JAKUB JÓZEF WOŹNIAK
PONTIFICIA FACOLTA TEOLOGICA TERESIANUM –
ISTITUTO TEOLOGICO LEONIANUM – ANAGNI, ROMA
JAKUB88W@GMAIL.COM
ORCID: 0000-0002-3994-619X

SZYMON GÓŹDŹ
UNIWERSYTET RZESZOWSKI
SZYMONGOZDZ@GMAIL.COM
ORCID: 0000-0002-2515-0262

THE IMAGE CODIFIED: DIONYSIUS OF FOURNA'S *HERMENEIA* AS A SOURCE OF INTERPRETATION OF THE CANON LAW DOGMATICS OF THE ICON

Abstract. The issues discussed in this article focus on a codification of the art of painting that builds upon the fundamental relationship between dogmatic interpretation and canon law rules and on the appropriate restoration of these principles in the field of iconography. A prime example of a painting code that determines the interpretation of the canon law dogmatics of the icon is the *Hermeneia* by Dionysius of Fourna, which structures the creation, perception and understanding of the image both as a form of visual representation and as a carrier of "spiritual content" – theological revelation and manifestation, a continuum of incarnation. Dionysius's codification relates to a liturgical synthesis of the arts, revealing the structure of and rationale behind the iconic reality. Furthermore, it validates the meaning of the concepts of light and image and original and copy in the Byzantine theological interpretation.

Keywords: icon, codification, canon, dogmatics, restoration, dispute.

Streszczenie. Obraz skodyfikowany. Malarska *Hermeneia* Dionizjusza z Furny jako wykładnia kanoniczno-prawnej dogmatyki ikony. Zakres problematyki podejmowanej w niniejszym artykule koncentruje się na zagadnieniu kodyfikacji malarskiej opartej na fundamentalnej relacji między wykładnią dogmatyczną, sferą reguł kanonicznych oraz właściwej im restytucji na polu ikonografii. Znamienitym przykładem kodeksu malarskiego, stanowiącego wykładnię kanoniczno-prawnej dogmatyki ikony, jest *Hermeneia* Dionizjusza z Furny. Porządkująca tworzenie, widzenie i rozumienie obrazu zarówno jako formy przedstawienia wizualnego, jak i jego „duchowej zawartości" – teologicznego objawienia i uobecnieniem, kontinuum wcielenia. Kodyfikacja Dionizjusza odnosi się przeto do liturgicznej syntezy sztuk; ukazując jak skonstruowana, ale też uzasadniona jest ikonowa rzeczywistość. Waloryzuje sens pojęć światła i obrazu oraz oryginału i kopii w bizantyńskiej wykładni teologicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: ikona, kodyfikacja, kanon, dogmatyka, restytucja, spór.

From the perspective of the tradition of the icon, a strict and, above all, binding code that structures the creation, perception and understanding of iconographic representation appears to be indispensable. A sacred image cannot be treated as a form of visual representation alone. On the contrary, its codification in terms of the art of painting can only come from a theological source that contains the Christian "pool of imagination" and, at the same time, imposes a certain discipline.

The close relationship between a sacred image and the interpretation of canon law that governs and complements it is one of the most fundamental and "natural" interdependencies specific to the community of Christian churches of Eastern origin. Within that order, the icon needs to be interpreted both as the central element of worship and as a unique "meta-keystone" that constructs, binds together and justifies the *continuum* of the wholeness and continuity of a liturgical synthesis of the arts. It establishes the foundation of the Eastern Christian "artistic model" that grew from the Hellenistic culture and is generally characteristic of the entire Byzantine and Orthodox (post-Byzantine) civilization, including the large community of autocephalic Orthodox churches. As a result, the historical, local and original variations of the artistic (iconic) message – despite their dynamic character and sometimes broad diversity across self-developed styles, modes and manners – remained fully compliant with the tenets of canon law and reproduced the immutable sources: the doc-

trine and liturgy of the Eastern Church. In an order oriented along the above lines, the artistic model needed to mimic to a significant extent the syncretically structured formula of the theological concept of being, that is the Neoplatonic–Christian metaphysics of sacred images integrally joined with the precisely defined liturgical and architectural structure.[1]

As Aidan Hart rightly notes, the theological truths that underpin the art of the icon are timeless, but the manner in which they are expressed depends on the period as well as on the icon painter and the culture in which he lives. According to the author, while innovation in terms of means of expression has never been an end in itself in the tradition of the icon, the variety of painting styles is a natural and positive outcome of the fact that every person is unique. Furthermore, as he observes, the existence of a community of iconographers creating in the same period and culture lends itself to the gradual and natural emergence of a school of painting that aims to express all that is good and true in a given culture and to offer it to God. In the end, the faithful can therefore say after the pilgrims "from every nation under heaven" who visited Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: "We have heard them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God!"[2]

THE *PARAGENESIS* OF THE CODIFICATION OF SACRED IMAGES

In the spirit of the council-oriented Eastern Christianity (interpreted as a community of individual local Churches), the unity of faith and worship was expressed through locally and historically diverse formulas referring to and originating from the different autocephalous Churches. Nevertheless, from the dawn of its history, the Church not only fulfilled its duties as the exponent and administrator of "God's law," but also – on the

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[1] See Małgorzata Smorąg-Różycka, "Wstęp," in Dionizjusz z Furny, *Hermeneia czyli objaśnienie sztuki malarskiej*, trans. Ireneusz Kania, ed. Małgorzata Smorąg-Różycka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011), 5–6. All further references and quotations are from the English translation of the text by Paul Hetherington: Dionysius of Fourna, *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fourna*, trans. Paul Hetherington (London: Sagittarius Press, 1974).

[2] See Aidan Hart, *Techniques of Icon and Wall Painting* (Leominster: Gracewing 2011).

basis of that law – conducted the universally unifying legislation of canons and dogmas as part of its worldly and "earthly" activity.[3]

The structural and legal foundation of the "visible shape" of the Church was embodied in the interconnection and functional interdependence of two areas, whereby the static and primary sphere of the dogmas (conveying the immutable theological truths given in the Revelation) found its expression in the relatively dynamic, modal canonical order that constituted, in a way, an interpretation and adaptation of the dogmatic axioms as well as an outlet through which they were channeled into the practical functional scope of the living (and variable in its "local historical forms") *praxis* of the Church.[4]

It is therefore not surprising that within an order so established, the icon was treated as a revelation and manifestation of the Incarnation. At the same time, however, this approach restricted its role and limited the available forms of painters' expression. On the one hand, it was a conglomerate of the unity of technique and manner of expression, and on the

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[3] According to Paul Evdokimov, "from her divine institution, the Church as the guardian of God's law derives the right to establish canons […], to judge and, if necessary, to apply sanctions […], Since the very beginning, the Church has been fully aware of her responsibility for her historical order, that is, the Incarnation. The Council of Jerusalem sets out rules for Christians of Jewish origin (Acts 15:22). In his letters, Saint Paul deals with the conduct of meetings, the virtues that bishops should have, and the use of charisms. In the first three centuries, the Church uses the customary law found in the *Didache* (late 1st or early 2nd century), in the *Didascalia of the Apostles* (c. 250) and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (c. 380). In the fourth century, the Church enters a period of regular councils. Many *Collections* provide us with a list of canons (an example being John Scholasticus's *Collection* of 550). The 'symphony' of the powers of the Church and the state explains the presence of ecclesiastical law in the *Collections* of imperial laws from the time of Theodosius or Justinian. Later, these are followed by the works of the canonists Balsamon, Zonaras and others." Paul Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959), 185.

[4] "Without ever aspiring to achieve the exhaustive fullness of its disciplinary forms, canon law implements the charismatic order in the most correct way possible under any given historical circumstances so as to prevent it from any disfiguration that could affect the immutable *esse* of the Church […]. Dogmatic unity guarantees the identity of the source of inspiration through the diversity of empirical forms. The canons coordinate the metahistorical *esse* of the Church and her historical body. They participate in dogmatic truths and, from this elevated position, show how they ought to be applied in order to protect the Church against heretical distortions: disagreement with the dogmas." Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, 186–187.

other, it manifested the dual nature of the icon: truthfulness and sacredness (which is about expressing the characteristics found in the Prototype). In this context, the dual nature is understood in an exclusively hypostatic manner rather than in a natural–substantial manner.[5]

The above paradigm is the central pillar of the dogmatic foundation of the icon: in the sacred and through the sacred, it legitimizes the emanation of the "Divine art" that complements the ontic dimension of a painter's depiction of the transformed world.[6] The latter, although full of symbolic content, reduces all unnecessary elements, focusing on the strictest and most complete "interaction" possible with the dogma.[7] "When he draws God's human face, the iconographer transposes the vision of the Church, for the Church contemplates the Mystery of God in his human face. This art is synergetic in that the divine Spirit-Iconographer inspires man […]. The canonization of iconographers raises sacred art to the level of holiness. What is more, their vision, essentially charismatic and ecclesial at the same time, makes the icon a 'theological meeting place' and therefore one of the sources of theology. In the West, the dogmatician informs and guides the artist; in the East the vision of a real iconographer informs and guides the dogmatician."[8]

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[5] "In the pronounced Name, through and with the icon, which 'pronounces' it in a silent and visible way, our love carries us to venerate and embrace the grace of the real presence in the very likeness of the icon. Nonetheless, the likeness is so intimately tied to the icon itself that this likeness constitutes its secret essence. It is impossible to distinguish the likeness and the icon, and even less to separate them. Veneration unites them in an iconic whole, but this 'whole' elevates the spirit to its beyond, to the invisibly present Archetype […]. To worship an icon, to adore it as though it were of the same nature as the person it represents would be to destroy it, for that would be to enclose a presence in the wooden board. It would be to make an idol and make the person represented absent." Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, trans. Steven Bigham (Pasadena: Oakwood Publications, 1989), 200–201.

[6] See Léonide Ouspensky, *Theology of The Icon*, vol. 1 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 151–194; see also Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Images: Expressions of Faith and Power," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 143–153.

[7] See Alexis Torrance, "Persons or Principles? The Meaning of the Byzantine Icon Revisited," in *Image as Theology: The Power of Art in Shaping Christian Thought, Devotion, and Imagination*, ed. Casey A. Strine, Mark Mclnroy, and Alexis Torrance (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 109–118.

[8] Evdokimov, *Art of the Icon*, 211. The theological and dogmatic interpretation of the icon has been the subject of many theoretical studies, including the follow-

It should be noted that the interpretation outlined above is a far-reaching consequence of the final verdict in the dispute concerning the role of paintings (and, more broadly, of sacred art) in catechesis and worship.[9] In the Eastern Christian Tradition, the official "debate" on the sacred image (or, more specifically, on the possibility of giving worship through it) was a recurring theme. Its most vivid manifestation came in the eighth and ninth centuries with the "first" and "second" iconoclasm and with the Second Council of Nicaea that came between them, concluding with the establishment of Orthodoxy.[10] In the iconoclastic view, the image was considered a kind of theological aporia, and the breaking of that image made it impossible for the official iconography of the Church to mediate in the *continuum* of the Greco–Roman traditions dating back to Antiquity. With regard to the above doubts, it can also be argued that "the validity or invalidity of the cult image is at the center of the strategy of continuity or break with Judaism, and the sensitivity to this dilemma differs depending on region and social stratum."[11]

The dispute that lasted for almost twelve decades was finally resolved with a legally binding verdict in favor of the icon. This conclusion was legally sanctioned by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which – on the basis of the texts of the Holy Scripture, the heritage of the Church Fathers and the defense of the sacred image contained in the writings of

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ing: Ryszard Knapiński and Aneta Kramiszewska, eds., *Credo in Deum w teologii i sztuce Kościołów chrześcijańskich* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2009); Stanisław Kobielus, *Dzieło sztuki. Dzieło wiary. Przez widzialne do niewidzialnego* (Ząbki: Apostolicum, 2002); Kazimierz Kupiec, "Ikona epifanią świata duchowego," *Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne* 14 (1995/1996); Tadeusz Dionizy Łukaszuk, *Obraz święty – Ikona w życiu, w wierze i w teologii Kościoła. Zarys teologii świętego obrazu* (Częstochowa: Paulinianum, 1993); John Meyendorff, *Teologia bizantyjska. Historia i doktryna*, trans. Jerzy Prokopiuk (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2007); Andrzej A. Napiórkowski, ed., *Chrystus Wybawiający. Teologia świętych obrazów* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2003); Anna Różycka-Bryzek, "Malarstwo bizantyńskie jako wykładnia prawd wiary. Recepcja na Rusi – drogi przenikania do Polski," *Summarium* 42–43 (1997).

[9] For more on this subject, see Lucyna Potyrała, *Ikona. Katechetyczna funkcja ikony* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1998).

[10] See Gilbert Dagron, "Ikonoklazm i ustanowienie ortodoksji (726–847)," in *Historia chrześcijaństwa: religia, kultura, polityka*, vol. 4, *Biskupi, mnisi i cesarze: 610–1054*, ed. Gilbert Dagron, Pierre Riché and André Vauchez, Polish edition ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski (Warsaw: Krupski i S-ka, 1999), 86–87.

[11] Dagron, "Ikonoklazm," 86.

John of Damascus, the patriarch Nikephoros and Theodore the Studite (as well as other advocates of the icon) – condemned iconoclasm as a heresy deriving from Judaic sources, Muslim and Manichean interpretations and Nestorian and Monophysite views (in the Christological sphere).[12]

With the restoration of the veneration of sacred images, the canon law status and devotional status of the icon were defined in more detail. Addressing one of the arguments made by John of Damascus, the Council made a distinction between *latreía* (adoration, praise of God as the Prototype) and *proskýnesis* (respect expressed in gestures that include touching, kissing, bowing, or burning candles and incense) with respect to images of the Divine Persons and saints.[13] The pre-iconoclastic teaching on the Incarnation was also reaffirmed, resulting in a Christological and iconographic interpretation of a painting as a mediation of the visible in the invisible, thus establishing an anagogical path between the representation and the Prototype in the icon.[14] Importantly, "the Council recognized that the Holy Scripture and the religious image 'reveal and explain' each other. They uncover one and the same truth expressed in two different forms: verbal and pictorial. Therefore, from now on, in the eyes of the Church, the image is not a form of art or an illustration of the Holy Scripture but a language through which instruction in faith is given."[15]

Some researchers, however, remain deeply skeptical about the iconographic consequences of the triumph of Orthodoxy.[16] On the one hand, the image as an element of the Eastern Christian Tradition not only avoided annihilation, but – all things considered – emerged as the victor. On the other hand, its post-iconoclastic restitution resulted in a reevaluation and redefinition that gave it a new – ambiguous yet limited – status.[17]

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[12] See Szczepan Włodarski, *Siedem soborów ekumenicznych* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Odrodzenie, 1969), 202.

[13] See Sergiusz Bułgakow, *Ikona i kult ikony. Zarys dogmatyczny*, trans. Henryk Paprocki (Bydgoszcz: Homini, 2002), 7.

[14] See Marek Starowieyski, *Sobory Kościoła Niepodzielonego. Część I – Dzieje* (Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej BIBLOS, 1994), 124.

[15] Dariusz Chełstowski, "Problem recepcji na Zachodzie nauki o obrazach Soboru Nicejskiego II," *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 60, no. 2 (2017): 390.

[16] See Hans Belting, *Obraz i kult. Historia obrazu przed epoką sztuki*, trans. Tadeusz Zatorski (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2010), 189–221.

[17] According to G. Dagron, "the new theology of image immediately annihilates all prior iconography, with its spontaneity, its groping in the dark and its inconsistencies

However, the above doubt cannot be sustained, even partially. The ontological archetype of the icon – the perspective of the supernatural relationship between the transcendent Prototype and its material reflection (*eikon* – image) and the contemplation of the Prototype – is founded in dogmatics. The resulting canon law order, in turn, further clarifies its formal resource pool and the content that it transposes. The iconographic canon is, therefore, an area that regulates and, at the same time, unifies the entire painting "medium" of the Revelation; it is an area which determines – in terms of both iconography and technology – the role of the icon painter (iconographer) and of the painting techniques, which are defined in terms of a set of rules rather than immutable laws.[18]

DIONYSIUS OF FOURNA'S "EXPLANATORY" CODIFICATION

As mentioned earlier, the rules in question were constituted dynamically and in direct connection with the doctrinal and liturgical tenets of the time, resulting in the emergence of an ever greater number of compositional formulas and variants. Hence, in the vast majority of cases, the execution of subtle nuances was left to the iconographer's ingenuity and "secondary" motives: "The requirement to faithfully reproduce the oldest and therefore most credible pattern only applied to icons which were given the highest level of veneration, and above all to acheiropoietic icons, that is those not created by the human hand […]. In painting practice, however, this conceptual requirement came down to reproducing the arrangement of the figures and their physiognomic types as accurately as possible, since the painting techniques and means of artistic expression would always

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without consequence. It will take many decades for new paintings to be created in accordance with the definition ascribed to them." Dagron, "Ikonoklazm," 141.

[18] "The distinct conservatism of the tradition is explained by an ecclesial perception of the same subject, hence the great stability of forms that characterizes the field of symbols in general […]. The apparent rigidity is inevitably a conventional expression of the transcendent element, providing protection against the expressionist subjectivism of the Romantics; the dictates of the rhythm contribute to the clarity of the expression and its full force; the lyricism of affection, after going through successive purifications, takes the form of noble austerity." Dagron, "Ikonoklazm," 183.

correspond to the style of a given period and environment."[19] With regard to the latter two aspects, one could venture to say that the canon law order encompassed not only the iconographer's spiritual preparation, including his endowment with a pool of iconographic patterns (spanning the entire Christian universe), but also the material and technological medium in terms of the perfection and permanence dedicated to and reserved for "God's art."[20]

An inherent part of the above order was the *Hermeneia of the Art of Painting*,[21] a manual of icon painting unique to the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine civilizations, compiled by a hieromonk living and working on the Holy Mount Athos: Dionysius of Fourna. Within a structure that comprised three prologues and six sections, the *Hermeneia* combined elements of a technological recipe book with iconographic representation formulas ordered according to strictly defined and systematized criteria.[22]

Dionysius created a synthesis of specialist knowledge and terminology based on many years of icon painting practice and supported by his personal spiritual experience.[23] In his work, he presented the general principles pertaining to the icon and explained its supernatural character. Dionysius's technological and iconographic guidance is axiomatic in character; the technological recommendations are explained in detail, whereas the descriptions of iconographic scenes and representations afford the icon painter a degree of freedom in choosing the desired image formula.[24] The author does not attempt to provide an in-depth, theologically determined analysis of the content of the depictions that he describes.[25]

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[19] Anna Różycka-Bryzek, "Przeciw stereotypom myślenia o sztuce bizantyńskiej," *Znak* 466, no. 3 (1994): 55.

[20] Różycka-Bryzek, "Przeciw stereotypom," 55.

[21] Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*.

[22] See Mateusz Jacek Ferens, *Dionysius of Fourna: Artistic Identity Through Visual Rhetoric* (Etna: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2015), 21–23.

[23] For a broader discussion of this subject, see George Kakavas, *Dionysios of Fourna (c. 1670–1745): Artistic Creation and Literary Description* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2008).

[24] Interestingly, despite what its title might directly suggest, Dionysius's *Hermeneia* did not originally contain any prototypes of illustrations, sketches, tracing sheets or drawing templates.

[25] In a concise chapter placed near the end of his book, entitled "[The tradition] from whence we derive [the practice of] painting images, and worshipping them," Diony-

Although the *Hermeneia* was not meant as an in-depth theological treatise, it can (and even should) be considered a vehicle for the transmission of the Eastern Christian history and cultural tradition with a firmly established origin. As a "product" of the late period of post-Byzantine art, it draws from the painting tradition of the Panselinos school (which was kept alive on Mount Athos). More broadly, it makes references to the neo-Palaeologue style of the Cretan Masters and, going back to the initial "classical" phase (13th century), to the Great Masters of the Palaeologue period.[26]

The hermetic language and arrangement of the descriptions, combined with Dionysius's sense of spiritual belonging and responsibility, mark the "axis of symmetry" of the *Hermeneia*. In this sense, the book should be treated as a strict code that structures the creation, perception and understanding (experience) of sacred images in a theological–cosmological–symbolic orientation towards the artistic model.

Structurally, Dionysius's code comprises six parts preceded by an invocation prayer through the intercession of the Mother of God ("To the mother of God and ever-virgin Mary") and an introduction directed to lovers and apprentices of the art of painting ("To all painters, and to others who love instruction and study this book, salutation in the name of the Lord" and "Preliminary training and instructions to he who wishes to learn the art of painting") in which the author explains the purpose and

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sius concluded: "The painting of holy images we take over not only from the holy fathers, but also from the holy apostles and even from the very person of Christ our only God […]. We therefore depict Christ on an icon as a man, since he came into the world and had dealings with men, becoming in the end a man like us, except in sin. Likewise, we also depict the Timeless Father as an old man, as Daniel saw him clearly. We represent the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove [*peristerá*], as it appeared at Jordan. We also represent the image of the Virgin and of all the saints, according them worship indirectly [*latreutikõs*], not to the image itself; that is to say we do not say that this really is Christ, or the Virgin, or whichever saint it is that is represented on the icon, but the honour that we pay to the icon we accord to the prototype [*protótypon*], that is to say to the person who is shown to us on the icon […]. We do not worship the colours and the skill, as those who are opposed to our Church clearly blaspheme, the faithless and the heretics, but we worship our lord […] for as Basil says, the honour paid to the icon passes on to the prototype […]. With justice we represent the other subjects and worship the holy images." Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 87.

[26] See Smorąg-Różycka, "Wstęp," 15–25.

legitimacy of his undertaking and, indirectly, of the codification of icon painting in general.[27]

When it comes to structure and meaning, however, two main areas of interest can be distinguished in the *Hermeneia*: technology[28] and iconography (the latter being of particular relevance to the issues discussed in this paper). Dionysius's iconographic codification comprises five parts: "How the wonders of the Old Law are represented,"[29] "How the principal feasts and the other works and miracles of Christ are represented, accord-

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[27] "Luke, the eloquent orator, most learned professor and teacher of every form of knowledge and science and most holy and stentorian herald and writer of the gospel message, showed clearly to all the divine love which he bore to your divinely adorned eminence, and did not bring, as first fruits, any of his abundant spiritual graces without first drawing and depicting on a panel in varied colours and golden mosaics with his painter's art your wonderful and graceful face, which he had himself seen. I wished to become his unworthy imitator, and started [to practise] the art of painting icons, thinking that the desire to fulfil my duty to your most high and laudable magnificence was the same as the ability [to do so] […] [Therefore] I presume to offer to thee the explanation and instructions of this art which I have gathered together and composed with the greatest care and skill of which I am capable […] providing for the painters […] sources of the most beautiful art with the right order and use of colours and ways of finding subjects; how and in what parts of the sacred churches they must be painted with scenes, in order to decorate and paint with scenes properly and fittingly the imagined heaven of the church, and above all your graceful appearance which is like unto the sun, continually transfigured in the mind's eye of the pious congregation that will continue to come until the end of time; by which means, turning away from earthly things of low estate, and reaching forward in relative measure to the prototype, they may take hope by calling to mind the pleasures of eternity." Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 1.

[28] The "technology" portion of the book contains detailed technical guidance that covers all the activities involved in the execution of a painting. This includes: lessons in outlining, and in particular in copying in general (as Dionysius considers imitating and copying the Masters to be the best way to become proficient in the art of painting) and in the use of specific copying techniques (several mechanical methods); advice on the preparation of tools (charcoals, brushes) and supports (including specific information on priming, plastering and embossing of halos as well as on the materials used for these purposes); an explanation of the gilding technique (as the primary technique that is applied before any other painting activities can be carried out, regardless of the support used); the reasoning behind the need to master the art of restoring old and damaged paintings; a meticulous description of the preparation of the different paints, grounds and painting tools; directions on constructing the proportions of the figure and individual parts of the human body, etc. See Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 5–16.

[29] Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 18–31.

ing to the holy Gospel,"[30] symbols ("How the parables are represented," "The holy liturgy," "The Revelation of [Saint] John the Divine" and "How the feast of the Mother of God are represented"),[31] hagiography[32] and miscellaneous notes.[33]

Among other things, Dionysius's handbook contains descriptions of iconographic scenes, patterns and representations that follow the order of the biblical narrative and rely on the teaching of the philosophers, including depictions of angelic choirs (according to the taxonomy of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite) and the fall of Lucifer.[34]

The author provides advice on how to depict various episodes from the Old Testament and characterizes the appearance of each of the figures involved. Importantly, his descriptions are short and concise. As he defines the figures in more detail, Dionysius rarely gives specific attributes (such as characteristics of garments, artifacts or other paraphernalia), although he does specify the age (using the categories of "young" versus "old"), hairstyle and facial hair.[35] This also applies to the descriptions of other representations: Prophets with scrolls (where Dionysius indicates a biblical source for each of them); the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the form of the Tree of Jesse; the events of the Gospel (beginning with the Annunciation); parables; and the heavenly liturgy celebrated by Christ the High Priest, including its establishment in the formula of the Communion of the Apostles and the epiphanic vision of the Second Coming, complemented by images from the Apocalypse of John.[36]

Dionysius devotes a considerable amount of attention to describing festive and hagiographic scenes and depictions, including Marian feasts (from Conception to Dormition, Burial and Assumption) and themes taken from the hymnography (Adoration and Glory of Mary). In addition, he makes an iconographic characterization of the saints divided into a number of groups: bishops, martyrs, poets, wise men, etc. The description begins with a presentation of the Apostles and Evangelists with their corre-

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30 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 32–113.
31 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 41–52.
32 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 52–81.
33 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 81–90.
34 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 18.
35 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 18–31.
36 Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 18–54.

sponding liturgical memorials. The author of the *Hermeneia* offers a rather detailed codification of illustrations used for feast days – for example the feasts of the Elevation of the Cross, the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Furthermore, Dionysius provides depictions of the miracles of individual saints (although, somewhat misleadingly, the description of this batch of paintings begins with the miracles of Archangel Michael) and the scenes of their martyrdom. In addition, there are "didactic and moralistic" representations with descriptions of the ideals of monastic life and the deprivation of worldly pleasures.[37]

An important element of the codification of icon painting developed by the monk of Fourna is the typological division of sacred buildings into domed, cross-domed and barrel-vaulted churches. This typology is accompanied by an explanation of the composition and placement of frescoes (scenes and themes of the iconographic program) in buildings with a specific architecture and in the different parts of the interior. The individual components of the iconographic program are connected to the symbolic and liturgical characteristics of the corresponding parts of the building's interior. The image of Christ Pantocrator, the Ruler of All, is (always) to be placed in the topmost part of the vault, surrounded by angelic hosts. The image of the Most Holy Virgin is to be found in the sanctuary, and the walls should be adorned with biblical scenes and ranks of saints.[38]

Next, Dionysius provides detailed guidelines for depicting the appearance of the faces and blessing hands of the Savior and the Virgin Mary, including their past representations. In his description, he abandons the majestic iconographic type of the *Theotokos* (solemn, with her hair covered) for the "modernized," fair-haired Madonna with a bright, vivid countenance.[39]

The final sections of the *Hermeneia* contain a list of (full and abbreviated) inscriptions that correspond to the different figures and representations.[40]

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[37] Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 52–83.
[38] Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 84–87.
[39] Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 87.
[40] Cfr. Dionysius of Fourna, *Painter's Manual*, 88–90.

A DOUBLE RESTORATION: DIONYSIUS OF FOURNA'S CODIFICATION AND THE TRADITION OF THE ICON

The debate on the true origin and nature of the *Hermeneia of the Art of Painting*, a book attributed to Dionysius of Fourna, dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century.[41] Some commentators argue that the author is indeed Dionysius, who reportedly compiled his painter's manual around 1730 at the monastery on Mount Athos, while others claim that the *Hermeneia* is a compilation of sixteenth-century manuscripts from that monastery and was created in 1701–1745.[42] In any case, however, there is no doubt that the book is the best known and, at the same time, the broadest and most universal codification of icon painting among the many *hermeneias* or *podlinniks* whose role and significance were determined by their very function as iconographic templates and painting manuals.[43]

In the case of Dionysius of Fourna's *Hermeneia*, however, reducing it to a purely utilitarian or preparatory role would be a major omission. Due to the fact that it appeared relatively late in relation to the most important disputes, debates and doctrinal verdicts of the Eastern Church, it has acted as a vehicle for the transmission of the history and tradition of the Christian East and, in some areas, of Christianity in general. From that perspective, the *Hermeneia* appears to usher in a double restoration: on the one hand, Dionysius's painting code restores the existing order by drawing from the centuries-old heritage of the past, and on the other, it leaves a certain legacy for the future – one that has been reintroduced in ever changing modalities until the present day.

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[41] The increased interest in the book, the implementation of its guidance into the contemporary cultural practice and the broad debate that it sparked can clearly be linked to the publication of the French translation of the *Hermeneia* in 1845 in Paris and the Russian translation in Kiev in 1868. See Konrad Onasch and Annemarie Schnieper, *Ikony. Fakty i legendy*, trans. Zofia Szanter (Warsaw: Arkady, 2013), 236.

[42] See Onasch and Schnieper, *Ikony*, 236.

[43] "The oldest preserved painting manuals from both the Byzantine and Russian cultural spheres date from the sixteenth century and were reproduced and supplemented by the different masters and workshops from Byzantine times until the nineteenth century. They offered iconographic patterns and diagrams showing the manner in which – according to tradition – one should paint figures of saints and scenes representing the most important events of the Old and New Testament." Onasch and Schnieper, *Ikony*, 236.

A study of Dionysius of Fourna's work reveals the author's humility, extraordinary awareness, skill and erudition in the field of painting. The *Hermeneia* in a way reconciles and draws from the long and turbulent history of the development of Byzantine painting, fully assimilating all the experiences of ancient "realism" and (in part) "impressionism," combining their freedom of expression and dynamism in the construction and composition of a painting – the entire manner in which the visible reality is captured and processed – with the cult of images rooted in the canonical interpretation of the dogmas. This follows from the fact that the orthodoxy of the Eastern Church manifests itself and crystallizes as a whole not in the sphere of doctrine but in the sphere of worship (whereby "orthodoxy" means "righteously," "correctly" displaying God's glory rather than following a flawless doctrine).[44]

We believe that our examination of the canon law dogmatics of the icon and its particular exemplification in the form of the codification of icon painting provided on the pages of Dionysius of Fourna's *Hermeneia* is a mere overview of this highly complex and fascinating subject – a subject that deserves further exploration in the future.

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[44] See Belting, *Obraz i kult*, 167–179.

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