

St Maximus the Greek: On *pietas* and the Vision of Pope Gregory the Great

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Abstract

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1.01 Original scientific article

This study examines the complex relationship between Eastern Orthodox and Western Roman Christian approaches to iconography through an unconventional textual source from the Renaissance period. The impetus for this study is a text by St. Maximus the Greek, a learned Athonite monk who, in the mid-16th century, reflected on the meaning of the iconographic term *pietas*. Through his personal exegesis, he facilitated a new reflection on the motif of *pietas*, which, in his interpretation – relating it to the liturgical vision of Pope Gregory the Great – appears as enigmatically defined and, in this instance, directly connected to the iconography of the Son of God. By distinctly diverging from conventionally established concepts in the fields of culture and art history, he has prompted a more profound examination of questions and foundational problems of Christian iconography. Using an interdisciplinary method based on philological, literary, and theological analysis, this research reconstructs the historical and political conditions that shaped different art-historical receptions. Through tracing the development of the “language of images,” the article clarifies the distinct Eastern and Western cultural-theological traditions that informed differing perceptions of Christian visual art.

Key words: St Maximus the Greek, Pope Gregory the Great, *pietas*, iconography, images of Jesus Christ, Mother of God (Theotokos), East-West, icons, Eastern councils

Izvleček

Sveti Maksim Grk: *Pietas* in videnje papeža Gregorja Velikega

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek

Razprava na podlagi neobičajnega besedilnega vira iz evropske renesanse osvetljuje večplastna razmerja med vzhodnim (pravoslavnim) in zahodnim (rimskim) pogledom na krščansko ikonografijo. Povod za raziskavo je besedilo Sv. Maksima Grka, atoškega meniha in učenega misleca, ki je v sredini 16. stoletja premišljeval o pomenu ikonografskega termina *pietas*. S svojo osebno eksegezo je omogočil nov razmislek o motivu *pietas*, ki se v njegovi interpretaciji – ob navezavi na liturgično vizijo papeža Gregorja Velikega – kaže kot enigmatično opredeljen in tokrat neposredno povezan z ikonografijo Božjega Sina. Z jasnim odstopanjem od uveljavljenih kulturnih in umetnostnozgodovinskih koncepcij je odprl globljo refleksijo temeljnih vprašanj krščanske ikonografije. Interdisciplinarna (filološko-literarno-teološka) rekonstrukcija izvirnega besedila ponuja vpogled v zgodovinske, kulturne in politične pogoje, ki so oblikovali ne le dve različni umetnostnozgodovinski tradiciji, temveč tudi več različnih smeri kulturnozgodovinske recepcije. Z vpogledom v zgodovinski razvoj »ikonografskega slovarja« (»jezik podob«) razprava obravnava različne vzhodne in zahodne kulturno-teološke tradicije, ki so vplivale na različna razumevanja krščanske upodobitvene umetnosti.

Ključne besede: Sv. Maksim Grk, papež Gregor Veliki, *pietas*, ikonografija, podobe Jezusa Kristusa, Mati Božja (Theotokos), Vzhod-Zahod, ikone, vzhodni koncili.

Introduction

In the Maximus' text about the meaning of *pietas* written during his period of imprisonment in a monastery cell (in Muscovite Russia) between 1525–1552, Maximus focused on the image of God the Son through the description of the Saviour's appearance during the liturgical service. The narrative is embraced by the vision of Pope Gregory the Great, who perceived it as a direct manifestation of Jesus Christ's Mercy. However, in explaining *pietas* in the relation to Jesus Christ, Maximus introduced the theologically based terms, associated specifically related to Eastern Orthodox Christianity: liturgy, icon-writing, the action of the Holy Spirit, spiritual tears, beauty and mystagogy. The present study therefore argues that Christian iconography can not be understood apart from its theological and liturgical foundations, especially the continuous interaction between Rome and Constantinople. Consequently, it encourages to precise a more nuanced comprehension of Christologically and the pneumatological content of shaping Christian iconography. Accordingly, Maximus's survey, encompassing both Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity, posits a fundamental paradigm for re-evaluating the extant historical records concerning sacred images. The reflection in the present essay leads to the exploration of the historical moment in which the indicated image was recognized, that aligned in the close timeline with the date of the first preserved icon of Jesus Christ, indeed, within or soon after the life of Pope Gregory I.

Maximus the Greek, born Mikhail Trivolis in the Greek town of Arta (c. 1469),¹ is perhaps to be considered of critical importance to the rational and philological criticism of the Russian sacred texts in the liturgical use of the time. The grounds for this assumption, however contested,² is his formative experience of collaboration with some of the most prominent characters of the early sixteenth century humanism – among them Janus Laskaris, Aldus Manutius, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola and the colleagues of the second wave of the Greek diaspora – during his stay in Italy (1492–1503?). While he was in Italy, among many of his experiences, he also heard of the legend of Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) and his supposed vision of Christ. He wrote a text about Pope's vision during his period in Russia.³

¹ The hypothesis that Michael Trivolis and Maksim Grek are the same person was first proposed in 1943 by the French scholar Élie Denissoff (Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec*). On Maximus the Greek's period in Russia, see Sinityna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii*. For a brief biographical survey, see Zajc, "Some Notes (Part 1)."

² For corroborating this assumption, see Ihor Ševčenko's contributions, within the necessary aspect of the firm Greek basis of Maximus's literary work: Ševčenko, "On the Greek Poetic;" Ševčenko, "The Four Worlds."

³ His work in Russia resulted from a letter of invitation with a request to send a translator and editor of the "sacred books" from Athos to Moscow in 1517. However, after the intense period (1518–1525) of his activity in Moscow, in 1525 and 1531, he was accused of "heretical mistakes" and consequently imprisoned until 1552. The severe conditions (in dark and solitude) were eased in 1536, and he was at least allowed to write. He died in 1555/1556. See more in Zajc, "Some Notes (Part 1);" Zajc, "St. Maximus the Greek;" Zajc, "St. Maximus the Greek – Between;" Zajc, "The Byzantine-Poetic Path;" Zajc, "St. Maximus the Greek (Mihail Trivolis);" Zajc, "The Biographical Phenomenon."

In his short thesis *About the Holy Icon of the Jesus Christ, called Despondency*,⁴ Maximus reflects on the iconological significance of the Latin term *pietas*,⁵ a concept whose precise etymological grounding remains elusive. Specifically, he addresses its iconographic misrepresentation among Russians. His text was motivated by the legend framed in the life of Pope Gregory the Great, which he somehow became acquainted with during his Italian years: when Gregory was holding a liturgical service,⁶ he had a great vision. Christ appeared before his eyes. Upon the beautiful apparition the pontiff's eyes began to shed tears of spiritual compassion. From that time onward, he commanded the painters to depict the exact image of Christ as he appeared in his vision.

However, the anecdote follows a precise philological introduction addressing specific Slavic terms, which came to denote the meaning of *pietas*. In doing so, Maximus diverged from the art-historical reception and tradition on the iconographic motif of *pietas*, primarily due to his explicit associating it with God the Son, which, indeed, hadn't been present in the Eastern iconography, and was mostly related to the Mother of God in the West.⁷

Maximus's text *About the Holy Icon of the Jesus Christ, called Despondency*

Prolegomena⁸

The Holy image of the venerable icon of the Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is referred to as pietas in Roman, which in Russian signifies "charity" (compassion) or "piety", but not despondency.

In the first paragraph of his text, Maximus presents his exegetical introduction to the increasingly close correlation between the term *pietas* and the depiction of Christ (fig. 1). Through this notion, he introduces into the discourse an intriguing connection between the sacred image and the icon as the ultimate representation of the Holy. He further emphasizes the significance of *pietas*

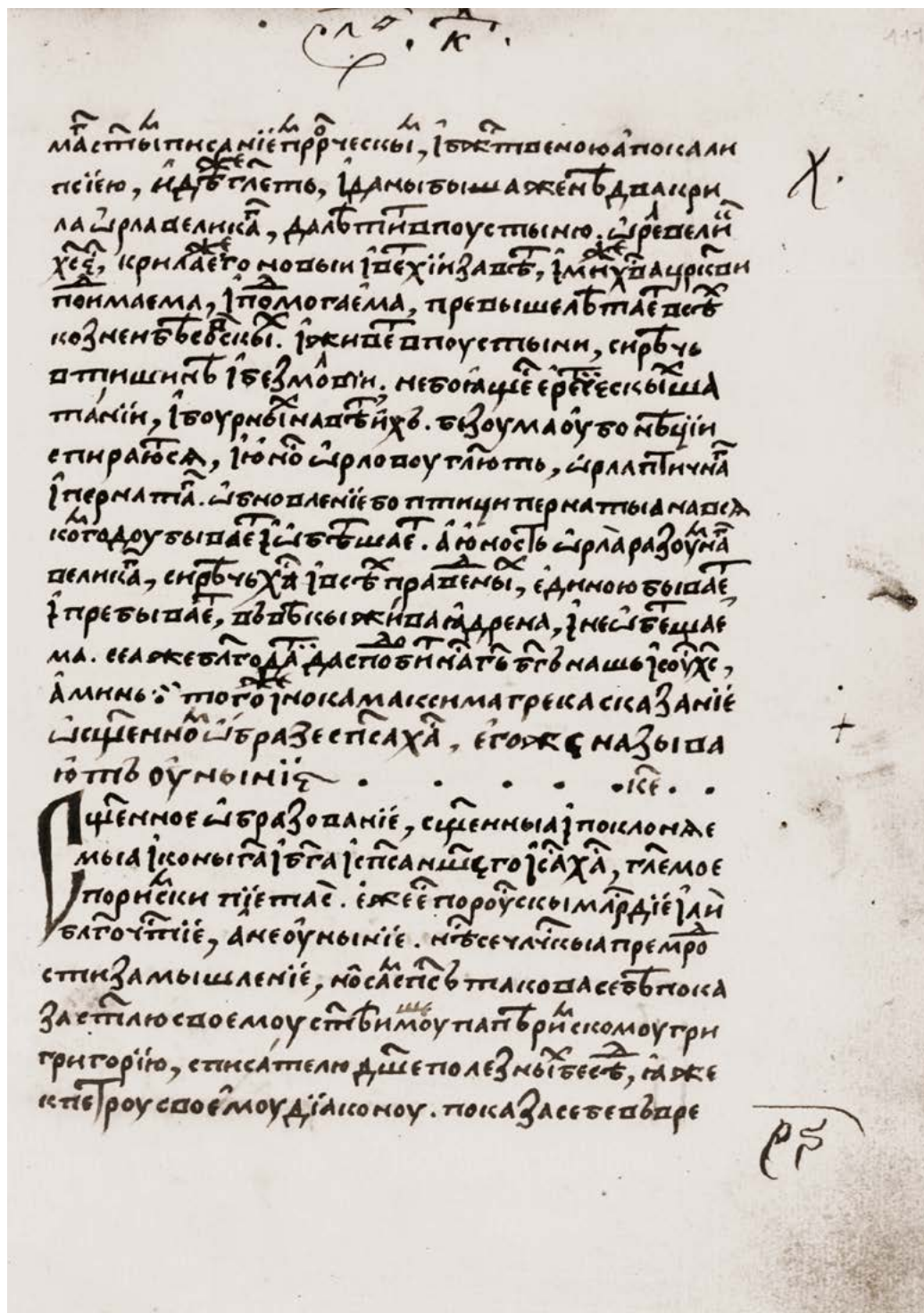
⁴ The text is not included in the two critical editions of St Maximus the Greek's texts in Russia, published in 2008 and 2014 (Grek, *Sočinenija*). However, it is included in all main manuscript collections of St Maximus the Greek in Russia. This research is also based on the manuscript from Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: Michel Trivolis, Opera), which contains the paths of Maximus's autographical protograph. In this context, I express my sincere gratitude to Nina V. Sinitsyna (1936–2018), who confirmed this thesis in a conversation with me (April 2013). Today Russian scholars are divided in their perspective on this issue. Undoubtedly, Ms. Slave 123 is reflected in the final collection of Khudov's manuscripts, which was improved by the hand of Maximus the Greek. See Zhurova, *Avtorskij tekst*, 1: 370–72; Zhurova, *Avtorskij tekst*, 2: 146–47; Čumičeva, "Massimo il Greco," 389–90, 393–94.

⁵ That is, *pietas* in terms of cardinal virtues, meaning duty, dutifulness, *erga deos* equalling piety. See below on the specific meaning of the term *pietas* as referred to in this article.

⁶ Gregory the Great was a deacon of Pope Benedict I (575–579). See Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 53.

⁷ In fact, the significant expression of the co-suffering and the mourning attitude, recognized within the known motif of *pietas*, was assimilated in the image of Mary. In the East, such a motif was differentiated in the form of *Deesis*, representing the Holy Theotokos with St John the Baptist, the later type (twelfth to fourteenth century) of the Byzantine iconostas. Chatzidakis, "A Byzantine Icon," 343; Weitzmann, *The Icons*, plate 26 (see also plate 47); Beckwith, *Early Christian*, plate 290.

⁸ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 111. All translations are by the author of this article.



1. First page of St Maximus the Greek's text on pietas, sixteenth century
 (© Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France: Ms. Slave 123, fol. 111)

in Old Church Slavonic⁹ by identifying two contextually and stylistically distinct meanings of the term. These are not perfect equivalents – neither exact analogues nor strict synonyms – but rather interpretative variants of the original concept.¹⁰ Adopting a philological approach that reflects his Italian training and professional practice as a translator, scribe, editor, and textual critic – particularly in the meticulous transition from manuscript to print – Maximus proposes two Slavonic terms embodying the ideas of mercy and devotion. These encompass meanings such as benevolence, forgiveness, tenderness of heart, and sincere piety. He grounds these interpretations in the Latin theological concept of *pietas*, closely associated with God’s merciful nature and expressed in human piety, charity, and boundless compassion. His treatise ultimately arose from his observation that this term, especially in relation to the icon of God the Son, was profoundly misunderstood among the Russian people.

There is a widely accepted consensus that Russian icons faithfully preserved the Orthodox iconographic tradition.¹¹ Yet Maximus nevertheless discerned a certain ambiguity in specific Russian icons, noting that he had not encountered analogous representations elsewhere in the Orthodox world and attributing their emergence to the acts of human imagination (*φαντασία*).¹² His critique¹³ thus targeted the rigorous and strict discipline required for the spiritually inspired use of inherited iconographic models warning against interpretative misleadings that might deviate from the clearly delimited conceptual framework of Orthodox theology. In contrast to this, Maximus simultaneously sought to strengthen the resolve of Russian monastic communities, urging them to persevere in the often arduous ascetic struggle intrinsic to the Orthodox faith. Within this specific text, he placed pronounced emphasis on the element of *reality*—that is, on the ontological presence of God the Son within the Holy Image itself, understood in terms of *ὑπόστασις* and *ἐνέργεια*. For Maximus, the icon is not merely a symbolic representation but a locus of divine presence that functions as an imperative for the meditative reception (*θεωρία*) of the Holy Image. This insistence on reality inadvertently but precisely touched upon the historical moment in which the iconographic depiction of Jesus Christ had only recently achieved definitive stabilization, shaped in part by the visionary narrative articulated by Pope Gregory the Great. Maximus’ intervention thus reveals an acute awareness of the fragile equilibrium between tradition and innovation at a time when Christological iconography was not yet autauthoritatively established.

⁹ On Maximus’s specific language, see Zajc, “Some Notes (Part 2).”

¹⁰ The relation of a possibility or a selection (alternative choice) is shown in the conjunction ‘or’ employed by Maximus.

¹¹ Cf. Gombrich, *The History of Art*, 109. There is confident scholarship on this topic: Lasareff, *Icônes russes*; Lazarev, *Russkaja ikonopis’*; Kondakov, *Russian Icon*; Grabar, *O drevnerusskom iskusstve*; Uspenskij, *Bogoslovie ikony Pravoslavnoj cerkvi*; Kriza, *Depicting Orthodoxy*.

¹² He particularly opposed iconographic motifs such as the crucified Seraph, the depiction of God the Father through the iconography of King David, and the representation of God the Son as a young bronze Christ seated by the Cross with a lance (Uspenskij, “Moskovskie sobory XVI veka,” 338–40). Maximus regarded these images as incompatible with Orthodox theology of the icon. Note that, although the manuscript of that text (eighteenth to nineteenth century) is not from his lifetime, the specific language characteristic for Maximus confirms its originality.

¹³ He noticed specific linguistic expressions in Russian liturgical manuscripts that appeared to align with Nestorianism, particularly with regard to the heretical interpretation of the nature of the Mother of God. Grek, *Sočinenija*, 2: 53–54.

The image of Jesus Christ

The Exegesis: Part I¹⁴

This is not the creation of the human's thought or imagination, but the Saviour Himself has shown Himself to His servant,¹⁵ to the saintly Pope of Rome, Gregory, the author of the spiritual writings to his deacon Peter¹⁶ that are beneficial for the soul.

Maximus's attention was centred on his conviction that the image of *pietas* was not an artistic depiction, made by a man, but a sublime product of a deep experience of the Holy presence.

His position emerges precisely at the juncture where the Christian visual representation of Christian God,¹⁷ had not yet effected a full rupture with the pagan artistic inheritance, and where the Eastern theological vocabulary of the Church was still being forged through the ecumenical Councils.¹⁸ After the definition of orthodoxy by Nicene Creed (325), that employed the non-scriptural term Gr. *homoousios* to signify the absolute equality of the Son with the Father ("begotten" and "consubstantial") and mark Orthodox Trinitarianism,¹⁹ Eastern theologians sought to anchor the dogma of the two natures of God the Son in the Bible.²⁰ The cornerstone of the nascent Orthodox iconography in the East coincided with the use of space for initials in Greek manuscripts (particularly of the Psalter).²¹ These initials, in the form of images, gained the status of miniatures, which were, in fact, the first prototype of "icons" (also with the first Eastern depictions of the Christ on the cross).²² The Council of Ephesus (431) established the iconographical basis of the Virgin Mary as the *Theotokos Parthenos* (Θεοτόκος παρθένας),²³ who was before this date depicted as the merely

¹⁴ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 111.

¹⁵ For Gregory, true holiness lay in humility; he called himself "the last of His servants and yours" and the "servant of the servants of God." Cf. Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 46, 101.

¹⁶ Maximus was obviously acquainted with Gregory's writings, see Gregory's letters to the deacon Peter in Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 62, 142, 147–48. On the deacon Peter vs. Peter the monk, see Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 116, 125; Gregory the Great, *The Fathers of the Church*, 64. About the authenticity of the Dialogues as an edited record of Gregory's conversations with the Deacon Peter (about the saints of Italy), it is proposed in the letter that Gregory wrote to Maximian, bishop of Syracuse, in July 593; McCulloh, "The cult of relics," 150–52.

¹⁷ The only anthropological (non-inanimate) early Christian depiction of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd, known from the ancient models (Roman catacombs, Ravenna Byzantine heritage), was constrained by its proximity to classical models of pagan worship (Beckwith, *Early Christian*, plates 3, 21). Instead, it took the course of depicting God the Son through impersonal and symbolic forms, such as a monogram or with a cross, which is the sign(ature) of Constantine the Great and a symbol of the victory over paganism (Grabar, *L'iconoclisme byzantin*, 36; Golubcov, *Iz čtenij po cerkovnoj*, 217–18; Gayet, *L'art byzantin*, 34; Farioli Campanati, "Ravenna, Costantinopoli,") or a fish (Gr. ἰχθύς) as the acronym of Christ's definition (i.e., Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ – Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour).

¹⁸ For example, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Justin Martyr, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, who were all reasonably familiar with Greek philosophy, especially the popular Neoplatonic movement against the Hellenists in the third century. See Baghos, "Aspects of the Byzantine Literary," 95–103; Mango, "New Religion, Old Culture," 99–101.

¹⁹ Louth, "The Introduction," n. 243.

²⁰ For example, Christ's apocalyptic vision (Rev 7:14) with the two angels could be seen in the Byzantine mosaics of the apse of San Vital in Ravenna; Gayet, *L'art byzantin*, 31.

²¹ Grabar, *L'iconoclisme byzantin*, 232, 237–38, 252–54.

²² Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 8–9, plate 1.

²³ Such expression was set on in 432 in the introduction that preceded the confession in the letter of John of Antioch and the Patriarch Cyrill which contained the symbol of union, confirming the Nicene doctrine (ὁμολογοῦμεν – ληφθέντα ναόν) after confrontations from Nestorius in 428 (Abramowski, "Concilium ephesenum," 78).

mother in the form, known in the type of Lat. *Orans* (praying in frontal pose) from the catacomb's ornamentation and wall-painting.²⁴ By the new variant of the latter,²⁵ now the Mother of God in a solitary pose with outstretched arms, embracing the frontally and centrally placed Son within Her, proposed the resemblance of Jesus Christ to be purposely recognized. Already in the fifth century, the half-figure Virgin with raised hands and the frontal Christ Child,²⁶ is documented in the catacombs of S. Maria Maggiore²⁷ and on lead ampullae (a reliquary medallion)²⁸ showing Christ on the top of the Cross, possibly linked to Pope Gregory the Great. The earliest icon of the Mother of God—later associated with the *Hodegetria* type—depicting Christ holding the Gospel in His left hand was likewise believed to have arrived from Crete in 590 and was personally received by Gregory the Great.

Implicitly, the foundation of such composition directed to the future native unit of the compassionate and co-suffering attitudes of the known basis of *pietas* motif. Relativizing heretical mainstreams (Arians, Eutyches, Nestorians, Macedonians) at the Council of Chalcedon (451),²⁹ the new definition of the Christological faith³⁰ (Christ as Logos) enabled a decisive break with the symbolic representation of Christ (firstly as lamb).³¹ Instead, the essence of the Incarnation by portraying the sensitive human likeness³² was suggested, adding the representation of the crucified and dead Christ,³³ which set forth the new affirmation of His two natures,³⁴ representing the triumph over

²⁴ The first example dates from the late second or third century (Beckwith, *Early Christian*, plate 4). The depiction of a nursing mother with a child in the Catacomb of Priscilla on the Via Salaria remains disputed (Beckwith, *Early Christian*, plate 5). According to Aringhi, *Roma subterranea novissima*, 59–62, 69, and Zajc, “Hagiografski vir,” 211, the portraits in the catacombs on the Via Nomentana could depict real people, such as the mother of Constantine the Great (St Helena). There is one example of this with the prophet Isaiah, embraced by St Peter and St Paul in the Catacombs of St Peter and St Marcellinus. Later this type became established as *Vergine Orante* / *Virgo Orans* in the West and in the East, see Cilento, *I Mosaici Bizantini*, 132–33, and further.

²⁵ Golubcov, *Iz čtenij po cerkovnoj*, 198; Aringhi, *Roma subterranea*, 59–62, 69; Zajc, “Hagiografski vir,” 211.

²⁶ Later examples from Saint Mary of Blachernae Church in Constantinople and from Venice, eleventh century. See Ševčenko, “Virgin Blachernitissa,” 2170; Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 24, fig. A.

²⁷ Wellen, *Theotokos*, 152, fig. 28b.

²⁸ Beckwith, *Early Christian*, 24–25; Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte*, plate X, no. 9a. These objects were in fact souvenirs from the Holy Land that pilgrims carried with themselves or donated to someone honoured. See Mundell Mango, “Pilgrimage.”

²⁹ Maximus often referred to Eastern councils, specifically to the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. See Grek, *Sočinenija*, 1: 191.

³⁰ Mühlenberg, “Concilium Chalcedonense,” 121; Mango, “New Religion, Old Culture,” 103.

³¹ The shift from symbolic representations (especially the lamb) to human likeness was formally articulated only later in Trullo Canon 82, and should not be treated as a simple endpoint of earlier councils. (a motif of the lamb, known from the first quarter of the fifth century from Ravenna, San Vitale as a concession to Judaism (Golubcov). It was forbidden with the words that the human likeness should replace the previous presentations in the form of lamb: “Id est Christum deum nostrum, instar hominis etiam in imaginibus dehinc pro vetere agno statui iubemus;” it was rare in the Christian East (Beckwith, *Early Christian*, plate 32; Golubcov, *Iz čtenij po cerkovnoj*, 225–26; Nedungatt and Agrestini, “Concilium Trullanum,” 210, 281; Grabar, *L'iconoclisme byzantin*, 95–96).

³² In San Vitale, Christ is represented with a young face; the Ravenna cup with the humanlike base and the inscription in Greek as a part of everyday lifestyle at the beginning of the sixth century was preserved in the treasury of Gregory the Great. Baldini, “Ravenna Bizantina,” 64–75; Cosentino, *Prosopografia dell'Italia*, 181.

³³ Martin, “The Dead Christ,” 189–96.

³⁴ Later reaffirmed at the Second Council of Nicaea (787) by explicit approval of the veneration of images after the iconoclastic period in Byzantium, in the seventh session by Nicaea's own *horos* (Lamberz, *Die Bischofslisten*, 15–17, 33–35; Fortounatto and Cunningham, “Theology of the Icon,” 138).

the Arian heresy. Significantly, the Chalcedonian *horos* on the theology of icons by referring to the Church's tradition justified the legitimacy of sacred images.³⁵

However, in the East the future iconoclastic period (726–787; 814–842) suppressed, but also discretely encouraged the determination of the sacred iconography. St John of Damascus in the first anti-iconoclastic sermons³⁶ revealed the crucial relationship between the image and its prototype, as an effective key for the spiritually transformed reception of the icons (theology of images), which, in the close association with the liturgical program in the conjunction with the decoration of the church, were now intended to reach out “all people”.³⁷ Already stable depictions of Lat. *Orans*, dating from 7–8th c.,³⁸ by the addition of the most influential iconographical type of Christ as *Pantocrator* (a Saviour and King; Lat. *Rex regnum*, All-Ruler), probably depicted in Constantinople, expressed the worldview of the universal Church and the cosmic Orthodox economy,³⁹ within which it could spread over all parts of the Christian world (until 12th c.).⁴⁰

On the path to the Christological iconography

The reception of the Holy image through the liturgical scope

After the resolving problems with Monophysites in the years following the Chalcedon Council, the Eucharistic practise was recognized as well.

The Exegesis: Part II⁴¹

*He has shown Himself during the proceeding of the Divine Liturgy, sacredly activating a fearful, bloodless sacrifice, when holiest Gregory placed the fourth part of the Holy and sacrificed lamb⁴² in the chalice.*⁴³

Maximus utilized the terminology from Orthodox liturgical practice, possibly referring to the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, since Pope Gregory was later associated with its practice. This form

³⁵ Lamberz and Uphus, “Concilium Nicaenum II,” 299.

³⁶ St John of Damascus, while living under Muslims (c. 726–730) wrote three iconoclastic sermons addressed to the iconoclastic Emperor Leo III. See Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 18; Louth, “The Introduction,” 10; Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 206, n. 53.

³⁷ Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 237.

³⁸ The cruciform reliquary (Gr. ἐγκόλπιον) with a Virgin and the crucified Christ (Table XII, 13, in Marazzi, *Bizantini: Luogi, simboli*, 309). From Cortona, Museo Diocesano, is the eighth-century Christ on the cross, preserved in stone, representing the anatomically naked “human” with arms, hands, and legs nailed, and with eyes open; *Christ Triumphans*, expressing a Christian victory (Table XV. 4, 17, in Marazzi, *Bizantini: Luogi, simboli*, 428).

³⁹ Gr. οἰκονομία – household management: the totality of God's activity towards his creation and its salvation; Cunningham and Theokritoff, *The Cambridge Companion*, 293.

⁴⁰ Later also in Italia-Greca (the region in which was kept the tradition of Eastern liturgical rites), in Sicily, dating from 1132–1140; Cilento, *I Mosaici Bizantini*, 77–79, 81, 110–13, 130–31, 137, 152, 184, 189.

⁴¹ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 111.

⁴² Lat. *Agnus Dei* (Jn 1:19; 1 Cor 5–7; Rev 5:6).

⁴³ In the Orthodox liturgy, the chalice over which the aër is waved over the holy gifts while the Creed is cited, cf. Steenberg, “The Church,” 122.

of the liturgy originally had a special place in the Sanctuary of the Cross on Calvary⁴⁴ — a tradition attested in later sources, though not verifiable from sixth-century evidence. It was celebrated on Holy Wednesday and linked to the biblical event of the Passion of Jesus Christ, firstly celebrated at the beginning of the Vigil of Holy Wednesday.

The Sunday Oration at the end of the Great Canon in the Greek Divine Liturgy indicates that the rite functioned as a preparation for Eucharistic Communion, reflecting later Byzantine euchological interpretation rather than early Roman practice. This preparatory role was already emphasized in the Mass of the Presanctified Gifts,⁴⁵ although the participation of the faithful in this service developed only in the eighth to ninth century. However, the liturgical scholarship⁴⁶ has consistently denied the view that Gregory of Great was the initiator⁴⁷ (of the Roman type of Gr. *anaphora*⁴⁸) of this form of liturgy in which in prothesis the bread and the vine were served before the Divine Liturgy,⁴⁹ distinguishing the medieval attribution from what can be established on the basis of securely datable sixth-century Roman usage. Although Gregory, in his letter to John, Bishop of Syracuse (October 589), ordered the Lord's Prayer to be pronounced immediately after the consecration of the eucharistic gifts — a modification of earlier Roman practice⁵⁰ — this intervention does not constitute the establishment of the Presanctified Liturgy. Greek and Roman manuscript traditions indeed associate Gregory's name with certain liturgical elements, but these attestations represent later interpretative layers rather than evidence for Gregory's authorship of the Presanctified Liturgy. Thus, it remains only possible, though not demonstrable, that during Gregory's lifetime the Presanctified Liturgy was celebrated in Italian-Greek ecclesiastical territories, such as Salento, where Greek-oriental liturgical customs persisted,⁵¹ but this possibility must be treated cautiously, since no direct evidence links Gregory himself to these celebrations.

⁴⁴ Salaville, *Liturgies orientales*, 87.

⁴⁵ The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts could originate from Jerusalem, also attested by Severus of Antioch between 511 and 518; the oldest surviving manuscript is Vat. Codex Barberini 366. See Salaville, *Liturgies orientales*, 86–88.

⁴⁶ Alexopoulos, *The Presanctified Liturgy*; Parenti and Velkovska, *L'Eucologio Barberini*; Parenti, "L'attribuzione a S. Gregorio;" Parenti, "Per la storia;" Radle, "Sinai Greek."

⁴⁷ The other initiators could be St Basil, St Athanasius, St John Chrysostom, Epiphanius of Salamis (died 403) (Brightman, *Liturgies, Eastern and Western*, xciii; Parenti, "L'attribuzione a S. Gregorio," 82, 85) and Severus of Antioch in 511 (Pitra, *Juris ecclesiastici*, 296).

⁴⁸ The Anaphora is considered the central, most solemn prayer of the Eucharist; Baumstark, *Liturgie comparée*, passim.

⁴⁹ Parenti, "Attribuzione a S. Gregorio," 82–84; Parenti, "Per la storia," 244. The question of whether Pope Gregory the Great introduced this form of the liturgy into the Constantinople liturgy was rejected, see Parenti, "Attribuzione a S. Gregorio," 87.

⁵⁰ For the letter, see Wellesz, *Gregory the Great's Letter*. The Lord's Prayer is placed in the Divine Liturgy after the Eucharistic *Epiclesis* by the invocation of the Holy Spirit as comforter, also to Christ (Rom 8:26; Gal 4:6); see Bobrinskoy, "God in Trinity," 53–54. The documents are dubious: in his letter to John of Syracuse, he denied the dependence of the Rome church in having to follow Constantinople's practice of *Kyrie eleison* but to be pronounced by the priest alone after the splitting of the Holy Lamb, as was the apostolic mystery of liturgy and then repeated by all the people, as he had witnessed the liturgy in the churches of the East. Cf. Parenti, "L'attribuzione a S. Gregorio," 87; Uspenskij, *Vizantijskaja liturgija*, 308; Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 184.

⁵¹ According to Euchologium: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Vat. Gr. 2591; Parenti, "Attribuzione a S. Gregorio," 79–80; Santo, "La Calabria greca medievale," 26.

Similar notices circulated in Slavonic manuscripts,⁵² but these cannot be assumed to have served as Maximus's source in this context.⁵³ From the Orthodox perspective, however, the mystery of the holy image's manifestation — indeed, its meditative emergence within the liturgy — lies beyond any formal ecclesiastical decree concerning the introduction or authorization of icons in worship, and therefore does not depend on the historical question of Gregory's role⁵⁴ and should not be conflated with later Western traditions (such as the *Mass of St Gregory*).

The mystagogical shifts

In Maximus's text, the structures of liturgical and iconological forms of literary depiction were closely interrelated because they derived from the Eastern (Byzantine, patristic and theological) theory of images, which required a specific preparatory stage for enhanced perception though this relationship should not be read as a direct causal line from conciliar Christology (e.g., Chalcedon) to specific iconographic types.

The Exegesis: Part III⁵⁵

When the pious Pope saw this Divine image, not created by human hands,⁵⁶ while standing in front of the chalice, he was touched because it was so beautiful, and he was moved⁵⁷ to spiritual tears,⁵⁸ marvelling⁵⁹ at the inexpressible descent⁶⁰ of the Saviour, just as he had seen with his eyes in the Holy Spirit.

⁵² The Codex Suprasliensis contains an unconventional hagiographic entry on Pope Gregory the Great, see Babič, "Cerkvenoslovanska ostalina," 48–53.

⁵³ The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in this form became a part of Byzantine liturgy, as well as of the Slavonic liturgy from the eighth to fourteenth century. This was after the Quinisext Council, of which Canon 52 specified that the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts should be celebrated on all (fasting) days during Great Lent, except Saturdays, Sundays, and the feast of the Holy Annunciation. By the addition of Great Thursday with the Liturgy of St Basil, this was accepted in all Byzantine Churches (Orthodox Churches until modern times). In the Roman rite after the eighth century, it remained only until the ninth century, but only in very few countries, and also in these it was preserved until the fifteenth century. See Nedungatt and Agrestini, "Concilium Trullanum," 265; Salaville, *Liturgies orientales*, 86–87.

⁵⁴ See notes 46 and 49.

⁵⁵ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 111v.

⁵⁶ Cf. Gr. ἀχειροποίητος; in the sixth century, this icon (the mandylion image) of Jesus Christ, according to his physical attributes and based on the existing image, was believed to be authentic. This was a cloth on which Christ had miraculously imprinted his features before sending it to Abgar, a king of Edessa, who had sent for it because of his healing properties. According to Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4, 27, it spread after that in Edessa under the name of an icon "made without hands". John of Damascus also referred to this image, see Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, 1: 1233–84.

⁵⁷ Literally *ascended*.

⁵⁸ Variation: "He was moved to tears / He ascended to the tears of the Spirit." A note: the gift of tears in the Eastern Church (given by Jesus, Mt 5:4) is available as a priority, perhaps on account of the emphasis on the heart as a vessel of the Holy Spirit; see Chrysavgis, "The Spiritual Way," 153. Supposedly, this icon depicts an image that was not painted by human hands but by the Grace of God.

⁵⁹ Variation: *surprised*.

⁶⁰ Cf. St Maximus the Confessor's interpretation: "This descent of the Christ toward the man in the church /.../ is the image or visible icon." Cited after Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins*, 120.

Maximus's understanding of the image of Christ corresponds with the Orthodox understanding of mystagogic⁶¹ guidance during the (Eucharistic) liturgical experience, and it is apprehended through a deeply personal spiritual experience granted by grace, and not reducible to the visual dimension of iconographic representation. According to the fragment, the possibility of the vision of God (Gr. θεοπτία) is granted through unceasing practice of inner prayer (Gr. ἡσυχία), in which the initial initial wordless stillness through which the nous and the heart are gradually united is formed through ascetical purification (humility and humbleness, zeal of faith, the purity of consciousness). Truly, the synergy of vision and prayer (an icon of God the Son during the liturgy) not reducible to the visual dimension of iconographic representation, and distinct from later Western devotional iconography was integrated into Maximus's daily monastic discipline (as suggested by Athonite euchological tradition), when such internal practise was essential for his spiritual endurance during his time in Russia.⁶² Moreover, Maximus likens the liturgical anamnesis of Christ's salvific deeds to the iconic manifestation of Christ, revealing His full humanity and full divinity, by which he implicitly delineates the Christological and Christocentric character of the Eucharistic mystery. Analogously, when Pope Gregory, in the narrative of Maximus, performs the bloodless sacrifice and participates in the mystery of Christ's Passion within the liturgical present by the anamnetic participation in Christ's redemptive economy and eschatological promise, it indicates the transition from visible liturgical signs to their imperceptible divine reality.

Eastern thesis on "writing the icons"

The Exegesis: Part IV⁶³

And just as he had seen with his own eyes in the Holy Spirit, he instructed the iconographers / icon-writers [N. Z.] to write [N. Z.] such a Holy Image of the Saviour. And from that time on, such images of the Saviour began to be written/depicted in the churches of God.

This iconic literal approach to the liturgy in Maximus's style deploys re-articulations of the continuing Eastern discussion on the liturgical and iconographical canons, in which the simultaneous ekphrasis between the image and the word conceptualized the theology of holy images by a distinct principle of literally "writing". Unlike in Western custom, whereby the image occupied a subordinate position, the reverse perspective in Eastern Orthodox iconography enabled the icon to engage the viewer personally. Apparently, in his text on *pietas*, Maximus touched the period from the Chalcedonian Council up to the sixth century – when Pope Gregory the Great lived –, when the refinement of dogmatic Christian theology was finally improved and during which the image of Christ

⁶¹ Mystagogy as the introduction into the holy mystery was first used in the work *Mystagogy* by St Maximus the Confessor (in the mid-sixth century) in his exegesis of the Bible and of the Divine Liturgy in which the reflection of the church reality employed the concept of the image. A specific "liturgical theory" (Gr. θεωρία) by the application of the spiritually significant intellectual cognizance ("intelligence") of God the Son as Logos in His cosmological dimension was purposely introduced. Cf. Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins*, 83–124, esp. 88–92, 94, 112, 118–20.

⁶² At the Vatopedi Monastery, Maximus could have experienced a distinct liturgical service associated with Constantinople, a model from the Vatopedi *Horologion* (c. 1075), commencing with the First Hour; cf. Καδός, *Τὰ σημειώματα τῶν χειρογράφων*, 226. See also Zajc, "St. Maximus the Greek (Mihail Trivolis)."

⁶³ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 111v.

could begin to be accepted. The earliest icons are known from the middle of sixth century⁶⁴ (from the monastery of St Catherine on Mt. Sinai, which was an imperial of Justinian I until 640⁶⁵), they were created in a realistic style,⁶⁶ among which the oldest icon of Jesus Christ is preserved (fig. 2). This icon, which the eligible two natures of God the Son reflects in the Redeemer's eyes (the right is light, the left is darkened),⁶⁷ was most probably produced in Constantinople,⁶⁸ showing the continuation of the classical tradition in the more sophisticated and pure style than in any other Mediterranean centre. From the same Sinaitic Monastery,⁶⁹ the earliest icon of the crucified but dead Christ is also known— with eyes closed, known in East and West (by Ravenna mosaics).⁷⁰ In fact, already in the documents of the acts of Chalcedon Council, a letter of Pope Leo to Eutychios of Constantinople was also preserved, in which Pope expressed the protection of the coexistence of Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit and the realness of God the Son as a mediator.⁷¹ Accordingly, the view of Pope Gregory the Great's on the presentations of the God the Son stemmed from his dispute with the Patriarch Eutychios, who at the Second Council of Constantinople (553) denied the possibility of the resurrection of the body of Christ, the issue to which Maximus the Greek also opposed.⁷²

Thus only after the restored iconodule principle after the Byzantine iconoclasm, the literary and philosophical formatting of the Eastern theological apology of iconography began, with the approval of the veneration of the sacred images within their worship.⁷³ The decree of the second council in Nicaea (787) confirmed that the images in churches, houses and in public were to be worshipped (Gr. *proskynesis*) with the distinction from the worship of God (Gr. λατρεία), known also from Old Testament wrong forms of worship, forbidden from the second commandment. Such was in the iconoclasm,⁷⁴ understood as transcending from the image to the subject it depicts.⁷⁵ By the proclamation of the veneration of icons they again become legitimately acknowledged setting for any liturgical⁷⁶ practise (namely, the Akathistos hymn).⁷⁷ Nicaea II distinguished proskynesis

⁶⁴ Cf. Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 40.

⁶⁵ Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 40.

⁶⁶ Reminiscent of the funerary portraits found in Roman-period cemeteries in Egypt. Mango, "Icons," 152; Gombrich, *The History of Art*, 106–11.

⁶⁷ Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 40, plate 1.

⁶⁸ Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 18.

⁶⁹ The typographical production of the icons appeared within such a topographical line (Constantinople – Sinai – Ravenna); cf. Weitzmann and Ševčenko, "The Moses Cross at Sinai," 389–91.

⁷⁰ Such an image during the iconoclastic controversy gained its function when, however, this monastery was beyond the reach of the Byzantine emperor. Sheperd, "Christology," 113; Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 61–64, plate 25).

⁷¹ "Mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus" (1 Tim 2:5). See Mühlenberg, "Concilium Chalcedonense," 128.

⁷² He wrote an apologetic text, in which he precisely expressed his opposition to the heretical teaching of Eutychios, titled *A Word of Reply on the Correction of the Russian Books, and in It Also on Those Who Say that the Flesh of the Lord was Indescribable after the Resurrection*, and it opens with the following words: "Let those that read it listen carefully and judge piously, together and for the goodness of humanity." See BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fols. 123, 159–269; Grek, *Sočinenija*, 2: 136–45.

⁷³ Karlin-Hayter, "Iconoclasm," 153, 156–157.

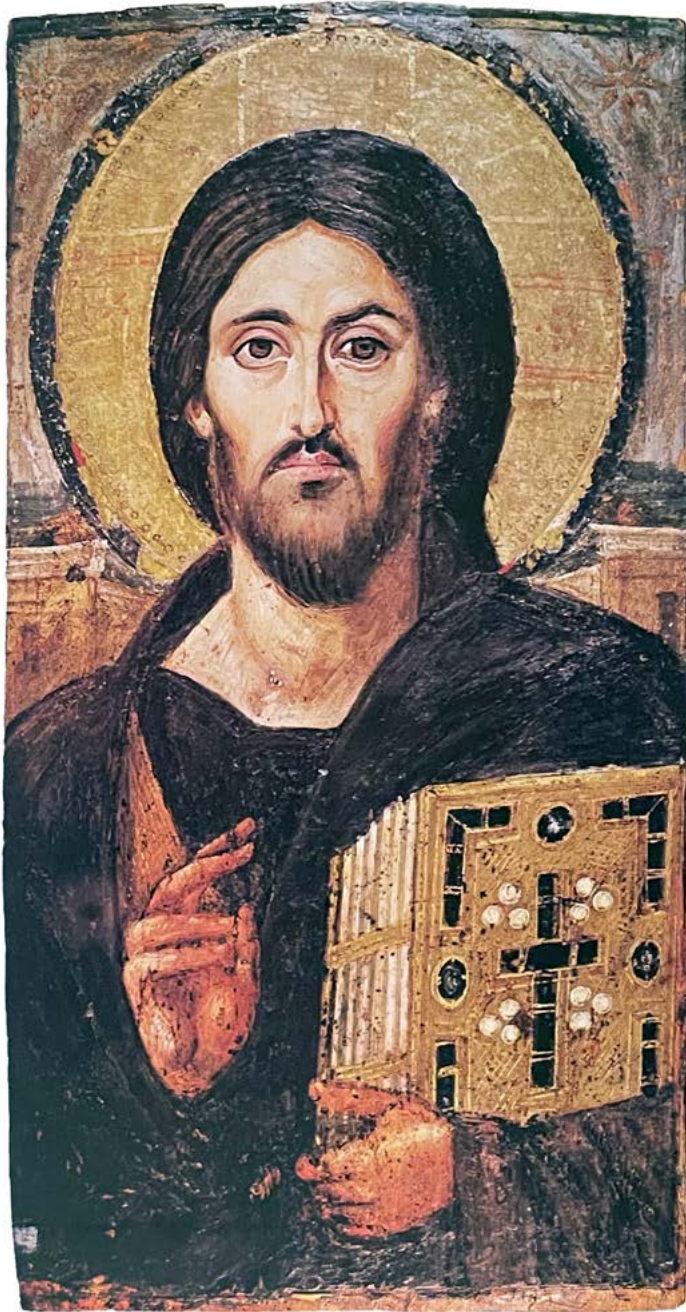
⁷⁴ See also Louth, "The Introduction," 11.

⁷⁵ Lamberz and Uphus, "Concilium Nicaenum II," 299.

⁷⁶ See the excellent essay by Nancy Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy."

⁷⁷ The correlation between the Akathistos hymn and Maximus's euchological work was proposed by Zajc, "St. Maximus the Greek (Mihail Trivolis)."

(veneration) from *latreia* (worship), a terminological precision essential for interpreting Maximus's theology of images. He had possibly witnessed such custom in his childhood in Arta, but in Moscow as well.⁷⁸



2. Encaustic icon with a bust of Christ, sixth century, Sinai, Monastery of St Catherine (source: Kurt Weitzmann. *The Icons*, 40)

⁷⁸ The image of public processions involving specific icons of the Virgin *Hodegetria* is confirmed by a thirteenth-century fresco in the Vlacherna Monastery near Arta, and also by a textile dated 1498 in Moscow; Ševčenko, "Icons in the Liturgy," 47.

By the invocation of the Holy Spirit

When Damascus in his first anti-iconoclastic treatise discussed the latter problem, he further referred to the unwritten tradition, in which he invoked a famous passage from St Basil's *On the Holy Spirit*.⁷⁹ Indeed, the respectful dedication of the entire procedure of all earthly attempts to the Holy Spirit was from the Orthodox point of view crucial to finalize the consecration of the faithful copy of the Holiest. The latter, in fact, by the discrete close bond to the higher presence, resolved the Arian heresy, the image was not depicted anymore, it was rather a product of following the commandments from the higher presence. Noticeably the important element of St Maximus the Greek's narrative presented the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the reception of the Holy Image, related to the pneumatological functioning of icons from the Eastern Christian point of view. Powered by Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and Saints, the icons could share the "Holy shadow" from the above on the images (Mk 16; 16-18; 2 Cor: 13-14) or as precisely Damascus called for "the veneration of images of God /.../ sanctified by name and therefore overshadowed by the grace of the divine Spirit."⁸⁰ In fact, Maximus opposed exactly the miscellaneous depictions on Russian icons that differenced the Christological message of the Bible,⁸¹ which did not venerate the basis of the Incarnation and opposed the Orthodox Trinitarianism. Such was the icon with a cherub in bronze, exemplifying the worship of the Old Testament, in which acts of veneration were offered to many things, to which exactly objected also Damascus.⁸² Indeed, the attention given to the invocational call to the Holy Spirit during the liturgical practice⁸³ (Gr. *Epiclesis*)⁸⁴ was at that time culminating to the long-lasting polemic between the East and West. The Churches in the West formal inclusion Lat. *Filioque* in the Christian Creed, with disrespect of the Holy Spirit, resulted in the final division between Western and Eastern Christianity, the schism in 1054. Both mentioned issues related to the Holy Spirit, formed a significant basis of Maximus's arguments against the Latins, which he polemically discussed and theologically debated in his writings.⁸⁵ Although Gregory the Great's view on the *Epiclesis* and Lat. *Filioque* was ambiguous, in the Homily 28 on John 20: 21, he expressed the economic manifestation of the Holy Spirit by the eternal procession, personally experienced in the mysterious manner,⁸⁶ in which the Holy Spirit organizes not only the human acts but functions also as the "blessing" for all taken actions (the role of *Epiclesis* as a companion in the monastic kenotic ascend to God; Gr. *Theosis*). In Maximus's description of Gregory's vision of Jesus Christ which was during the liturgy noetically placed "in the Holy Spirit" (with "spiritual" eyes), the appearance of God the Son descended to the visual impression, which was perceived as the icon of Christ, called *pietas*.

⁷⁹ Louth, "The Introduction," 12.

⁸⁰ "Θείου Πνεύματος ἐπισκίαζόμενον χάριτι." See Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, 2: 1300; Damascus, *Three Treatises*, 71.

⁸¹ See note 11.

⁸² Louth, "The Introduction," 11.

⁸³ The Orthodox liturgical *praxis* includes the recounting of all God's benefactions (anamnesis) and the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the Eucharistic gifts (*Epiclesis*), based on the second Council of Constantinople (381). By the Creed recited upon it is expressed the sacramental communion in the person of Christ, the Son and Word of God, as was defined in two natures, and affirmed as "acknowledged, without confusion, change, division or separation" at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Cf. Steenberg, "The Church," 122; Cunningham and Theokritoff, *The Cambridge Companion*, 293–94.

⁸⁴ Zheltov, "The Moment of Eucharistic."

⁸⁵ He also opposed to the concept of purgatory and rejected introducing the elevated bread into Latin (Catholic) liturgical practice.

⁸⁶ Siecienski, *The Filioque*, 70–71.

The core of the subversive reflection

Gregory the Great and art historical tradition

It could be suggested that Gregory the Great, who probably encountered the images during liturgy or as illustrations of biblical content in ecclesiastical spaces whilst on his mission to Constantinople, when he wrote his corpus on *Divinity* and the *Moralia of Job*⁸⁷ during his intimately acquainted stay at the court of Maurice,⁸⁸ preannounced the period of iconoclasm in the East, which followed the Quinisext Council in 692. From this aspect, Pope Gregory the Great could be comprehended as the first pre-iconodules, previewing the fear of iconoclastic tendencies. Indeed, according to Western art historical tradition, Pope Gregory I (540–604) introduced the artistic practices in the field of sacred art, as follows. Firstly, he is supposed to have given the argument against the spreading opinion that the church paintings were not useful, claiming that these paintings were for the illiterate Christians similar to the illustrations in books being good for children.⁸⁹ This pronouncement, frequently cited in discourses concerning the presence of images in ecclesiastical spaces, had profound implications for art history, particularly about the depiction of Christian Divinity. In 590 Pope Gregory criticized the destruction of sacred images by Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles. In a letter to him,⁹⁰ he is believed to have expressed that when writing about the relationship to Christian images:

*It is one thing to adore a picture; another to learn what it is to be adored through the history told by the picture. What Scripture presents to readers, a picture presents to the gaze of the unlearned: for in it even the ignorant see what they ought to follow; in it the illiterate read.*⁹¹

In another letter to one educated man (to whom Pope consequently sent the images of God the Saviour, of the Holy Mother of God, and of the St Peter and St Paul), Gregory opened his discourse toward the invisible thinking of the image itself, approving the Divine dimension of the visible impression:

*We do nothing unreasonable if by the visible we show forth the invisible. /.../ I know that you do not desire the image of our Saviour that you may worship it as God, but that you may be reminded of Him, and refresh your love for Him by the sight of His image.*⁹²

Naming, personalizing (the external facts)

The evolution of the motif *pietas* is evident in the early interplay between the Virgin *Orans* and Christ *Pantocrator*, whose iconography reflects communality and maternal reciprocity shaped by the divergent Eastern and Western traditions. This development parallels the Eastern *Paraklesis* type,

⁸⁷ Beckwith, *Early Christian*, 65.

⁸⁸ Cameron, "The Theotokos," 91, 96.

⁸⁹ It is believed that Pope Gregory the Great said: "Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read." Gombrich, *The History of Art*, 105.

⁹⁰ Davis, *The First Seven*, 292–93.

⁹¹ Cited after Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 201–02.

⁹² Cited after Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 202.



3. Triptych of the Pietà by Nikolaos Tzafouris, 1489–1500 (source: Mango, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, 301)

venerated from the sixth to seventh centuries onwards⁹³ and reinforced in the eighth to ninth-century liturgical hymns and ecclesiastical writings. After Iconoclasm, two types of the Virgin Orans⁹⁴ appeared; one includes the Christ Child in a medallion on the Virgin's breast,⁹⁵ emphasizing her role as *Theotokos*. This form is well attested on Mount Athos, notably in the Vatopaidi Psalter (the head piece for the Magnificat).⁹⁶ From the fourteenth century — especially in the West but also in the East⁹⁷ — *pietas* is suddenly known named and explicitly connected the motif with the Crucifixion. A fourteenth-century Cypriot icon shows this new intimacy, while in the West the theme becomes personalized, exemplified by Giovanni da Milano's *Pietà* (1365), where Mary touches the lifeless Christ.⁹⁸ At the end of the fifteenth century, a Byzantine *pietas* type is documented in small triptychs for private devotion, flanked by St Francis and St Mary Magdalene. Archival contracts from Venice,⁹⁹ attribute this variant to the Cretan painter Nikolaos Tzafouris, executed in the Italian or *Greco maniera* characteristic of post-Byzantine workshops (fig. 3).

⁹³ Cameron, "The Theotokos."

⁹⁴ Etzeoglou, "The Virgin Zoodochos," 246, plate 20.2.

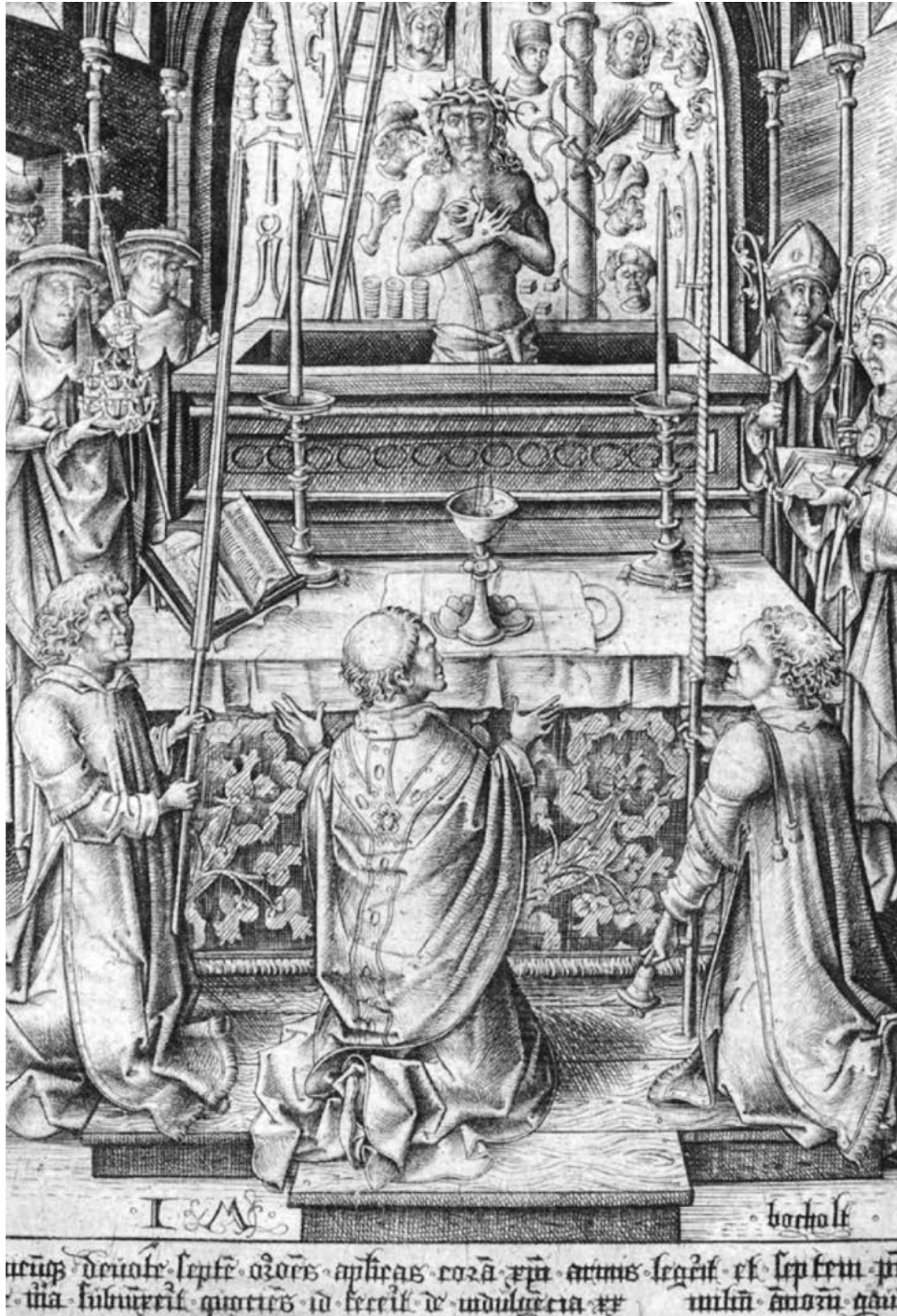
⁹⁵ Both types are known from Theotokos of Blachernae Church in Constantinople; Ševčenko, "Virgin Blachernitissa."

⁹⁶ Cod. 851, fol. 190; see Cutler, *Aristocratic Psalters*, 31. From the Monastery of Hilandar: the two jasper liturgical cups, related to *Orthros*, Eucharistic service with a *panagiaron* (a portable object) decorated with an image of the Virgin Orans with a medallion of the Christ child; see Teteriatnikov, "The Image of the Virgin," 229–31.

⁹⁷ Bacci, "The Legacy of the Hodegetria," 325.

⁹⁸ Carr, "Thoughts on Mary," 285, figs. 23.7, 23.8.

⁹⁹ Mango, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, fig. 303.



4. Israhel van Meckenem: *Imago Pietatis* of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, engraving, c. 1495–1500
(© Berlin State Museums, Museum of Prints and Drawings).

Maximus concluded the exegetical survey with the information about the exact time and place of the narrated story, which resulted from the narrative he had encountered during his period in Italy.

The Exegesis: Part V¹⁰⁰

This is the story I received from pious Italian people. I lived with them a quite a long time when I was quite young and when I still lived a secular life. Just as I have heard it, now I am telling it to your Holiness.

In this passage Maximus claimed that this story had belonged to the local Italian tradition. When he resided in Florence, among Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici's estate¹⁰¹ existed ecclesiastical objects depicting Pope Gregory the Great during the liturgy and before the altar with the image of Christ underneath him.¹⁰² Such relics, to which Maximus possibly had access,¹⁰³ were also a part of the Renaissance decoration of the Duomo in Florence.¹⁰⁴ From the visual effect of the above-mentioned monuments the basis of the storytelling legend of the vision of Pope Gregory I. could have arisen, according to which the specific image of Christ was named as *pietas* (fig. 4).

Yet there are no confirmed documents that support the thesis that Maximus could have seen the mentioned sacred objects in the Renaissance Italy. However, his contemplated memorial view of the image of Christ could only scarcely be related to two Italo-Cretan icons and triptychs, found in Ethiopian heritage of Amhara, which reveal insights into fifteenth- and sixteenth-century cross-cultural art exchanges after the 1453 fall of Constantinople, when Crete emerged as a key centre of icon production under Venetian rule.¹⁰⁵ This unique synthesis of Eastern Orthodox and Western European artistic elements could be the subject of additional reflection on Maximus's observation on *pietas*. The first responds to *Imago Pietatis*, following the style of mentioned Cretan artist Nikolaos Tzafouris,¹⁰⁶ but this time in the framework of the iconography of *Deposition*, particularly with Christ's arms crossed in front of his sarcophagus and not extended (fig. 5), witnessing that this central panel was imported from Italy.¹⁰⁷ The second icon displays the conventional motif of

¹⁰⁰ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 111v.

¹⁰¹ The relics were part of the "Libretto" of King Charles V of France for his brother Louis, who may have brought them to Italy in 1382, or that King Louis XI of France donated to Piero de' Medici, among whose inventory they appeared in 1465. Freiberg, "The *Imago Pietatis*," 66.

¹⁰² The *Imago Pietatis*, depicting "the Man of the Sorrows", was connected with the international atmosphere of papal Rome in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and the Church of San Pietro in Montorio with the reliquary triptych which contains images of Christ and the relics. From the thirteenth to fifteenth century, this legend about Pope Gregory I gained popularity due to the intensified Eucharistic devotion. In the Renaissance, the German printmaker Israhel van Meckenem made an icon and an engraving of the *Imago Pietatis* (c. 1495–1500) with the claim that it was a copy of the aforementioned image from Rome, depicting the Mass of Gregory the Great with the pope kneeling before an altar, with Christ appearing above the altar table. Freiberg, "The *Imago Pietatis*," 63–64, 72–73, 76–77. For the engraving, see also Martens, "Die Gregorsmesse der Niklauskirche." On the legend of the story about the image of Christ and Pope Gregory I, see Bynum, "Seeing and Seeing Beyond."

¹⁰³ Together with Janus Laskaris, Trivolis was involved in the project of shaping the Medici library. Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano," 264–66; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec*, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Salini, "La formazione del Tesoro," 34.

¹⁰⁵ Semoglou, "Italo-Cretan Triptychs."

¹⁰⁶ Semoglou, "Italo-Cretan Triptychs," 89; Vocotopoulos, "Iconographie et style," 39, fig. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Chatzidakis, "Aspects de la peinture," 184.



5. *The Kwer'ata re'esu triptych*, No. 527-03, Ethiopia, Amhara
(source: Semoglou, "Italo-Cretan Triptychs," 89)



6. *The Pieta of the Martula Maryam Monastery*, No. 525-50, Ethiopia, Amhara
(source: Semoglou, "Italo-Cretan Triptychs," 91)

pietas (fig. 6), which was not present in Byzantine iconography, thus demonstrating the fidelity to the Greek-Venetian style.¹⁰⁸ Within this paradigm, the narrative of St Maximus the Greek is positioned to be contextualised within the broader framework of this “Italo-Greca”, specifically the Venetian-Cretan art and cultural-historical milieu.

Hence, if we are to reflect this discourse with veracity, the enigma surrounding the image of Christ as delineated by Maximus in his exegetical treatment cannot be resolved as the sole product of the oral Italian legend. Certainly, he did not rely on any human interpretation, nor his interpretation was not referred to any human creation. We know only that he accepted this Roman legend about the image of *pietas* as a valid Christian tradition, by the insight into which he intriguingly opened new perspectives on the traditionally well-known iconographic type.

The original exegesis of Maximus the Greek within inter- and intra-textuality

From the perspective of the Maximus’s literary republic of letters, the text on *pietas* is considered to be one from the cycle of his writings on discouragement¹⁰⁹ (and similarly deprived feelings and low tones in the souls of Orthodox believers, such as depression, doubt, confusion, apathy, resignation), which visually culminates his final opposition against despondency (melancholy, dejection) and stagnation on the path to spiritual redemption.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, his message primarily focuses on two meanings, disclosing the iconographic motif of *pietas*, where he felt obliged to give his confident philological explanation on what was, according to his linguistic comprehension, derived from the Latin linguistic context. The first meaning (Stcsl. мѡрдїє), specified by Maximus in Old Church Slavonic, is God’s Grace, reflected in His nature (the merciful, philanthropic God, Gr. φιλανθρωπία; Christ’s visceral and kind response throughout His ministry, Gr. εὐσπλαγχνος),¹¹¹ and His depth of compassion toward those who suffer. In the context of the reception of the latter the first meaning is therein reflected in the compassionate (Gr. συμπάθεια) inclinations of humans, expressed in pitifulness, mercifulness, charity (Gr. εὐσπλαγχνία),¹¹² following Christ’s example. Such understanding is very close to the ancient Latin (Roman) context of *pietas*, by which the Christ’s image acts in the sense of a moral duty, gaining the respect of the cardinal virtue.

The second meaning of *pietas*, proposed by Maximus, is the sequence of the first one as it analogously denotes a deep piety (Stcsl. бѡгостѣїє), the fear of God, piousness, devotion, “godly

¹⁰⁸ Semoglou, “Italo-Cretan Triptychs,” 92.

¹⁰⁹ The Russian Church Slavonic term *малоудушие* is of later date than the Old Church Slavonic term for a despondency (*уныние*), about which Maximus wrote only in this text.

¹¹⁰ In many of his works, Maximus warned against erroneous Russian interpretations, which he identified as dangerous for their potentially harmful effects on other Christians, resulting in devastating mental disinclination, complete despondency, and the erosion of faith (akin to the Latin term *acedia*), which, according to the Gospel teachings of Jesus Christ, is categorized as one of the gravest sins, alongside other grave moral transgressions (Mat 5:27–30).

¹¹¹ Cf. Mt 9:36, 14:4, 15:32.

¹¹² Ceitlin et al., *Staroslavjanskij slovar'*, 326.

heart-response”¹¹³ (Gr. εὐσέβεια),¹¹⁴ related to the recipient who favourably answers to Christ’s call.¹¹⁵ Indeed, both mentioned meanings are encompassing the ancient Latin term of *pietas*,¹¹⁶ of which we only know that Maximus had been referring to. Additionally, it is possible that he somehow remembered related semantics of *pietas* (and *pious*) in the context of expressed honour of the blood related person, especially in the relationship of son to father and father to son (known from Homer and Sophocles, f. e. *Antigone*’s apology of the burial of Polynices), but also to the destiny of Rome (as a social obligation) within which the aim is to internalize.

In the context of personal meditation through spiritual metamorphosis, such an understanding is suddenly transformed into a human quality which, even in the context of non-blood ties (for example, in someone’s relationship with a friend’s wife), makes him capable of responding respectfully and responsibly; it is, in fact, his cardinal virtue, as is known to be preserved in the folksong about the bridge of Arta, his birth town.¹¹⁷

Truthfully, the motif of *pietas* is most often eligible as the basis of holiness in the essence of the Mother of God and conceptualized in the iconographic types of the mother and the child in the touching, moving unity (not maternal affection, but slight melancholy, as if she foresees the Passion of her son),¹¹⁸ where the type of *Eleousa*¹¹⁹ (the merciful or compassionate; Rus. *Umilenye*) and *Paramythia* (gr. παραμυθία, compassion, consolation) should be stressed.¹²⁰ Both types could be closely associated with Maximus the Greek. The first icon, painted in Constantinople ca 1131,¹²¹ had already been in Moscow, when Maximus was there; the second is highly venerated in the Monastery

¹¹³ Ceitlin et al., *Staroslavjanskij slovar*, 90.

¹¹⁴ In Orthodox theology, the “heart” is not understood as a physical organ, but as a spiritual heart that represents the centre of the body in the person, who obeys God the Son, Jesus Christ, through prayer. The “Jesus Christ’s prayer” is also placed in the heart; cf. Hesychast, *Letters and Poems*, 136.

¹¹⁵ In Orthodox historical and biblical theology: 1. the indwelling of Christ Himself as the mystery of godliness realized in the believer; 2. Godliness as the Holy Spirit’s fruit by His Mercy, available through Scripture (Deut. 6:5; Micah 6:8 – in the embrace of “the fear of the Lord”, covenant faithfulness, whole-hearted love for God); 3. eschatologically: anticipating future glory as the humble preparation for His return in the coming Kingdom; 4. as the motivation or Provision (2 Pet 3:11, 2 Pet 1:3), leading to the truth of God (Tit 1:1); 5. Early Church Fathers interpreted as: spiritual training (cf. 2 Tim 4:7–8) and the duty of moral purity, preaching, and constant prayer.

¹¹⁶ That is, *pietas* as one of the cardinal virtues (constituting the full spectrum of *virtus* together with *constantia*, *gravitas*, and *fides*). On the aspects of *virtus*, see McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*. See also Pobežin, *Rimski zgodovinar*, 80–88; Pobežin, “Dihotomija človeškega in živalskega.”

¹¹⁷ Kakridis, *Homeric Researches*, 156.

¹¹⁸ Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 80.

¹¹⁹ *Eleousa* (Gr. ἐλεούσα, loving kindness), the image of the Mother and the Child tenderly touching heads, never exchanging intimate regards that would exclude the beholder, yet their embrace, which is a reminder of motherhood, does not glorify maternity, but Jesus Christ; according to orally transmitted post-biblical reality, it was exactly this image that was approved by Mary when St Luke depicted her. Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 92–93; Fortounatto and Cunningham, “Theology of the Icon,” 145.

¹²⁰ Some other examples are *Glykophilousa* (Gr. Γλυκοφιλούσα – sweet piety or a kiss; Lat. *Mater Amabilis*) – mother most lovable in the West in the late thirteenth century and *Hodegetria* (Gr. Ὁδηγήτρια – guide), which literally signifies “the one who points the way to Christ; theologically, it reminds us of the role of the holy Virgin at Cana” (Jn 2:5). The mutual meaning of such depictions is comparable with Pope Gregory the Great’s reflection on the call for kindness and humanity: “The word of doctrine fails to penetrate the mind of the needy, unless commended by the hand of compassion.” See Fortounatto and Cunningham, “Theology of the Icon,” 145; Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 168.

¹²¹ Weitzmann, *The Icons*, 80.

of Vatopaidi (fig. 7).¹²² Although Maximus is known to have offered his philological explanation of the inscription related to Mother of God (about the Greek inscription of Her name),¹²³ and to Jesus Christ (about the garland around His head, the roll in His hands and about the sign of the waning crescent above Him etc.), he revealed the meaning of the image of Christ exclusively in the text on *pietas*.

Moreover, the spiritual dimension of the writing could be observed also on the level of Maximus following a specific personally shaped model of rhythmic structure of the text, secularizing it by comma(s), possibly based on the pneumatological figure of a colon, measured out by the supply of breath of the individual speaker, known to him from *Hermogenes* corpus,¹²⁴ the manuscript he transcribed during the Italian period.¹²⁵ This Maximus's text likewise bears the marks of his poetological-theological stylistic idiom, evident in the stemmatologically repeated but morphologically varied words that generate a constitutive rhythm—familiar from paraliturgical poetry¹²⁶—through a re-evaluated semantic content. While reminiscent of inorganic paronomasia¹²⁷ the device here approaches *annominatio*, respecting both the meaning of the words and their phonetic affinity (Mt 16:18).¹²⁸



7. Diptych of St Maximus the Greek and the Virgin Paramithia, 2014, the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi (personal archive of Neža Zajc)

¹²² *A Pilgrim's Guide*, 75–79. In 2014 the diptych of St Maximus the Greek and Theotokos, Panagia Paramithia, was made in the icon-craft making cell of the Athonite Monastery of Vatopaidi where Maximus the Greek spent ten monastic years (1506–1516).

¹²³ BnF, Département des manuscrits, Ms. Slave 123: fol. 655v.

¹²⁴ Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium*, 132.

¹²⁵ Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano," 296.

¹²⁶ Hartung, "The Collection and Transmission," 427.

¹²⁷ As the semantic trope of adjectival parallelism; a type of simile (7. f.). See Filonov Gove, *The Slavic Akathistos*, 165, 168.

¹²⁸ Blass, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 298.

Specifically, in this text it seems that Maximus pointed to a different use of the word repetition, precisely, the chaining of pairs with underlined key meaning, that spreads through all the textual material, is tenured in eight lexically exact parallels, and four times paired. By repeated word “sacred” such device, occurring not only as a refrain but likely the leitmotif, the message of the text is centrally divided into twice paired and repeated sentence of “sacred image”, once singularly placed in the paradigmatically acting semantic occasion as “Divine image, not made by human hands”, and secondly offering the variants (“sacred Gregory/sacred chalice”). Moreover, there are two uniquely repeated Christologically created formulas (“He has shown Himself”) by the addition of the powerful respectful addressing apostrophe (“the Saviour”). The climax of the text is in the literary creation of the argument on the spiritual reliance on the non-aesthetically anticipation (“it was so beautiful /.../ spiritual tears /.../ as he saw in the Holy Spirit”). It was the depth of the personal experience, similarly to the “touching,”¹²⁹ which inspired the future procedure of Gregory the Great. From another aspect the repetition, understood as the epigrammatic and epitaphic device, known from Maximus’s Athonite period¹³⁰ as well as from his facing¹³¹ with the texts of Gregory Nazianzus,¹³² could be comprehended as the monastic (anchorite) writing exercise.¹³³ By synthesis of a poetic-rhetorical device (Gr. γύμνασμα) and practice of short prayers both could enable the deepening of the stage of the ascesis.¹³⁴

Lastly, in the narrative of Maximus the principle of the icon was revealed, namely the cardinal Latin signification of *pietas*. The high respect as a personal sense of duty seemingly resulted from the address of the origin, from Jesus Christ, who mercifully shed light on a humble, silent, vigilant believer. All perceptible is the result of the Highest Who acts like the ultimate directive to the enhancement (conversion into) of the man’s ascetic attitude.¹³⁵ If we accept that Maximus expressed the idea that the icon *pietas* precisely denotes the image of Jesus Christ that He himself approved, then the associated personal qualities, such as mercy and piety, represent a state or feeling, experienced within the presence of God the Son, placed in the inner prayer (known as Jesus Christ’s – circular – noetic prayer).¹³⁶ These virtues are intended to inspire a human being to serve God to the most of his ability. Hence, this does not refer to the conventional understanding of personal asceticism or strict monastic discipline, but rather to the demonstration of inner fortitude, generosity, calmness which can train the individual in the undisturbed spiritual service to the Most High (as it is the essential aim of the praxis of ascetics, Gr. ἄσκησις), without external physical obstacles. Such practise was precisely described by Maximus.¹³⁷ Finally, it is known that such (monastic) state of mind should facilitate the internalization of a mystical experiencing God’s will (His Mercy, Providence with a

¹²⁹ Cf. St Thomas touching Christ’s wounds, in Louth, “From Roman Melodist,” 202–03, 206.

¹³⁰ Grek, *Sočinenija*, 1: 77–89; Γραικού, *Λόγοι*, 297–99.

¹³¹ Bulanin, *Perevody i poslanija*, 30–53.

¹³² Simelidis, “Gregory of Nazianzus,” 636.

¹³³ In the *Novels of Justinian* (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, *Novella 5*, cap. 3) three forms of monasticism were indicated: an anchorite, Hesychast and common (life in the communion). Cf. Justinian, “Concerning Monks.”

¹³⁴ Βερτουδάκης, *To όγδοο βιβλίο*, 80–81.

¹³⁵ Prayer, humility, cultivating of inner being in solitude and silence, abstinence (not only from physical pleasures) from external effects (of the senses, but), ability also to perform deep purifying suffering.

¹³⁶ Cf. Hesychast, *Letters and Poems*, 440.

¹³⁷ See Zajc, “U istokov monašeskogo.”



8. The Wisdom of God, icon, fourteenth century, Thessaloniki (?) (personal archive of Neža Zajc)

Fear and Love). This is the reason why Maximus sublimely addressed the issue of disappeared man's love toward God and the lost trust in His words:

And if Christ is not in us, then woe to us, for we have laboured in vain and toiled in abstinence from food and long prayers and vigils, hoping to be saved. /.../ For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit¹³⁸ /.../ love, holiness, mercy, and generosity toward everyone who lives in misery and poverty.¹³⁹

Furthermore, narrowing the context of Christ's message on the Bible content could propose even more close relation to the concrete image of Christ, holding the Gospel of Matthew in his left hand. It is attested on the specific Greek (Balkan)¹⁴⁰ variant of the type of *Pantocrator*, the icon named "the Wisdom of God", to be open on a precise page (Mt 9:13), (fig. 8), – by which Christ's central message to humanity presents his words: "I desire mercy not sacrifice," expressing in fact the circumstances, relevant to present research, namely, the opposition to the Old Testament ritualistic worship. But above all, this is the exact message that also Maximus constantly expressed in his literary writings,¹⁴¹ in both theological and autobiographical contexts. The mercy should be named as the moral duty and responsibility, experienced as the Christian cardinal virtue as the image of Christ's *pietas*, as described by Maximus's texts on Pope Gregory the Great's vision.

Concluding remarks

Maximus's philological exegesis highlights the nuances of the term *pietas*, whose semantic field encompasses piety and compassion. These virtues are preserved as uniquely, not only emphatically but prayerfully perceived dispositions, familiar from early images of the Mother of God, although ultimately initially grounded in and powered by her Son. Though Maximus does not elucidate the specific expression traditionally associated with the co-suffering of the Mother with her Son — the term that later entered the art-historical tradition as *pietas*.

Nevertheless, through the present examination it is possible to trace, at least scarcely and sporadically, the development of this iconographic type. Its earliest prototype appears to emerge in the third century in the figure of the *Orans/Orante*: a solitary mother-figure without explicit Christian context. At this time the representation of Christ was still obscured in symbolic forms — the acronym of the fish (*Ichthys*) or the Good Shepherd — before being depicted with the signs of the cross or the lamb, which gradually introduced connotations of suffering.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, the first image of the Son of God emerged. Alongside the development of Christian iconography, its theological foundations were simultaneously articulated

¹³⁸ Cf. Mk 12:30–31; Jn 14:21, 24; Rom 14:17.

¹³⁹ Grek, *Sočinenija*, 2: 310. Cf. Gregory the Great: "It is an enemy of the Saviour who, through the good works which he does, desires to be loved in the Church instead of God." Cited after Barmby, *Gregory the Great*, 168.

¹⁴⁰ Possibly attributed to Palaiologan's style (associated with Andronikos II), known, specifically from the territory of Thessaloniki, the Athonite Vatopedi, Arta; it was also identified as regional Greek-Balkan variant, recognised at Athos, Ohrid, Dečani, Studenica. Cf. Corrie, "The Kahn and Mellon," 298; Fittipaldi, "L'icona della." All mentioned localities were crucially associated with St Maximus the Greek.

¹⁴¹ Grek, *Sočinenija*, 2: 217.

at the Church councils. The supposed to be earliest image of Jesus Christ appeared after the Second Council of Constantinople, following the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, which refuted major heretical teachings and affirm the irrefutable unity of the Son with God the Father, the double nature of Christ, and the nature of the Mother of God (the Holy Theotokos). This early image expresses both His divine and human nature and depicts His serene, watchful, providential will. These characteristics may be understood as cardinal virtues — grace, mercy, compassion, piety, justice, goodness, respect, and reverence — yet they do not include any explicit indication of His suffering. Following the seventh and eighth centuries, and especially after the Council of Trullo, which prohibited symbolic representations of Christ (explicitly in the form of the lamb), a more stable iconographic tradition develops between the seventh and eleventh centuries. The Eastern type of the Virgin *Orans* becomes prominent, depicting the Son while avoiding properties associated with the complex motions of sacrificial custom, since the Son of God within is not imaged as a mature person. The theme of the Cross is introduced prudently and discreetly only later. Nevertheless, the ancient form of the *Orans* implicitly directs toward the co-suffering essence of what would later be expressed in the motif *pieta(s)*.

From the first image of Jesus Christ, the *Pantocrator* type develops, emphasizing His power, omnipotence, and authority. In Greece, an analogous variant entitled “the Wisdom of God” emerges, expressing equal but more modest characteristics. Between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, as veneration of Mary grows, the “Mother within Her Son” type begins to appear in the West (though it can also be traced in the East), emphasizing the Mother’s shared suffering during her Son’s crucifixion. This variant becomes known as the *pietà* motif, depicting not the child but the signs of pathos perceived on the Virgin Mary.

In incorporating the narrative about Pope Gregory the Great into his exegetical survey, St Maximus did not attempt to combine Western and Orthodox perspectives; rather, he used it as an illustration of the divine and spiritual origin of the subsequent image of Christ — an image not different from the dogmatical Christological confession of Nicaea I,¹⁴² later iconographically affirmed at Nicaea II and ratified in the Nicene Creed, which affirms the irrefutable unity of the Son with the Father and the Trinitarian foundation of Christological doctrine. Maximus does not refer to any other known interpretation; instead, he understands the core of *pietas* as possessing significant theological, philological, and ethical (moral, intellectual, spiritual) value for every human being.

For Maximus, *pietas* is bestowed upon those who attain a state of intense humility, through which the mystery of Christ’s appearance *can* be humbly received. The mutual effect of Christ’s living presence and the spiritual experience of the beholder — through the reception of the image of Christ precisely as *pietas* — should thereby deepen mindful and *watchful* observation, for it constitutes the core of the Orthodox practice of constant (noetic) remembrance (thinking) of God the Son, which forms the very basis of one’s asceticism.

¹⁴² Colish, *Medieval Foundations*, 72.

APPENDIX A

*Transcription of the original manuscript of the text***Original text**

Того же инока Максима Грека сказаніе ѿ сѣннѣ ѡбразѣ Спсаха, єго же называ//ютъ
оунынїе¹

Сѣннѣе ѡбразованїе, сѣннѣныа і поклоняемыа // іконы Га і Бга і Спса ншего Саха, глаголюе
// порйски пїетас. Эже є по роуьскы мѣрдїе іли // бл҃гоуѣтїе, а не оунынїе. нѣ се члѣкыа
премѣр//сти замышленїе, нѣ сѣ Спсз таково себѣ показа // сѣлю своему сѣѣ*ше²моу
папѣ римскому // Григорїю, списателю дѣшеполезнѣи вѣсѣ, яже // к Петроу своему
дїаконоу, пока//за себе въ вре//³ма сѣннѣныа литѣргїи сѣенодѣиствѣющоу // страшноу
і бескровноу жѣтвѣ сѣѣшмоу // Григорїю внеѣа влагаше в ѿр ѣтвертоу • чѣсть//сѣго
і покланяема агньца. Сицево нероукоТво//ренїе бж҃твеное ѡбразованїе. видѣв сѣннѣны
Григорїе, стоѣще провоу сѣннѣна пѣра // оумилїе іакѣ лѣпо бѣ, і въ слѣзы дѣховныа снесѣ бѣ,
// преоудививса Спсовоу нейзреченному схожѣю // і іакѣ видѣ ѡчима в дѣѣ сѣѣ, тако сказа
іконо//писцѣ писѣ прочее таковое Спсово сѣннѣе // ѡбразованїе. і ѡтолѣ на чѣ сице сѣннѣе
ѡбрѣ//зованїе Спсово въ сѣѣ храмѣ писѣса. Сице // азъ таковоу повѣ прїахъ ѡдостоѣрных
// моужей Італїанѣ. оуни живѣи время довоно // юнѣ єще сы и * держѣ⁴ мѣскаго жїа. іакѣ
оубо а прїахъ // сице і повѣствоу твоѣмоу сѣѣлѣствоу. єго сѣѣими мѣтѣвами, да ма сподобї
Гѣ каатї іскренѣи моихъ прегѣшенїи, аминь.

¹ Paris, BnF, Ms. Slave 123, 111r.² Ins.³ Paris, BnF, Ms. Slave 123, 111v.⁴ Marg.

APPENDIX B
Translation of the text (in English)

Rules for submission of the manuscript text

The division of the text into five parts serves a philological purpose, allowing analytical examination of each segment, which aids in interpreting textual themes, stylistic features, and the use of linguistic devices. Line breaks in the transcription of the original manuscript are preserved. In the adaptation of the manuscript transcription, capital letters are maintained for names in accordance with traditional orthographic and theological conventions (Jesus Christ, Lord, Saviour, Gregory), which these retain as a mark of respect, hierarchical status, or theological significance within the text.

Prolegomena

The Holy image of the venerable icon of the Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is referred to as *pietas* in Roman, which in Russian signifies ‘charity (compassion)’ or ‘piety’, but not despondency.

The Exegesis: Part I

This is not the creation of the human’s thought or imagination, but the Saviour Himself has shown Himself to His servant, to the saintly Pope of Rome, Gregory, the author of the spiritual writings to his deacon Peter that are beneficial for the soul.

The Exegesis: Part II

He has shown Himself during the proceeding of the Divine Liturgy, sacredly activating a fearful, bloodless sacrifice, when holiest Gregory placed the fourth part of the Holy and sacrificed lamb in the chalice.

Exegesis: Part III

When the pious Pope saw this Divine image, not created by human hands, while standing in front of the chalice, he was touched because it was so beautiful, and he was moved to spiritual tears, marveling at the inexpressible descent of the Saviour, just as he had seen with (his) eyes in the Holy Spirit.

Part IV:

And just as he had seen with his own eyes in the Holy Spirit, he instructed the iconographers/icon-writers [N. Z.] to write [N. Z.] such a Holy Image of the Saviour. And from that time on, such images of the Saviour began to be written/depicted in the churches of God.

Part V

This is the story I received from pious Italian people. I lived with them a quite a long time when I was quite young and when I still lived a secular life. Just as I have heard it, now I am telling it to your Holiness.

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Sveti Maksim Grk: *Pietas* in videnje papeža Gregorja Velikega

Povzetek

Pričujoča razprava obravnava kompleksno temo ozadja vzpostavljanja ikonografskega motiva *pietas*. Povod za to in osrednje mesto v študiji predstavlja nekoliko neobičajna in razmeroma neznana interpretacija omenjene krščanske upodobitve, kot jo je zapisal v prvi polovici 16. stoletja sv. Maksim Grk. V svojem besedilu je sv. Maksim zapisal natančno filološko-teološko eksegezo te ikonografske upodobitve, znane pod imenom *pietas*, ob kateri se je tudi kritično dotaknil neustreznega razumevanja, kot ga je opazil v Rusiji, in sicer ga je zmotilo približevanje pomenu resignacije oziroma duhovne stagnacije. Vendar pa Maksim nadaljuje svojo interpretacijo z navezavo na legendo, ki jo je slišal med svojim bivanjem v severni Italiji in ki govori o liturgični izkušnji papeža Gregorja Velikega. Prek opisa papeževega videnja Maksim razkriva edinstveno razsežnost ikonografije Jezusa Kristusa.

Besedilo Maksima Grka pomembno uvaja prepoznavno vzhodnokrščansko terminologijo, s čimer se vzpostavi primerjalna možnost kulturno-zgodovinske refleksije. Izvirno besedilo je v tokratni študiji pogojno razdeljeno na pet delov, ki so podrobno in večplastno predstavljeni. Filološko analizo dopolnjujejo teološke vzporednice razumevanja in nazorske korelacije. Prispevek na večdimenzionalni ravni raziskuje zgodovino nastanka omenjenega besedila. S tem poseže v globlje plasti doumevanja vsebine obravnavanega ikonografskega motiva in omogoča nove možnosti interpretacije. Pregledno in strnjeno osvetljuje teološke premise (tudi prek vzhodnih koncilov) v težavnih obdobjih določanja temeljev in pravil krščanske ikonografije na vzhodu in na zahodu.

Osrednja tema, opazovana skozi zgodovinski metodološki vpogled, kliče k možnemu ponovnemu ovrednotenju sprejetih (tradicionalnih, konvencionalnih) umetnostnozgodovinskih in kulturnozgodovinskih paradigem ter odpira diskutabilno refleksijo o temeljnih vprašanjih zahodne in vzhodne kulture. Zdi se, da taka študija vodi stran od osnove *pietas*, kot smo jo poznali doslej. Vendar pa se na koncu zazdi, da morda nikdar še nismo bili tako blizu razumevanja bistva *pietas*. Kratka zgodovina ikonografskega pomena *pietas* je tako predstavljena zgolj kot ena od ugank humanistične percepcije umetnosti in zgodovine. Prav izvirno besedilo sv. Maksima Grka pa je tisto, ki bralcu ponudi novo razsežnost razumevanja srži upodabljanja in interpretacije podob Sina Božjega.