavarinos „the inclusion of all these components is essential to show or remind the viewer that this is only a vision, not a representation of God, according to His real nature”<sup>48</sup>. Cavarinos' opinion, although it might seem to be slightly exaggerated, is completely correct, since not all exegetes of the icon of the Holy Trinity consider the three angels, whom they identify with one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, as symbols, *typoi*, and not as representations or likenesses of the Three Persons. Beyond the way in which the three angels are identified or interpreted, as *typoi* or likenesses of the Three Persons, the representation of the Holy Trinity under the face of three angels around the table at the Mamre Oak, regardless of which type it belongs to, and the one made by Andrei Rublev in especially, it has become the canonical model to follow in this regard, as one that is in accordance with Revelation and the Church's teaching of faith.

#### 4. NON-CANONICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The issue of the canonicity of the icon of the Holy Trinity received special attention for the first time in the Orthodox world during the *Synod of the 100 Heads, Stoglav*, held in Moscow in 1551, and was resumed two years later by a synod convened in Moscow<sup>49</sup>, in the context in which serious deviations from the right faith and the revealed truth had already appeared in Orthodox iconography that any iconographic representation must testify to, deviations that appeared as a result of various heterodox influences received indiscriminately from the West. Later, the subject would be taken up again by the *Great Synod of Moscow*, from the year 1666, which also issued an important decision by which it was forbidden to paint God the Father in the various heterodox compositions of the Holy Trinity<sup>50</sup>. The meeting of these synods was necessary because over time not only the canonical image of the Holy Trinity had known some non-canonical variants, but in the entire Orthodox area non-canonical representations of the Holy Trinity had appeared which had become extremely widespread, more popular even than *Abraham's Philoxenia* or Rublev's *Troika*.

Well, if in some canonical representations of the Holy Trinity in the form of three angels only the angel in the middle had a cross in a nimbus around his head, over time there appeared some in which all three angels had the cross in a nimbus, which was in equally a heresy and an absurdity, because it was suggested either that there are three Christs, or that the divine nature is passionate. Also, starting from the 9th-10th centuries, in addition to the traditional canonical model, various other representations of the Holy Trinity had appeared, two of which were extremely widespread, namely the one called *Paternity* (fig. 10) and another, known as the *New Testament Trinity*, *Sintronia*<sup>51</sup> or the *Trinity of the psalter*<sup>52</sup> (fig. 11). In addition to these, two other non-canonical representations of the Holy Trinity entered the Orthodox iconography, namely the *Throne of Mercy* or the *Throne of Grace* (fig. 12) and

<sup>47</sup> C. CAVARNOS, *Ghid de iconografie bizantină*, p. 162.

<sup>48</sup> C. CAVARNOS, *Ghid de iconografie bizantină*, p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, pp. 263-305; G. KRUG, *Cugetările unui iconograf...*, pp. 69-72.

<sup>50</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, pp. 358-360.

<sup>51</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 391.

<sup>52</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 207.

the one called by Grimaldi-Hierholtz „enigmatic and monstrous”<sup>53</sup>, namely the *Tricephalic Trinity* (fig. 13), with the variant *Trifaces Trinity* or *vultus trifrons* (fig. 14), which, however, did not have the same spread and popularity as the first two.

#### 4.1. *The origin and antiquity of these non-canonical representations of the Holy Trinity*

The origin and antiquity of these non-canonical representations of the Holy Trinity are topics of controversy for researchers to this day, who attribute them either to the Catholic West or to the Orthodox East, theological, historical and artistic arguments being invoked in favor of each statement. From the studies in which these representations are analyzed, it appears that they originally appeared as illustrations of some scriptural texts from the Psalter or from the Holy Gospels or some liturgical texts from cult books. These representations, which have become so widespread, are part of a much larger number of variants from the X-XIV centuries, which appeared especially in the West following the attempts of miniaturists to illustrate the Holy Trinity, which, however, did not “career” because they remained between the covers of the manuscripts, not becoming subjects for parietal or easel painting.

According to the study published by F. Bloespflug and Y. Załuska, „most autonomous and non-narrative representations of the Holy Trinity can be seen as variations, multiplications and developments of the *Majestas Domini* theme”<sup>54</sup>, that is, of the Christ in majesty theme. Thus, appeared in the manuscripts of the time the so-called *Binity* or *Bi-unity*, in different variants, in which next to Christ in majesty appears one of the symbols used for the other Persons of the Holy Trinity, and the *Trinity*, with its variants, in which either Christ appears in majesty replicated three times, either together with the symbols of the other Persons of the Holy Trinity.

In a first subgroup of the *Binity* in the composition, Christ appears on the throne, in majesty, above Him being represented either the hand, as a symbol of the Father, or, in a second subgroup, the dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit<sup>55</sup>. There is also a third subgroup, in which Christ appears in a double representation, Christ in majesty or in the form of the Ancient of Days and Christ carrying the Cross or Christ Logos, an iconographic type very widespread in the illustrated Psalters. The earliest known representation of this type in the West appears in the *Utrecht Psalter*, which dates from the end of the 9th century<sup>56</sup> (fig. 15).

Among the Trinitarian images, a first group appeared through the triple replication of the Christ in majesty theme, images that fit into the *Triandric Trinity* theme. The oldest image of this type illustrates the opening page of the Gospel according to Saint John the Evangelist, in *Grimbald's Gospels*, being made around 1010-1020<sup>57</sup>. Another one, called the *Triandric Creative Trinity* (fig. 16), which illustrated the work *Hortus deliciarum* of Herrad of Landsberg, executed between 1167-1185, today lost, would surprise the advice of the Persons of the Holy Trinity to create the world. A. Heimann classifies this iconographic type as the Byzantine type, since, along with other researchers, he considers it to be of Byzantine origin<sup>58</sup>. The earliest Byzantine miniature with the theme of the *Council of the Holy Trinity*

<sup>53</sup> R. GRIMALDI-HIERHOLTZ, *Images de la Trinité dans l'art*, Fontainebleau, 1995, pp. 82-83.

<sup>54</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 188.

<sup>55</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 194-195.

<sup>56</sup> Ernst KANTOROWICZ, „The Quinity of Winchester”, in: *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 29, no.2, 1947, p. 75; F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie...”, p. 200, 213-220.

<sup>57</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 189.

<sup>58</sup> A. HEIMANN, „Trinitas creator mundi”, pp. 46-48; E. KANTOROWICZ, „The Quinity of Winchester”, p. 77, nota 25; F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 236.

captures the advice of the Holy Trinity to send the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary and was created towards the end of the first half of the 11th century by the monk Jacob Kokkinobaphos to illustrate the homily at the Annunciation<sup>59</sup> (fig 17).

The source of inspiration for this iconographic type seems to be a pagan one, such a scheme, in which two or three people, represented frontally, share the same throne, being characteristic of Roman imperial art from the 1st-4th centuries. A representation of this type is preserved on a gold medallion, minted in 338, in which Constantine II (337-340), Constans (337-350) and Constantius II (337-361), the sons and successors of Constantine the Great (306-337), sit on the same throne, frontally, in a composition that captures the majesty and imperial equality of the three<sup>60</sup>. Since such a scheme survived in the West until the 7th century in the coins struck by the Germans, Franks and Anglo-Saxons<sup>61</sup>, it would perhaps not be improbable to hypothesize that this scheme was taken directly from a model in West, and not from an intermediate Byzantine one.

Two centuries later, a new iconographic type appeared in the West, the *Triandric Eucharistic Trinity*, a composition in which the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, figured with the face of Christ, stand behind the Holy Table, each blessing a chalice. This iconographic theme seems to have been inspired by the visions of the monk Rupert de Deutz, with the difference that in his vision one of the Three Persons, probably the Son, was a young man with royal features, while the other two had the features of very old people<sup>62</sup>. The iconographic type made by the triple replication of the theme *Christ in majesty* survived in Catholic art, without being very widespread, until the 19th century, in the form of a stained glass window, from the 17th century, from the chapel of Saint Philomen of the church of Saint Mary of Paris, and in bas-relief form the 16<sup>th</sup>-century in Holy Trinity Abbey of Fécamp and the 19th-century in Church of the Holy Trinity in Caen<sup>63</sup>.

The second group is made up of the Trinity in two medallions, so named because Christ in majesty is flanked on the right by the zoomorphic symbol of the lamb and that of the dove on the left, each of them being inscribed in a circle, which also dates from the twelfth century<sup>64</sup> (fig. 18).

Obviously, this iconographic type also raises problems of interpretation, since, although it is meant to be an image of the Holy Trinity, in fact it visualizes twice the Son, incarnate, as Christ in majesty, and symbolically, in the form of a lamb, together with the symbol of the Holy Spirit, the Father being absent. Images of this type are therefore a distortion rather than a canonically and dogmatically correct representation of the Holy Trinity. Another trinitarian iconographic type, which is also the only one that does not cause confusion in its interpretation, is the one in which Christ appears in majesty, the dove, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the hand, as a symbol of the Father, coming out of a cloud at

<sup>59</sup> Linardou KALLIRROE, "[The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited: The Internal Evidence of the Books](#)", in: *Scriptorium*, 61 (2), 2007, pp. 384-407.

<sup>60</sup> E. KANTOROWICZ, "The Quinity of Winchester", p. 77.

<sup>61</sup> E. KANTOROWICZ, "The Quinity of Winchester", p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, "La vision de la Trinité de Norbert de Xanta et de Rupert de Deutz", in: *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, tome 71, fasc. 2, 1997, pp. 205-229.

<sup>63</sup> R. GRIMALDI-HIERHOLTZ, *Images de la Trinité dans l'art*, pp. 38-41.

<sup>64</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, "Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...", pp. 191-193.



the top of the image. Although the earliest image of this type dates from the 10th century, this type also did not survive the 12th century<sup>65</sup>.

Some of these iconographic types were the basis of the trinitarian types mentioned above, *Paternity*, *Syntronoï*, *Throne of Mercy*, *Tricephalous-Triphrons*, which appeared through the „enrichment” of some variants of the one called Binity, in particular.

**4.1.1. *Paternity*.** This iconographic type has attracted, and continues to do so, the attention of many researchers, who have not reached a common opinion regarding its origin and antiquity, on the contrary.

Those who argue for the Byzantine origin<sup>66</sup> of *Paternity* identify the first representation of this type in a miniature in the Vatican codices. gr. 394, fol. 7, which dates from the beginning of the 11th century, and which illustrates the *Ladder* of St. John the Ladder<sup>67</sup>. The source of *Paternity* in the Vatic codices. gr. 394, fol. 7 would be the miniature from Codex 587 of the Dionysius monastery in Athos, which dates from 1059<sup>68</sup>. In this miniature that illustrates the text from John 1, 18, in the letter Θ (theta) of the word θεος (theos-God) the Ancient of Days is depicted holding Christ-Emmanuel on his knees (fig. 19), an image which, through the addition of the dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, would have become the representation of the Holy Trinity of the *Paternity* type. Therefore, according to them, the origin of this composition, which „is closer to the teachings of the Orthodox faith”<sup>69</sup>, should not be sought in the West, its appearance being the result of an independent process carried out in the East.

As for the cause of the appearance of this type of representation of the Holy Trinity, various hypotheses have been advanced. Some have identified the source of inspiration for this iconographic type in the adoption ritual practiced by pagans in antiquity<sup>70</sup>, a hypothesis that cannot be retained, since, being related to the plan of intratrinitarian relations, it expresses a heresy. Others are of the opinion that the influences of the heretical ideas of the Bogomils<sup>71</sup>, from Byzantium of the 10th-12th centuries and later, about the anthropomorphism of God<sup>72</sup> are what led to the appearance of this iconographic type. Last but not least, there are also researchers who attribute the appearance of this iconographic

<sup>65</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 196-197.

<sup>66</sup> H. GERSTINGER, „Über Herkunft und Entwicklung der anthropomorphen byzantinisch-slavischen Trinitätsdarstellungen des sogenannten Syntroni- und Paternitas Typus”, in: *Festschrift W. Sas-Zaloziecky*, Graz, 1956, pp. 78-95; Adelheid HEIMANN, „L’iconografie de la Trinité; Une formule byzantin et son développement en Occident”, in: *L’Art Chrétien*, oct. 1934, pp. 37-59; Ágnes KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque? Trinitarian Syntronoï Images at the Crossroads of the Catholic West and the Orthodox East (ca. 1300-1500)”, in: Alice Isabella Sullivan and Maria Alessia Rossi (eds.), *Eclecticism at the Edges: Medieval Art and Architecture at the Crossroads of the Latin, Greek and Slavic Culutral Spheres (c. 1300-c.1550)*, Berlin, Boston: Walter DeGruyer, 2021, p.158; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, pp. 56, 88.

<sup>67</sup> Adelheid HEIMANN, „L’iconografie de la Trinité”, pp. 39-40; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, p. 88; Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?...”, p.158, n. 6.

<sup>68</sup> H. GERSTINGER, „Über Herkunft und Entwicklung...”, p. 81; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>69</sup> Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?...”, p.158.

<sup>70</sup> S. A. PAPADOPULOS, „Essai d’interprétation du thème iconographique de la Paternité dans l’art byzantin”, in: *Cahiers archeologiques*, t. XVIII, 1968, pp. 121-136 la F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> Cu privire la bogomili, a se vedea Steven RUNCIMAN, *Maniheul medieval, studiu asupra ereziei dualiste în Evul Mediu*, traducere de Mihai-D. Grigore și Damian Alexandru Anfile, col. *Byzantium*, Ed. Nemira, București, 2016, pp. 91-127.

<sup>72</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, pp. 396-397, 403-404.



type to the doctrinal struggle of the Orthodox against the addition of the Filioque, seeing in this image „a visualization of the Orthodox position in this dispute”<sup>73</sup>.

From a compositional point of view, *Paternity* presents two variants according to the way in which Christ is depicted, with the face of an adult, but much reduced, or as Christ-Emmanuel, the first variant being called Italo-Byzantine, the other, Slavo-Byzantine<sup>74</sup>, and two others variants according to the place where the symbol of the Holy Spirit, the dove, is placed, in the arms of Christ or on the chest of the Father, between the Father and Christ. Specific to the representations of *Paternity* in the Orthodox East is the depiction of the Father in the face of the Ancient of Days, this being one of the fundamental differences from those in the West, in which the Father is depicted with the face of Christ.

Interpreting *Paternity* iconologically, the researchers who affirm the Byzantine origin of this iconographic type believe that, through the compositional arrangement of the Father and the Son and the symbol of the Holy Spirit, the aim was to transmit the teaching about the divinity and the perichoretic unity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Also, the composition would capture the hypostatic properties of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The image of the Father, which dominates in size, is understood as expressing the teaching about the monarchy of the Father, who gives birth to the Son, figured near the womb, and proceeds the Holy Spirit<sup>75</sup>. Last but not least, the followers of the Eastern origin of *Paternity* see in the version in which the dove is positioned in the arms of Christ the reflection of the Orthodox teaching about the “shining” of the Holy Spirit from the Father through the Son<sup>76</sup>, and in the one in which the dove is positioned between the Father and the Son, on the one about the procession of the Holy Spirit only from the Father<sup>77</sup>.

The opinions of those who support the Byzantine origin of this type of representation are refuted with solid arguments by other researchers<sup>78</sup>. They showed that *Paternity* in the Vatican codices. gr. 394 fol. 7 is the oldest representation of this type in the East, but in the West the representations of this type are „prior to the oldest Byzantine examples”<sup>79</sup>. They referred in this regard to the capital of the cathedral in Bayeux, France, and to a miniature from the oldest copy of the *Utrecht Psalter*, Harley manuscript 603, in the

<sup>73</sup> Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?...”, p. 160.

<sup>74</sup> H. GERSTINGER, „Über Herkunft und Entwicklung...”, p. 80.

<sup>75</sup> Sophia KALOPISSI-VERTI, „Aspects of Byzantine Art after the Recapture of Constantinople (1261-c.1300): Reflections of Imperial Policy, Reactions, Confrontation with the Latins”, in: J.-P. Caillet and F. Joubert, (eds.), *Orient et Occident Méditerranéens au XIIIe siècle: les programmes picturaux*, Paris 2012, pp. 41-64; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, pp. 56-57, 89; Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?”, pp. 160-161.

<sup>76</sup> The first among the Orthodox theologians who theologized about the “shining” of the Holy Spirit through the Son was the Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory of Cyprus (1283-1289), in: *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, P.G. 142, 269-300; a se vedea, pe această temă, și Olivier CLÉMENT, „Grégoire de Chypre, De l’ekporèse du Saint Esprit”, in: *Istina*, 17 (1972); Vitalien LAURENT, „Les signataires du second synode des Blakernes”, in: *Échos d’Orient*, 146 (1927); in Romanian: Ioan I. ICĂ jr., „Sinodul constantinopolitan din 1285 și învățătura despre Sfântul Duh a patriarhului Grigorie II Cipriotul în contextul controverselor asupra lui Filioque”, in: *Mitropolia Ardealului*, anul XXXII, nr. 2, 1987; Pr. Cristian GAGU, *Teologie și umanism în epoca Paleologilor*, Ed. Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2007, pp. 163-169.

<sup>77</sup> H. GERSTINGER, „Über Herkunft und Entwicklung...”, p. 80; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, p. 90; Kuyumdzhieva adopts Gerstinger’s view, as one that „more precisely covers the meaning of the image”.

<sup>78</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 197-201; Saška BOGEVSKA, „The Holy Trinity in the Diocese of the Archbishopric of the Ohrid in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century”, in: *Patrimonium*, 10(2012), pp. 146-154.

<sup>79</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 198.

British Library, which dates from the late 10th century<sup>80</sup>. These are the oldest, but they are not the only representations from the 10th-12th centuries in the West of this iconographic type. We find this representation in the *Bible* of the Benedictine Abbey of Dijon, from 1130-1140, in the Prague *Psalter* of the Codex Ostroviensis, in a *Gradual* of the monastery of Weingarten, in the capitals of some churches in Spain<sup>81</sup>, which shows its popularity in the world catholic

This type would have appeared, therefore, in the Catholic West as an illustration of the scriptural text of the Prologue of the Gospel according to Saint John the Evangelist, especially of the verse „The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1, 18), and of the one in Psalm 2, 7, „You are my Son, today I have begotten You!”. F.Boespflug and Y.Załuska believe that, from a compositional point of view, the different variants of *Paternity* are inspired by the models of the *Virgin Platytera*, *Eleusa* or *Nikopeia*<sup>82</sup>. The specificity of this iconographic type in the West is the representation of the Father with the face of Christ and the Son as Christ-Emmanuel. Interpreting this way of representing the Father and the Son, F. Boespflug states that the Father, because he cannot be represented, since „no one has ever seen God” (Jn 1, 18), was represented by Western artists through the face To the incarnate Son, based on the word spoken by Christ Himself to the Holy Apostle Philip, „He who has seen Me has seen the Father [...] I am in the Father and the Father in Me [...]” (Jn 14, 9 -11), and the Son, as Emmanuel<sup>83</sup>.

Considering that Boespflug concludes, following the analysis made of this iconographic type, that „the Byzantine origin of *Paternity* is still not demonstrated”<sup>84</sup>, and that rather the evidence converges towards affirming its Catholic origin, also taking into account the particularity of the Father’s figure in the image of Christ, it follows that it is much more likely that the Byzantines borrowed this iconographic type from the West<sup>85</sup> and replaced the representation of the Father in the face of Christ with the one in which he is figured as the Ancient of Days.

**4.1.2. Synthronoi.** The foundation of the second type of the trinity representation, the *Synthronoi* or *Trinity of the Psalter*, resides, according to the researchers, in the interpretation of Psalm 109, v.1, „The Lord said to my Lord: sit at my right hand until I put the enemies You make a bed for Your feet”, which, by the way, he illustrates very frequently in the *Psalter*, which is why the composition has been called by some researchers the *Trinity of the Psalter*. From a scriptural point of view, this type also illustrates the text from the *Gospel* according to the Saint Evangelist Mark, which relates the Ascension of the Savior Jesus Christ and the sitting at the right hand of the Father (Mk 16, 19), as well as the vision of Saint Archdeacon Stephen before being stoned (Acts 7, 55)<sup>86</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> E. KANTOROWICZ, „The Quinity of Winchester”, p. 75; F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 199; F. BOESPFLUG, „Dieu en Mère? Féminité et maternité de la figure de Dieu le Père dans l’art médiéval d’occident (XI<sup>e</sup> - XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, în: *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 83/1, 2009, p. 24.

<sup>81</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 200-201; F. BOESPFLUG, „Dieu en Mère?”, pp. 24-29.

<sup>82</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 199-200.

<sup>83</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 187-188, 200-201.

<sup>84</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 198.

<sup>85</sup> S. BOGEVSKA, „The Holy Trinity in the Diocese of the Archbishopric of the Ohrid...”, pp.146-154.

<sup>86</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 209.

This theme was illustrated in the *Psalter* in both the West and the East, but the differences are essential in how the composition was designed to faithfully express the doctrine of the Holy Trinity specific to each Church.

In the Catholic West the oldest illustration of Psalm 109, v.1 appears in the *Utrecht Psalter*, which dates from the 9th century, in the form of a duality of the Father, figured, as in other cases, with the face of Christ, and of the Son, figured also like Christ, but distinguished from the Father by the cruciform nimbus, at the feet of which are Judas and Arius. The representation created confusion among researchers, some considering that Christ is represented in the icon in a double pose, of glory, the Christ of glory, and of humility, the Christ of history, and that the two poses personify the two natures, divine and human<sup>87</sup>. From a theological point of view, as Kantorowicz also noted, this iconographic type illustrates Nestorian Christology<sup>88</sup>.

The Binity, which in the 10th-12th centuries became the usual illustration of verse 1 of Psalm 109 in the Western Psalters<sup>89</sup>, formed the basis for the *Synthronoi* or *Trinity of the Psalter*. First, for the first time in *Roda's Bible*, executed in the first half of the 11th century, the representation of the Father with the face of Christ was replaced within the Binity with the image of the Ancient of Days<sup>90</sup>. The next step was taken in the same period by introducing into the composition the dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, positioned between the Father and the Son to symbolize the procession *ab utroque*<sup>91</sup>. The first preserved image of the Syntronia, however, adorns not a manuscript of any *Psalter*, but Godwin's seal<sup>92</sup>. After the 11th century, the number of psalters and Catholic worship books that contain the representation of the Holy Trinity according to this compositional scheme of the *Synthronoi* or very close to it is quite large. Interestingly, most of these representations come from the Anglo-Saxon world.

Unlike the Catholic West, in the Orthodox East God the Father was symbolized either by the right hand that blesses the Son, on which the Holy Spirit descends, in the form of three rays, as in the *Hludov Psalter*, or by the *Throne of hetoimasia*, which emphasizes transcendence absolute of God, as in the 11th century psalter preserved in the Library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the codices ms. Taphou 53<sup>93</sup>.

Starting from the 14th century, however, *Synthronoi* also entered Orthodox iconography, first in the form of a miniature, and then as a wall and easel painting. The reason for borrowing this iconographic type from Catholic art would lie in the theological disputes between East and West, especially on the subject of the Filioque. A. Kriza even states that „Orthodox painters borrowed this Western iconographic type to challenge it: the choice served as a sign or visual reference to visually identify the subject of the polemic”<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> E. KANTOROWICZ, „The Quinity of Winchester”, pp. 76, 79.

<sup>88</sup> E. KANTOROWICZ, „The Quinity of Winchester”, p. 81.

<sup>89</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 213-226.

<sup>90</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 224-225.

<sup>91</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 232-234; Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?...”, p. 158.

<sup>92</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 227.

<sup>93</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 211-212, 228; S. BALDERSTONE, „The Evolution of Trinity Images to the Medieval Period”, pp. 104-105.

<sup>94</sup> Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?”, p. 174; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, p. 102, states that in East the scheme was „completely reworked”.

It is certain that if after the twelfth century in Western iconography the dove, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, is positioned between the Father and the Son, whose mouth it touches with its wings, to symbolize the procession *ab utroque*, in Eastern iconography the positioning of the dove was changed, to symbolize the teaching of the Orthodox faith about the Holy Spirit proceeding only from the Father and “resting” in the Son. Thus, in some compositions the dove is positioned either on the right hand raised as a sign of the Father’s blessing, with its wings folded and its head turned towards the Son, as in the church of St. Nicholas in Tzortza, Kastoria, or equidistant above the Father and the Son, but always turned towards the Son, as in most such representations in the Orthodox space, to symbolize the procession from the Father and the “rest” in the Son<sup>95</sup>.

The anti-filioquist intentionality impregnated in this iconographic type in the Orthodox space would be even more evident in the *Synthronoi* preserved in the Benaki museum in Athens, an icon executed around the year 1500. The particularity of this icon consists in the presence, on one side and the other of the iconographic scheme, of the saints hymnographers Cosmas and Anastasius, holding scrolls inscribed with anti-Filioquist trinitarian hymns. On the scroll of Cosmas it can be read: „I glorify the Son from the Father and the Spirit, as from the sun, the light and the ray; but on the Son after the birth, because there is also a birth, and on the Spirit after the exit [procession], because there is also an exit [procession]; on the divine Trinity that is together without beginning, Whom all creation worships” (*Triodion*, Glory at the 4th Canticle from the Matins of the Sunday of the Last Judgment), and on that of Anastasios: „And the births of the one without beginning and the procession I worship: the Father, the One who gave birth, I glorify the Son who was born, I praise the Holy Spirit, the One who shines together with the Father and the Son” (*Triodion*, Glory to the Beatitudes, Canon of Saint Andrew the Critean, Thursday in the Vth week from Lent)<sup>96</sup>. Although, as it emerges from the studies on this trinitarian iconological type, it would seem that in the Orthodox environment it transmitted an anti-filioquist and, therefore, anti-Latin message, which would explain its spread after the 15th century throughout the Orthodox area, however, the Orthodox Church banned the *Synthronoi* or *Trinity of the psalter* in 1776, in a synod held in Constantinople under the pastorate of Patriarch Sophronius II (1774-1780), the argument being that „this alleged icon of the Holy Trinity is an innovation”, which „entered the Orthodox Church through the Latins”<sup>97</sup>. Even if this synodal decision was not respected everywhere and by all the Orthodox, be they painters, founders or donors, the argument invoked by the Constantinople Synod - Latin innovation - refutes, I think, without right of appeal, all the statements of contemporary researchers who have attributed to this iconographic scheme an assumed anti-Latin character.

**4.1.3 Throne of mercy-Gnadenstuhl.** In this iconographic type, God the Father in majesty rests between his calves and supports with both hands the cross on which His incarnate Son is crucified, which he seems to present to the viewer, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is positioned on the Father’s chest, in the vertical axis of the cross. This composition became the most popular image of the Holy Trinity in the Catholic Church between the 13th and 16th centuries, with Catholics calling it simply the Holy Trinity.

<sup>95</sup> Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?”, pp. 164-167.

<sup>96</sup> Á. KRIZA, „Pro or contra Filioque?”, pp. 168-169.

<sup>97</sup> Sergius MACRAIOS, *Ecclesiastical History*. In: Konstantin SATHAS, *Bibliotheca graeca medii aevi*, vol. III, Veneția, 1872, p. 317; L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 393, correctly gives the name of the Patriarch Sophronius II, but the year is wrongly indicated as 1176, and not 1776, when the Constantinople synod was convened to put an end to „the controversy of the alms”



From one of the writings of the Latin liturgist Sicard de Cremona (1160-1215), it appears that this iconographic type was born from the juxtaposition in some Catholic Liturgies from the twelfth century of the theme of *Majesty*, in which the place of Christ was taken by the Father, figured as the Ancient of Days, with that of the *Crucifixion*<sup>98</sup>. However, the earliest such image is not a manuscript miniature, but a late 11th-century fresco in a church in Norfolk, England, and appears not in a Eucharistic context, but in a scene of the *Last Judgment*<sup>99</sup>. The oldest miniatures of this type adorn the *Cambrai Missal* (fig. 20) and the *Perpignan Missal*, both of which belong to the twelfth century. Some compositions of this type visually convey the Catholic dogma of procession *ab utroque*, as is the case with the one in the *Cambrai Missal* in which the wings of the dove touch both the mouth of the Father and that of the Son<sup>100</sup>. In the Orthodox world, this new Catholic model entered only towards the end of the 14th century, more precisely in the years 1380-1381, in the wall painting of the church of the Holy Virgin in Roustika, Crete. Following the Cretan model, two other representations of this iconographic type were made in the churches of Holy Cross, at the end of the 15th century, and Saint Irina, in the 16th century, in Cyprus<sup>101</sup>.

If in the Balkans and in the Romanian Countries this iconographic type was not successful, it instead became very popular in Russian Orthodoxy, starting from the 16th century. Those who brought this iconographic type to Russia were the painters from Pskov who were called to paint the Annunciation cathedral, rebuilt by Ivan IV the Terrible (1533-1584) after the fire that destroyed Moscow in 1547. They brought with them also some innovations that had made their way into the School of Pskov under the influx of Catholic religious art that had influenced the master painters of this city on the border of Russia with the Western world. Like *Syntronoï*, the *Throne of Mercy*, called by the Russians the *Crucifixion in the bosom of the Father*, was painted by them on the famous four-part icon intended for the iconostasis of the Moscow cathedral, attracting the attention of the deacon Ivan Viskovatâi, who contested the representation of the Father as the Ancient of Days<sup>102</sup>. Unfortunately, the attitude of Metropolitan Macarie and the Russian synodals in the dispute with the deacon Viskovatâi, who supported the representation of the Father with the ancient face on the basis of church custom and the erroneous interpretation of the Old Testament messianic prophecies, led to the spread of these iconographic types in Russia. From there, *Syntronoï* penetrated into other Orthodox countries, such as Moldova and Bulgaria, but not the *Throne of mercy*, however, which did not penetrate these Orthodox areas, remaining an iconographic type specific to Russian Orthodoxy.

**4.1.4. Tricephalic Trinity.** The fourth non-canonical iconographic type of the Holy Trinity present in the Orthodox space is the *Tricephalic Trinity*, with the version of the *Three-faced Trinity* or *Trifrons Trinity*. And regarding the origin of this iconographic type there are divergences among researchers. While most of them affirm its Western origin,

<sup>98</sup> Á. KRIZA, "The Russian Gnadenstuhl". in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 29 (2016), p. 102 ; F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, "Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...", pp. 204-205.

<sup>99</sup> John MUNNS, *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Norman England*, The Boydell Press, 2021, pp. 46-49; Á. KRIZA, "The Russian Gnadenstuhl", p. 96.

<sup>100</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, "Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident...", p. 207.

<sup>101</sup> M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>102</sup> „It is not appropriate to represent the unseen Deity”, wrote Viskovatâi in one of his writings addressed to the Synod: L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 285.



there are also some who opine that it is of Byzantine origin and that in the East the image would have appeared and evolved independently from the West<sup>103</sup>.

The circumstances surrounding the association of the tricephalic type with the Holy Trinity in the West are not very clear, especially since it was originally associated with the devil<sup>104</sup>. According to the most widespread theory, „Trinitarian tricephalism arose through the Christianization of a mythological figure who had the merit, in the eyes of artists and theologians, of solving the artistically impossible problem of «three in one»”<sup>105</sup>. It is certain that, under the influence of the Carolingian renaissance, the West took over the gryls images from the Greco-Roman glyptic tradition, using them in miniatures, on the friezes and capitals of cathedrals, either to represent Time, Wisdom or Philosophy, or the devil. The first associations of tricephalic images with the Holy Trinity appeared as early as the 12th century, such a tricephalic gryl, accompanied by the text *Caput nostrum trinitas est*, adorning the ring of Archbishop Roger of York (1154), while another, with the inscription *Trinitatis imago*, appears in the ring seal of Henry Lancaster Earl of Derby on the deed to Thomas Wake<sup>106</sup>.

Another 12th-century representation of this tricephalic type, which researchers interpret as referring to the Holy Trinity, is carved in the capital of the church of the monastery of Santa Maria d'Alquezar, in Aragon (fig. 21). Inscribed in a mandorla, the image shows a three-headed figure holding a man with his left hand, while touching his face with his right, as if to breathe life into him, which is why it has been said to represent the *Creative Trinity*. The image is considered „a possible and even probable” representation of the Holy Trinity<sup>107</sup>. The oldest undoubted representation of this kind of the Holy Trinity dates from the second half of the 13th century and appears in a Bible made in England, preserved today in St. John's College, Ms. K 26. In the miniature depicting the biblical episode of the reception of the Three Guests (fig. 22), Abraham appears prostrate before a tricephalus, in flagrant contradiction with the scriptural text, which clearly speaks of the presence of three men<sup>108</sup>. As for the *vultus trifrons* type, it seems that the source of inspiration was one of the representations of Prudence (fig. 23), with its three qualities, *memoria*, *intelligentia* and *providentia*, through which it rules time, with its categories, *praeteritum*, *praesens* and *futurum*<sup>109</sup>. After Petrarch brought it back to attention in 1338, the theme of *Prudence* adorned some churches in the West starting from the 14th century<sup>110</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, „The three-headed Angel and the three-headed Christ”, in: *Laudator Temporis Acti. Studia in Memoriam Ioannis A. Božilov*, vol. II, Ius, Imperium, Potestas, Litterae, Ars et Archaeologia, curavit I. A. Biliarsky, Serdicae 2018, pp. 498-523; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, pp.120-137.

<sup>104</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, „Le diable et la trinité tricéphales. A propos d'une pseudo-«visione de la Trinité» advenue à une novice de saint Norbert de Xanten”, in: *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, tome 72, fascicule 2, 1998, pp. 166-169; Jurgis BALTRUSAITIS, *Evul mediu fantastic*, traducere de Valentina Grigorescu, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1975, pp. 31-32.

<sup>105</sup> Raffaele PETTAZZONI, „The Pagan Origin of the Three-Headed Representation of the Christian Trinity”, in: *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, IX, London, 1946, pp. 135-151; F. BOESPFLUG, „Le diable et la trinité tricéphales...”, 169; J. BALTRUSAITIS, *Evul mediu fantastic*, pp. 19-20, lists the various pagan deities from the Greco-Roman religions that were represented with two or three faces or heads, dicephals or tricephals, biprons or triprons.

<sup>106</sup> J. BALTRUSAITIS, *Evul mediu fantastic*, p. 30; F. BOESPFLUG, „Le diable et la trinité tricéphales...”, p.170.

<sup>107</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, „Le diable et la trinité tricéphales...”, p. 171.

<sup>108</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, „Le diable et la trinité tricéphales...”, p. 171.

<sup>109</sup> Erwin PANOFKY, „Tabloul lui Tițian «Alegoria Prudenței». Un postscriptum”, în: *Artă și semnificație*, traducere de Ștefan Stoenescu, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1980, pp. 202-203; J. BALTRUSAITIS, *Evul mediu*

Another source for the trinitarian three-headed type seems to have been the image of the god Janus, the two-faced one, with one facing the past and the other looking into the future, to which was added a third, symbolizing the present<sup>111</sup>. Such a symbolization of the Holy Trinity, in the form of a bifrons with wings, these symbolizing the Holy Spirit, whose two faces symbolize one the Father and the other the Son, appears in the form of a miniature from the *Hamilton Bible*, produced in the workshops of the School of Naples and dating from the mid-14th century<sup>112</sup>. Also, the representatives of the School of Naples are the authors of the fresco in the church of *Santa Croce Andria*, in which the Father and the Son are depicted in the form of a dicephalus in majesty and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove sitting on the shoulder next to the Father's head. An image similar to this is preserved in the church of *Saint George* in Omorphokklesia, near Kastoria. From a chronological point of view, the one in the church of *Saint George* precedes the one in Naples by almost a century, which is why A. Heimann states that the source for this "fusion" is the ancient classical models taken over in the West through Byzantine art<sup>113</sup>. The arrangement of the symbol of the Father in the middle, between that of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit, would express the Orthodox teaching about the procession of the Holy Spirit only from the Father, which would be an additional argument in favor of the Byzantine origin of the image. S. Bogevska<sup>114</sup>, on the contrary, is of the opinion that the source of inspiration for the three-headed trinitarian type should be sought in the West, especially since the oldest representations of this type belong to Western art. This type didn't make a career, unlike the other one. The Catholic Church condemned this iconographic type only in 1628, Pope Urban VIII pronouncing a solemn condemnation in this regard<sup>115</sup>, which did not stop its spread even after this date, which is why Pope Benedict XIV felt compelled to ban it again in 1745<sup>116</sup>. Although the oldest tricephalic representations of the Holy Trinity belong to the West, dating from the 12th century, there are researchers<sup>117</sup> who state that Byzantine art created its own tricephalic iconographic type, „radically different” from the Western one, the fundamental difference from it consisting in the representation of the Father as the Ancient of Days<sup>118</sup>.

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*fantastic*, pp. 29-30; Nicolae SABĂU, "Între Occident și Orient. «Sfânta Troiță într-un trup» și «vultus trifrons», în câteva exemple ale picturii religioase transilvănene", în: *Studia UBB Historia Artium*, LXII, 1, 2017, p. 22.

<sup>110</sup> E. PANOFKY, "Tabloul lui Tițian «Alegoria Prudenței»...", pp. 208-219.

<sup>111</sup> J. BALTRUSAITIS, *Evul mediu fantastic*, p. 29.

<sup>112</sup> A. HEIMANN, "Trinitas creator mundi", p. 48, pl. 6a.

<sup>113</sup> A. HEIMANN, "Trinitas creator mundi", p. 48.

<sup>114</sup> S. BOGEVSKA, "The Holy Trinity in the Diocese of the Archbishopric of the Ohrid...", p. 156.

<sup>115</sup> R. GRIMALDI-HIERHOLTZ, *Images de la Trinité dans l'art*, p. 83; J. BALTRUSAITIS, *Evul mediu fantastic*, p. 31.

<sup>116</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, *Dio nell'arte. Sollicitudini nostrae di Benedetto XIV*, Marietti, Casale Monferro, 1986, pp. 15-51; N. SABĂU, "Între Occident și Orient...", p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, "The three-headed Angel...", p. 516; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, 136; Radoslav GRUJIĆ, "Ikonografski motiv sličan induskom Trimurtiu u staroj srpskoj likovnoj umetnosti", in: *Tkalčićev zbornik*, I, Zagreb, 1955; Sreten PETKOVIĆ, *Зидно сликарство на подручју Пећке патријаршије: 1557–1614*, Novi Sad, 1965; L. M. EVSEEVA, "Две символические композиции в росписи XIV в. монастыря Зарзма", in: *Византийский временник*, 43 (1982), pp. 134-146.

<sup>118</sup> M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, "The three-headed Angel...", p. 504; M. KUYUMDZHIEVA, *The Face of God...*, p. 125.

Beyond this common view, opinions differ as to the origin of this iconographic type and the cause that led to its appearance in Byzantium. Radoslav Grujić, who paid special attention to the presence of this iconographic type in the space of the former Yugoslavia during the 14th-18th centuries, stated that the appearance of the tricephalic type in the Orthodox East must be seen as a reaction against the Bogomil heresy, which denied the unity of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity<sup>119</sup>. This hypothesis was reconsidered by Sreten Petković. Considering that during the 17th-18th centuries, when this type of image became very widespread in the Orthodox space, Bogomilism no longer represented a problem for the Church, he advanced the hypothesis that the appearance of the tricephalic type is due to the painters' desire to expose in images the dogma of the Holy Trinity as understood by ignorant Christians<sup>120</sup>.

As for the source of inspiration for the tricephalic iconographic type in Byzantium, Grujić believes that this would be the iconographic theme of *Abraham's Hospitality*<sup>121</sup>, a hypothesis also embraced by other researchers. His statement, however, links the Byzantine tricephalic type, at least in terms of the source of inspiration, to that of the Bible made in England in the 13th century, preserved at St. John's College, Ms. K 26, which reproduces this very biblical episode. Although those who support the Byzantine origin and the independent evolution in the East of the tricephalic iconographic type from that of the West present some arguments in favour of this view, it is difficult to believe that the same iconographic type, having the same source of inspiration, appeared independently in East a short distance after West. The Western origin and influence of this tricephalic iconographic type for the Eastern one remains plausible, even if for now it cannot be demonstrated with certainty.

#### **4.2. The heretical theological content of these representations of the Holy Trinity**

The non-canonical representations of the Holy Trinity, although they spread throughout the Orthodox area starting from the 11th-12th centuries, were not analyzed from a doctrinal point of view by the Orthodox Church until the 16th century. The issue of the canonicity of these representations was addressed first by the *Stoglav* synod, from 1547, and then by the Moscow synod (1553-1554), being taken up again by the *Great Moscow synod*, from 1666. Even so, they have not all heretical iconographic types were analyzed, but only *Paternity*, and the synod did not proceed with the judgment to the end, contenting itself with stating that in this representation an impermissible mixture of the intratrinitarian or theological plan was made with the oikonomic one<sup>122</sup>, or, in other words, that what was wanted was the reproduction of the intra-trinitarian relations, the birth of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father from eternity, by appealing to the oikonomic plan, the Son being represented, according to the oikonomic plan, as the baby Emmanuel, and the Holy Spirit as a dove, while the Father appears with an anthropomorphic face by misinterpreting the prophetic visions.

This so-called icon of the Holy Trinity expresses no less than three Trinitarian heresies. The introduction of the temporal category into the theological plan of intra-trinitarian relations by representing the Father as an old man and the Son as a baby induces the idea that there was a time when God the Father did not have His Son, so He was not the

<sup>119</sup> R. GRUJIĆ, "Ikonografski motiv sličan...", pp. 106-107.

<sup>120</sup> S. PETKOVIĆ, *Зидно сликарство...*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>121</sup> R. GRUJIĆ, "Ikonografski motiv sličan...", p. 103.

<sup>122</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, pp. 373-376.

Father<sup>123</sup>, and this is not other than Arius' heresy, Arianism, condemned at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325. Secondly, the fact that the image of the dove, in which the Holy Spirit is represented, which is only one of His modes of oikonomic manifestation, cannot capture „the fullness of His Hypostatic dignity” and „cannot convey a glory equal to that of the representation To the Father and the Son”, as the monk Gregory Krug<sup>124</sup> rightly observes, induces the idea of the pneumatomachian heresy, fought by the Second Ecumenical Synod in Constantinople, from the year 381.

Also, the way in which the Three Persons are represented, the Holy Spirit in the bosom of the Son and the Son in that of the Father, suggests the Catholic doctrine Filioque, meaning the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son. In some variants of the *Paternity* icon, the Holy Spirit is represented between the Father and the Son, some researchers seeing in this composition an attempt to counteract the Catholic propaganda about the procession of the Holy Spirit and from the Son<sup>125</sup>. Finally, this type of images introduces anthropomorphism into the bosom of the Holy Trinity<sup>126</sup>.

For the Catholic theologian Egon Sendler, the representation of the Holy Trinity in the form of *Paternity* does not raise any doctrinal problem, on the contrary, he believes that „it shows a later evolution, which departs from the biblical tradition to represent the divine persons and the way in which they originate from one another: purely theological conception”<sup>127</sup>. Interpreting this representation of the Holy Trinity in a theological sense, Sendler sins precisely by the fact that he resorts to the mixture of the two planes, theological and oikonomic. In order to argue the theological meaning of this type of representation of the Holy Trinity, Sendler cited the irmos of the second canon of the fourth canticle from the Matins of Pentecost, in which reference is made to the oikonomic sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son<sup>128</sup>, which he invoked as a proof of the procession of the Holy Spirit and through the Son<sup>129</sup>, thus following the same confusion or mixing of plans.

Since *Paternity* differs from *Syntronoï* only from the point of view of composition, of the arrangement of the Three Persons in the composition, not of the manner of their representation, the latter type expresses the same heresies too. Theologians, and not only the Orthodox ones, but also the Catholic ones, have particularly shown that these two types of representation of the Holy Trinity visualize the Catholic doctrine Filioque<sup>130</sup>, Constantine Cavarinos even considering them as means of spreading this doctrine<sup>131</sup>.

F. Boespflug observes, in this sense, that in these two types of representation of the Holy Trinity, „according to all appearances this arrangement was dictated to the artists by the concern to visually satisfy the exigencies of the Filioque doctrine”<sup>132</sup> (fig. 24) and that

<sup>123</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 374.

<sup>124</sup> G. KRUG, *Cugetările unui iconograf...*, p. 79.

<sup>125</sup> L. S. RETKOVSKAIA, „Despre apariția și dezvoltarea compoziției «Paternitatea» în arta rusă”, în *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo XV-XVI vecov*, Moscova, 1963 la L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 401, nota 79.

<sup>126</sup> L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 374.

<sup>127</sup> E. SENDLER, *Icoana, chipul nevăzutului...*, p. 77.

<sup>128</sup> „Monarch of monarchs, Alone from the Alone, / Word issuing from the Father who has no cause, / As Benefactor you have unerringly sent out / To the Apostles your Spirit, equal in strength, / As they sing ‘Glory to your might, O Lord!’”, *Penticostar*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1999, p. 321.

<sup>129</sup> E. SENDLER, *Icoana, chipul nevăzutului...*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>130</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, pp. 207, 230.

<sup>131</sup> C. CAVARNOS, *Ghid de iconografie bizantină*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>132</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 207.

„plastic expression is more direct and striking than all verbal rhetoric: in this sense, the image is at once silent and reveals more than a speech”<sup>133</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The causes of the appearance of „these meaningless images” of the Holy Trinity were, therefore, the loss of the ontological link between word and image, on the one hand, and, on the other, the departure from the patristic tradition, which led to the loss of the theological criterion with regarding what is and what is not representable in art, i.e. the perception of the face, as well as regarding how the sacred should be represented<sup>134</sup>.

This mutation, which represents a fall from the right faith, occurred as a result of doctrinal innovations in the theology of the Catholic Church - Filioque, the theory of satisfaction, and liturgical ones, on the one hand, and, on the other, freedom of expression on the which the painters in the West assumed, a freedom that went as far as taking over some pagan images and adapting them, totally wrong, of course, to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. These deviations from the right faith, which Western sacred art has transposed into images, become vehicles for transmitting the wrong, heretical teachings that it visualizes, have also penetrated the space of Eastern Orthodoxy either as a result of some influences of Catholic theology, or of Western sacred art, and although the Orthodox Church officially rejected them, the effects of these influences can be seen to this day, some gaining the status of the norm in Eastern sacred art.

The normative status in Eastern sacred art obtained by some representations of the Holy Trinity, such as the *Syntronoï*, by itself or in compositions, *Paternity* and the *Throne of grace*, or of God the Father in the image of the Ancient of Days, consecrated even by the herminia of Byzantine painting, do not constitute by no means an argument in favour of their perpetuation, but we must return to the canonical norm and to the old tradition of the Church, according to which the only representation of the Holy Trinity in accordance with the revealed truth and the teaching of the Orthodox faith is the *Philoxeny of Abraham*.

The return to the canonical norm and its observance is imperatively necessary because, as a Catholic theologian very well summarizes the consequences of the deviation from this norm, „the visible representation of a fact, which by being is invisible, is for the theology of the icon not only madness, but also heresy and blasphemy: because this means an arbitrary completion of the Revelation and the divine oikonomia, and in this case, in moreover, it is also a heresy that supports the incarnation of the Father and the Holy Spirit”<sup>135</sup>.

<sup>133</sup> F. BOESPFLUG, Y. ZAŁUSKA, „Le dogme trinitaire et l’essor de son iconographie en Occident...”, p. 220.

<sup>134</sup> L.USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, pp. 406-407.

<sup>135</sup> H. J. SCHULZ, „Die Hollenfahrt als Anastasis”, în: *Zeitschrift fur katolische Theologie*, 81, vol. I, 1959, p. 12 la L.USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 391.



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## Annexes

Fig. 1. Trinity sarcophagus, Arles, IVth century



Fig. 2. Dogmatic sarcophagus, Vatican, IVth century





Fig. 3. Via Latina catacomb, Rome, IVth century



Fig. 4. Santa Maria Maggiore church, Rome, Vth century



Fig. 5. Palatine chapel, Palermo, 1130.



Fig. 6. The Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily, XIIth century.

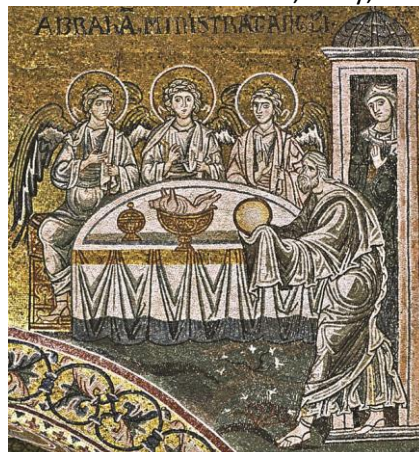




Fig. 7. Saint Mark`s Basilica, Venice, XIIIth century.



Fig. 8. Çarikli (Sandal) Church, Göreme, Capadocia, IXth century



Fig. 9. Holy Trinity, Andrei Rubliov, cca. 1425, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Fig. 10. Paternitas, School of Novgorod, XIVth century.



Fig. 11. Synthronoi, Heisterbach bible, 1240, Berlin state library.

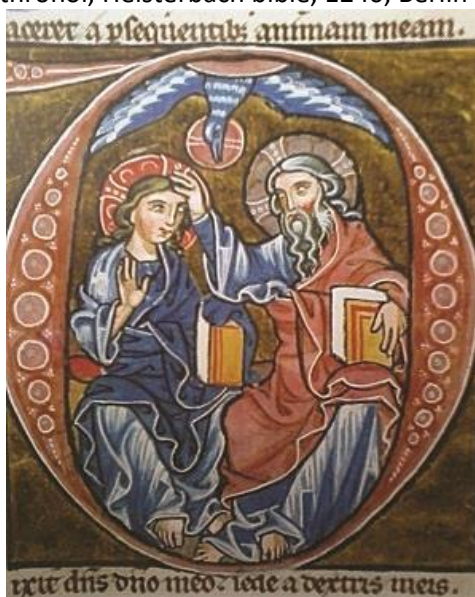


Fig. 12. Gnadenstuhl, The National Gallery, London.



Fig. 13. Tricefalous Trinity, Santa Maria Assunta cathedral, Abruzzes, 1430.





Fig. 14. Trifrons Trinity, Provins, France, XVth century.



Fig. 15. Utrechts Psalter, page 1351, IXth century

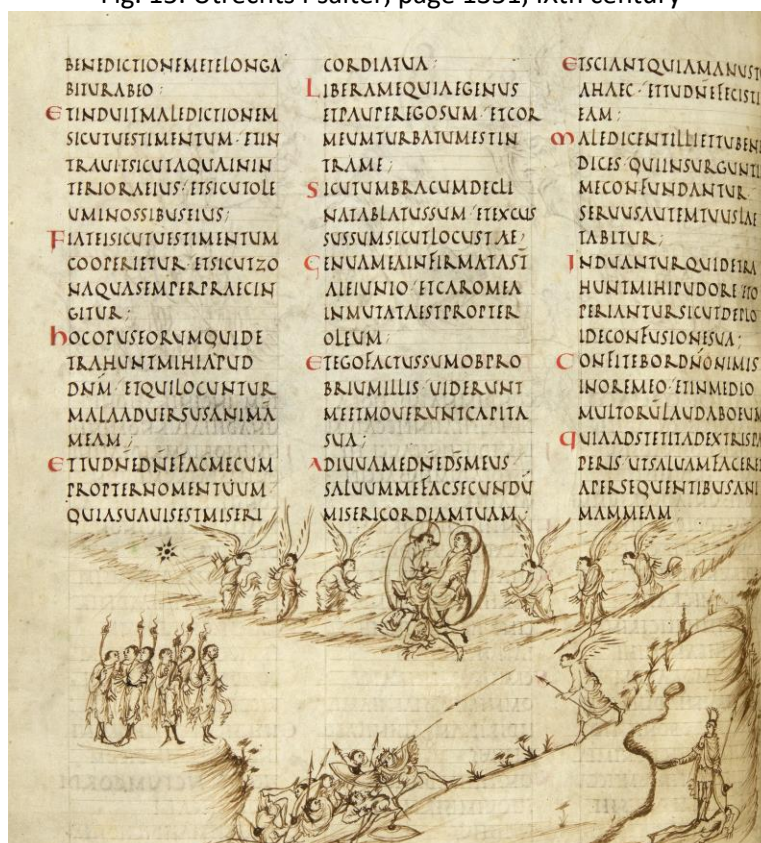


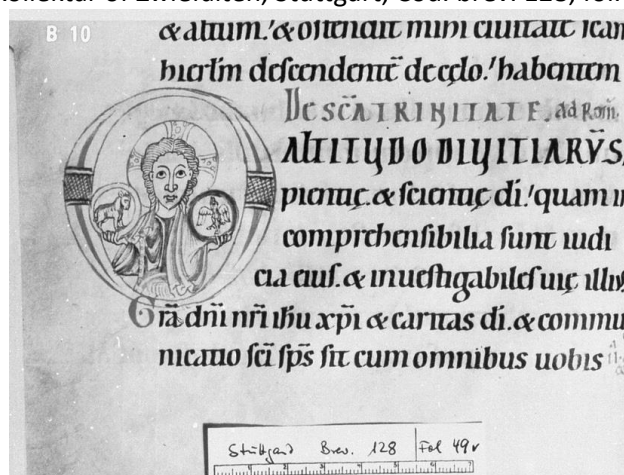
Fig. 16. Triandric Trinity, Hortus deliciarum, fol. 8r, 1167-1185.



Fig. 17. James Kokkinobaphos, Gabriel is sent from heaven, Vat. gr. 1162, Xth century, Pallasweb.com



Fig. 18. Kollektar of Zwiefalten, Stuttgart, Cod. brev. 128, fol. 49v, 1131



LA 2180/41 Stuttgart LB Cod. brev. 128  
 Kollektar, Zwiefalten nach 1131  
 fol. 49v Initiale O ( altitudo) zum Offi-  
 cium De Sancta Trinitate; in der Initiale  
 Halbfigur Christi, der in den Händen Me-  
 daillons mit Lamm Gottes und Geisttaube  
 hält  
 (Aufn. 1963)



Fig. 19. Dionysiou Lectionary Codex 587, fol. 3v, Athos, sec. XI.

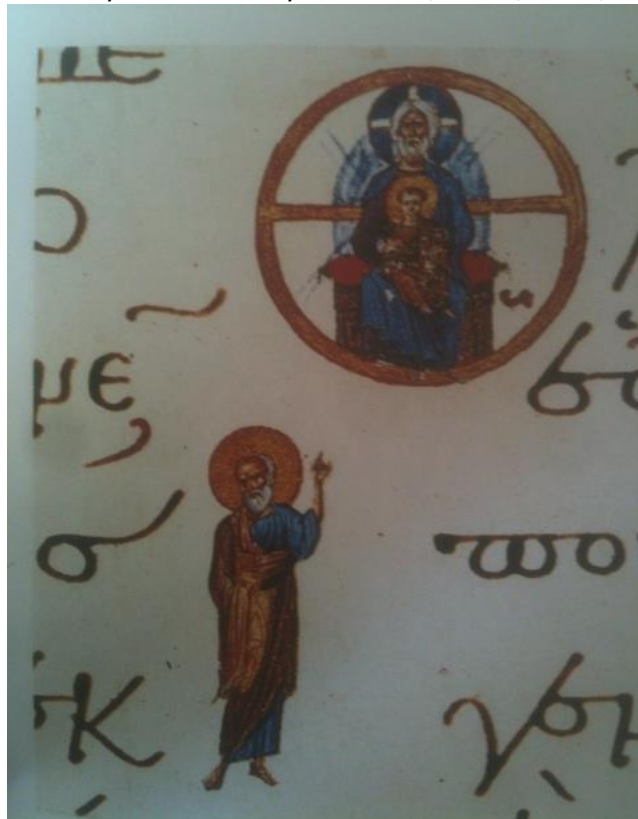


Fig. 20. Missel de Cambrai, France, 1120.



Fig. 21. Trifrons, Santa Maria d' Alcazar, sec. XII



Fig. 22. Abraham's hospitality, miniature, bible, Cambridge, st. John's College, ms. K 26, fol. 9v, 1270.





Fig. 23. Vultus trifrons or an allegory of prudence



Fig. 24. The Quadrilobe, Lothian Bible, 1220.

