HYPOSTASIS HISTORICITY REPRESENTED IN THE MOLDAVIAN RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS DURING THE XVth AND XVIth CENTURIES

Vasile Cristescu[*]

University 'Al. I. Cuza', Faculty of Orthodox Theology, 9 Closca, 700065 Iasi,
Romania

Abstract

The discovery of the hypostasis historicity as an irreducible existence to its nature, reflected in the Moldavian Orthodox iconography (XVth-XVIth centuries) helps understanding the unity and the inner connection between iconography plans achieved in the integral vision of salvation history having the centre in the Trinitarian persons, particularly the person of Christ, making possible the connection with the Byzantine post Byzantine iconographic tradition.

Keywords: hypostasis, history, salvation history, nature, Byzantine tradition

1. Introduction

The analysis criteria of the elements of Byzantine and post-Byzantine Anthropology can be found in church paintings of Moldova from the XVth and XVIth centuries. All scientists of Wallachia and Moldavian culture of the fifteenth century recognize the originality of this culture within the meaning of creative synthesis [1]. The existence of Byzantine elements across the cultural life of both countries was never questioned. Certain Byzantine elements were discovered in an old Romanian civilization where Byzantine forms have ceased to be united with the realities of these countries [2].

The words of the eminent researcher I.D. Stefanescu are totally true in this respect: "Each icon is linked to an historical and artistic prototype very distant in time" [3].The discovery at Mount Sinai of the most consistent collection of Byzantine icons from the VIth century to XIVth century has given the opportunity to follow up this kind of art as a whole, hand in hand with the mural painting [4]. Early icons, as well as those of the last phase of Byzantine art [5], circulated worldwide by Byzantine artistic heritage. A monographic study considers later Greek icons that belong now to the treasures of Venice, a city where there worked many famous painters and Greek refugees after the fall of

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[*] E-mail: veniamin2001@yahoo.de

Constantinople [6]. Icons with artistic qualities of the sixteenth century made by famous artists of this painting school have been preserved throughout the Balkan world [7] and Romanian collections, as can be seen at Golia Monastery in Iasi. In all the monasteries founded in the early years of the fifteenth century (Bistriţa, Neamţ, Bogdănesti, Umor, Pângăraţi, Bisericani, etc.) the artistic and historical tradition of the existence of old icons has been transmitted. Latest Greek Icons of Cretan Athonite schools circulated continuously in a large number and are stored now in the Romanian collections. This argument is necessary in order to show the prototype link with its later icons from the Romanian lands.

Our study is mainly intended to show the continuity of iconographic representations of Byzantine theology in Wallachia and Moldova during the XVth and XVIth centuries and also to go beyond the unilateral interpretations of some researchers regarding these representations due to the lack of theological training necessary for understanding the representation of the hypostasis in iconography. We should focus on the most representative iconographic representations.

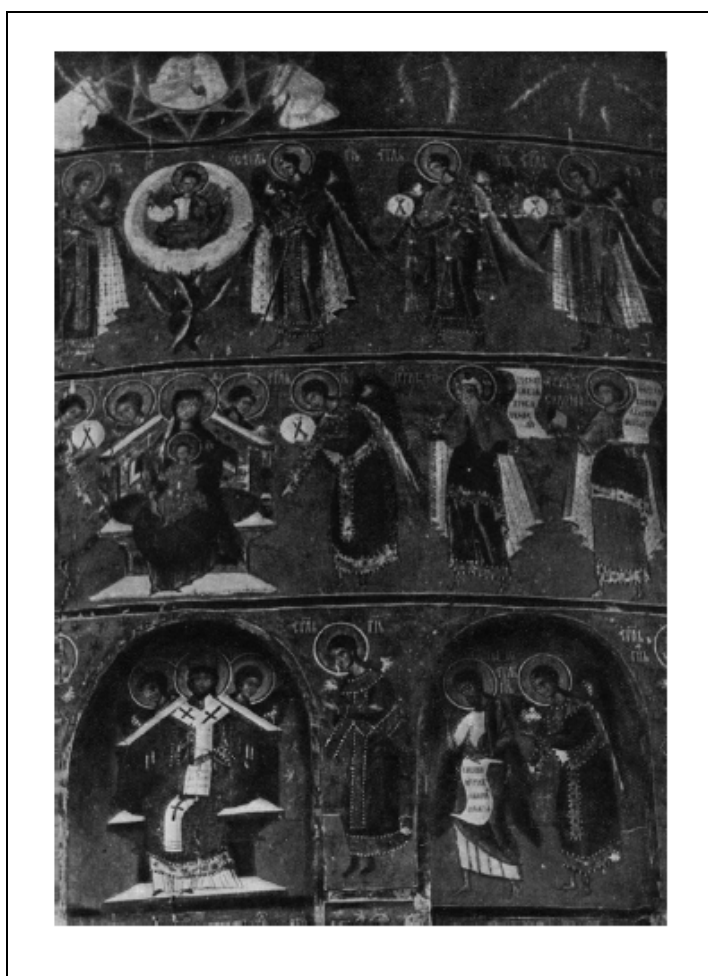## 2. Hypostasis movement in the history of redemption depicted in the painting of Sucevita Monastery

The whole iconography of Suceviţa monastery from the XVth-XVIth centuries created difficulties in understanding the authentic paintings [8]. In particular, the scenes and characters do not allow an immediate approach nor a purely technical one, because it would involve the risk of individualizing the represented characters and their removal from the relationship with the entirety and the iconographic context. The most appropriate approach that the painter had in mind, when painting the characters, was the history of salvation. In the history of salvation we can find the hypostasis historicity that marks the story, retaining its identity and also this hypostasis link to the whole series of events that happened before or after, that can be found in the sacred history and are related to hypostasis. It is said that at Suceviţa, one can find subtle innovations regarding the whole concept of painting where the history of human salvation begins in the nave before the spirit of grace.

Actually the painter wanted to convey the reality of this history of salvation which has as starting point the creation of the world and man ending with Christ's ascension to Heaven and his staying on the right hand of the Father. That is why at Suceviţa this route is pursued in its historical reality in order to maintain the contact between the Old and New Testaments and simultaneously to show the reality prefigured in the Old Testament and its fulfilment in the New Testament.

It is kept here the link between reality and their distinction as it is reflected at hypostasis level that makes possible the iconographic representation [9]. Understanding this can only be made retroactively in the history of salvation, through Christ as the fulfilment of its subject. Therefore, the so-called

'innovation' from the iconographic representation of Sucevița in reality isn't but a genuine expression of salvation history which does not affect the iconographic plan, but it confirms its inner link.

In this respect as in the existing order expressed in the reality of salvation history, namely that salvation comes from God to man, must be taken into consideration the representations of the sanctuary apse axis under the roof to buttress up to the central apse, in which people represent Christ, Virgin Mary, and the sides, the seven horizontal registers showing the heavenly and Church hierarchy starting with seraphims, angels and continuing with prophets, apostles, bishops, martyrs, hermits and monks. Sitting or running, all the characters are facing the central axis. All these historical characters create the scene called *Cinul* (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Order of Sucevița.

The horizontal rhythm and pits verticality that go to the upper third register confers to the facades of the three apses an alternate geometric choice to break the uniformity of characters' conduct. In addition, the exterior painting at Suceviţa indicates an alternation that far from harming the whole, it gives rhythm and symmetry.

The alternation and symmetry practically confirm here the identity of the hypostasis represented in painting, breaking in the history of salvation the uniformity and repetition that are evident in the man marked by sin, sunk in his own nature, which he holds individually, disconnected from other people's nature. Rhythm and symmetry is given by the fact that these hypostases or persons are not wholly outside from each other, being linked by the unity of human nature. All expresses a rhythm and symmetry, because the liturgy or praise brought to Christ by the beings created has a cosmic feature. Therefore, the angels painted in the second register walk with their heads bowed each one having a spear in one hand and on the other a disc bearing the initials of Christ the Redeemer, signifying the universal nature of Christ's sacrifice.

3. Upward movement of the created human beings towards God in the representation of the 'Ladder' at Sucevita.

On the northern front, between the narthex window and the buttress of the right wall that separates the nave mortuary occupying the centre front, representing the Ladder of Saint John Climacus is the most extensive iconographic representation of the Last Judgement and also one of the most beautiful compositions of this painting period (Figure 2).

And here the vertical order alternating with the curve gentle movement of the nimbed head, suggests a sequence of bright and peaceful beauty.

By placing rows of angels, this silent and majestic beauty receives a universal value [10]. Here is highlighted the movement of the created beings towards God, a constituent movement of the created beings, and its positive role. The movement that Saint Maximus the Confessor is talking about his writings [11], highlighted in the iconography of angels' scene, is characteristic for the painting of human hypostases at Suceviţa and for the saints. It will express their process of deification in connection with Christ.

As regards the representation of demons and hell at Suceviţa, the interpretations given to this representation are marked by subjectivness and ignorance of Church teaching. The painter from Suceviţa respected this teaching. According to modern interpretations, chaotic darkness of hell is marked by a 'fierce dynamism' [8, p. 62]. In reality hell as well as the bodies represented as fell into it lacks any dynamism, because it represents the absence of existence and also the absence in Community, the appropriate definition of hypostasis. So it has no face or hypostatic existence.

Figure 2. Ladder of Sucevița.

But there is no movement in it, as modern interpreters believe, but a state of immobility. Even if in it, beings with human face are represented, in reality it refers here to the hypostatic existences characterized by movement, which cannot be upgraded or put into work in the state of hell. Essentially hell means the inability to love and be in communion. Therefore where communion is missing, the movement is missing. In hell, there cannot be found a 'chaotic motion', in whose attractiveness bodies would fall, as stated in the studies regarding Sucevița [8, p. 62].

Sucevița painter suggested through the falling bodies into hell the minus of existence and distance from the communion with the supreme person, Christ. The minus of existence does not mean little movement. Hell is immobility and lack of communion. In no case the devils from the scene of the Ladder of Saint John Climacus at Sucevița constitute a "dynamic element par excellence" [8, p. 62] as modern interpreters state, but the expression of death and the lack of existence. Devils do not have a personal face and „expressiveness in attitude" [8, p. 72] but rather the image they take after the way the work of wickedness works, one can see the absence of any expression, because the face is completely dark. Devils are not painted with a face that might express an identity, but take that image of evil whose cause they become in those that the biggest evil works in, meaning the distance of man from God. Therefore, in their work is seen only the fall, the opposite work of grace.

In no work of any Church Father devils are presented as dynamic elements by excellence and neither in the teaching of Saint John Climacus. As in the 'Ladder' of Saint John Climacus there is no teaching about people who climb "not with the peace of a destiny which drives" but of the decision to come up through their willingness or that the staircase and their climb are the "becoming stairs" [8, p. 72] that man ascends "alone between the two realms" as stated Muzicescu and Berza [8, p. 74]. This would, mean, that in Eastern iconography would be played only a becoming of the being and not a way of expressing the nature through hypostasis or a person transfiguration. It would leave to the nature level and would not reach the person level [12, 13].

In reality the hypostasis or person represents the irreducibility of human being to his nature, and that is plastically suggested by the Romanian Church iconography. In relation to grace that comes from holiness, emphasizing the becoming at nature level of the man who is "alone between the two lands" would mean Pelagianism, a conception that man would start his salvation and grace would then be added. But this doctrine is missing from Saint John Climacus as well as from the other parents. In reality the Ladder of Saint John Climacus represents the grace in his work of salvation that comes only from God [14].

In the Ladder scene from Suceviţa, Christ is at the upper end of the scale, because He is the source of grace which makes possible the human ascent to God. The people's silent climb of the ladder is not the one of a destiny that would drive them because this would cancel their freedom as individuals or hypostases but the quietness of feeling the grace as a work of God. In addition, the idea of destiny is missing in the Old and New Testament and further in Christianity [15].

Those who climbed the ladder are saints whose personal faces are quiet and peaceful. These states are encountered in the person level and their ascent is expressed at the personal level and not the nature one where one can talk only about their likeness, according to the Promethean myth. Modern interpreters say that the scale of Saint John of Suceviţa crosses a period of time, but an abstract period of time [8, p. 95]. But this understanding is inadequate taking into account the iconographic content of this monastery. In reality it is about the salvation time expressing human synergy with grace. It is time for human communion with Christ [16, 17].

The ascent at this time is not abstract but real and dynamic. The scale represents the basis of the ascent or grace. Therefore, the motion that accompanies it gives dynamism to the period. Human's ascent takes place not in his self-sufficiency, but in synergy, in human cooperation with grace. This understanding has its basis in the eastern Theology with a strong biblical representation: patriarch Jacob's dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the ground with the tip touching the sky (Genesis 28.12). This place was named James, Bethel (house of God) (Genesis 28.19). So it wasn't named after a human work, nor is the expression of the human will. As well as the scale represented at Suceavita.

Another scene is over the threshold, verse 24th of the Akathist, unique in the Moldovan painting period, depicting *the Virgin with Jesus' face on her chest,* standing in front of a large tent. At Virgin's feet on both sides, under the open wings of the tent, on the right the bishops are kneeling and on the left the crowd in red clothes is worshiping the Virgin. The representation of the Virgin near the tent was not yet made in iconography. The tent located in front of Virgin Mary is the holy tent of the Old Testament where the holy tabernacle was placed, having two seraphim at the ends with open wings, covering the tabernacle.

Virgin Marry spent some time in the holy tabernacle, in holiness and acquired a personal purification [18]. Virgin was the most holy, because she born God made flesh, Jesus Christ, Son of incarnated God [19]. The distinction between personal and natural is also kept in the representation of the Virgin and explains her purity and the meaning of representing the tent before the Virgin. Also it is shown Virgin's special place in salvation history. Virgin is linked to a number of ancestors represented by the crowd in red clothing, namely the one of martyrs. In terms of iconography program and truth content revelation shown by Moldoviṭa painting, executed in 1537, it continues the previous tradition [20]. This is particularly important for our study because expresses the Byzantine nature of the paintings and with it their theological content specific to the Byzantine theology. As we have seen, this is also true for the paintings from Suceava.

4. The historical character of the genealogy of Jesus Christ body presented at Moldovita monastery

Cinul from Moldovita shows a part of salvation history namely the genealogy by flesh of Christ the Saviour. This is exemplified by the tree of Jesse. From the flowers cup of this tree grow busts of saints, just to show Christ's Davidic descent as body. The saints growing from the flowers cup shows the holiness tribe of David, expressed by persons or personal faces that make the historical connection with the holiness Spring, Christ. On the three apses is placed the heavenly Church and the earthly Church, meaning *'Cinul'* just to show that holiness of Christ bears fruit in the Church that works in history and that is represented by the convoy of saints and martyrs painted in the centre of the main apse, then stretching the walls of the two lateral apses.

Aimed at proving the continuity in rendering the historicity hypostasis or person in the iconography of churches from Walachia and Moldavia (XVth-XVIth centuries), our study will help us prove that the continuity background of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine iconography remained in these centuries even when foreign influence started to be felt. Byzantine iconography and its own characteristic way in which the identity of the hypostasis is represented as its location in salvation history has been preserved and expressed in church painting of these two centuries in the Romanian Countries.

Figure 3. The Tree of Jesse from Moldovița.

Therefore, the entire exterior painting of Moldovita, the scenes represented in them, having high and elegant figures takes place in a processional arrangement that leads to an interesting linear rhythm [21] (Figure 3). But this rhythm is closely related to the linear conception about the time present in salvation history that includes the Old and New Testament. Reading and understanding this history and this linear time has to be done retroactively, from Christ, meaning from the fulfilment of time backwards. Therefore the saints represented in the iconography of monasteries are positioned towards Christ as the centre of history and the fulfilment of time and holiness.

Vivid and varied movements of the characters do not suggest as some researchers [20, p. 60] would say the humanizing tendency of some types by the painter and the power of feelings expression, these being the main qualities of these painting of Moldovita, according to these researchers. The affirmation of this kind of principle up to its emphasize lead to the transformation of the icon in picture, and the latter has nothing to do with salvation history and Byzantine iconography rules that expresses it.

In reality the faces of saints and their whole attitude express holiness as the fulfilment of the human, meaning transfigured humanity, made transparent in the light of holiness. That is why saints' faces are bright, beautiful and full of inner peace. Their light beauty has nothing to do with the bodily beauty of the characters from Renaissance paintings. The beauty of saints' faces from the Romanian churches is given by bodies shape and spiritual beauty.

5. Historical time and eschatology fulfillment in the person of Christ depicted at Neamt Monastery

Therefore in these paintings isn't presented just a humanization of the human, but its transfiguration, which sees human contact with divine grace, or deification, as a specific topic of Theology and Byzantine painting. It can also be seen in iconographic representations of the sixteenth century Moldavian tombs. After restoration work in Neamṭ monastery crypt, scenes were discovered that allow a re-evaluation of the mural entirety.

Here was painted the Deisis theme, with Jesus as a High Priest, surrounded by winged symbols of the evangelists, archangels and seraphim, apostles, bishops and martyrs, and in the eardrums, *Christ's birth, circumcision and Bringing Jesus to the temple (north), Jesus tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus reading in the synagogue from the prophet Isaiah's book 8 (south), Wedding at Cana (west)*. The two registers that follow include a cycle of *Wonderland, Transfiguration* and *Passion* cycle. All programs were put under *Deisis* sign making the shift from the historical time to eschatology. But in this respect history is not dissolved, it constitutes a criterion for the Judgement. This was the reason of representing in Moldavian tombs of the churches, during the sixteenth century, saving events and miracles of Christ's historical life. If these events from Christ's life wouldn't have been represented, would have been thought that eschatology would represent for Christ what represents for a prophet: events that will happen in the future. In the person of Christ time rendering modes are not separated, but united. In the person of Christ the eschaton is fulfilled, this achievement remains to be assimilated by Christians partly during their lives and fully after death.

This fulfilment in the person of Christ begins with his *birth.* Thus in the painting from Neamṭ, *Advent* is the first holiday, all the other arising from it, and on the arc the two chosen scenes highlight the double nature of the Child: the divine one recognized by Simeon and the human one illustrating regular ritual practices in Judaism, circumcision. This was accompanied by the words of God establishing a "circumcised heart" (Deuteronomy 30.6).

Thus the salvation history is depicted in eastern iconography not as a natural string of facts, but as a history that sees humanity transformation by the grace of God, transformation fulfilled in Christ but required by God to the chosen people even in the Old Testament. Circumcision of the heart could be fulfilled in Christ, so the physical circumcision was rejected once with Christianity because it had no effect in the humanity renewed in Christ. This is also the meaning of the Pantocrat painting from Neamṭ next to Christ's circumcision scene. He was circumcised in order to respect the law but dissolved physical circumcision because he perfectly fulfilled the law in its spiritual side.

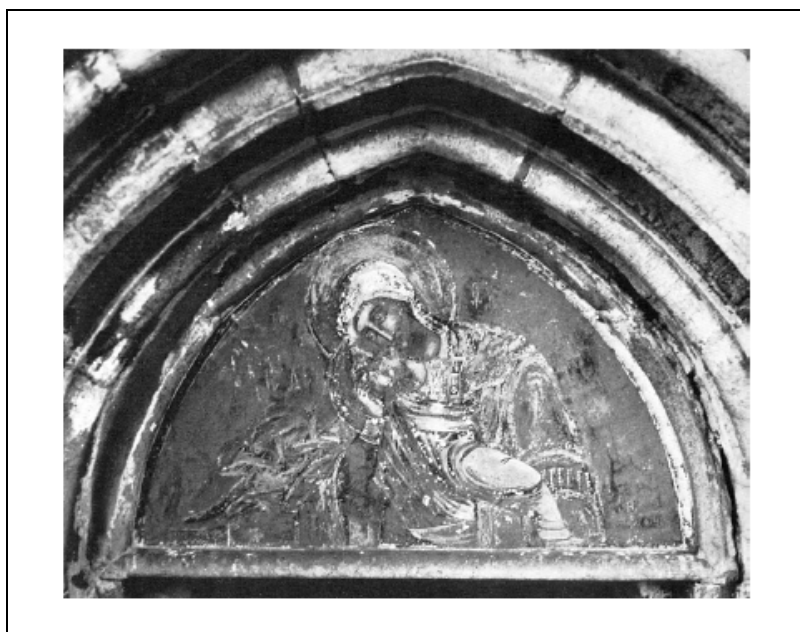### 6. Unity in personal multiplicity depicted in the iconography of Humor Monastery

In the church narthex painting of Humor Monastery (XVIth century) one can see what Paul Henry said at the beginning of the XXth century that "in all Christian art there are few works that through the correctness of features, usage of registers and symmetry of combinations can offer something more satisfying for the most demanding eye" [22]. P. Henry says that the artist seems to have painlessly found at Humor the great Byzantine tradition. But other unfair claim of P. Henry is that the masterpiece of the early Byzantine art would come through Italy [22]. Also in the last century the great Russian scholar P. Florensky showed that the Eastern perspective in iconography is largely different from the Italian one [23]. In addition, P. Comarnescu noted that the narthex vault of Humor is not an isolated occurrence in the Moldavian painting during Petru Rares era, examples of a similar quality being at Probota Moldovita, Voronet, Saint George and Saint Demetrius from Suceava, which involves the artistic medium format [24].

`This observation provides our study arguments of special weight. It is particularly sending us to the historicity of hypostasis from the Eastern painting that is depicted in this very painting, concretely in the history of salvation. The hypostasis represented here has features that distinguish it from the natural man. Instead of purely bodily aesthetics there are being outlined here the transparency, delicacy, sensitivity for others, communion with them, features rendered on the face and on the attitude of the depicted person, namely the saint (Figure 4).
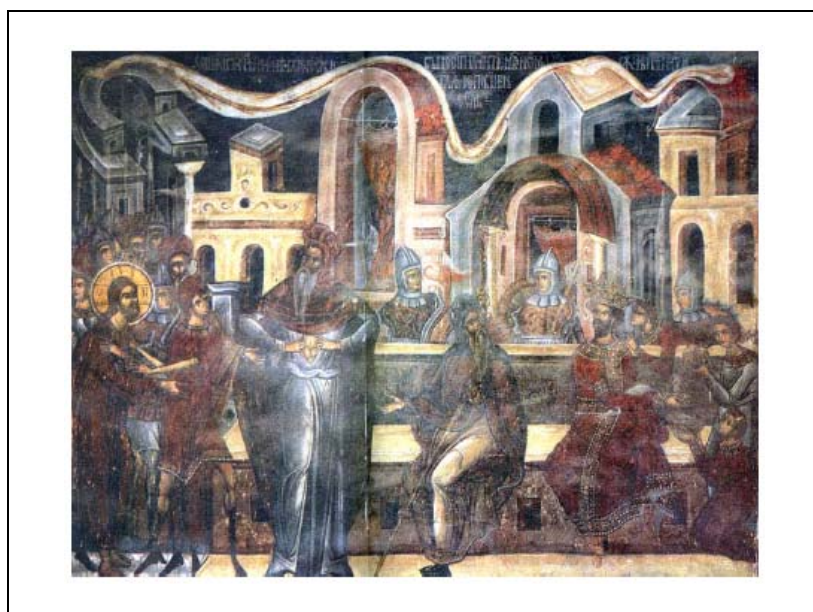
Virgin embodies these qualities more than them. In the west portal of Humor Monastery the icon of the Virgin is painted. "Unique in the Romanian old painting this icon takes over the iconographic type of old Byzantine tradition of the 'Loving mother'" [25]. The child is facing his mother strongly cuddling her face and leaving his head back and while hugging her, Virgin sustains him with her left hand and with her right hand caresses his head. It is expressed here the maternal tenderness and filial love theme found in Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting.

On the right side of the crypt and partly of the nave of Humor Monastery there is represented *Jesse Tree,* vertically framed by ancient philosophers figures. On a blue and bright background is presented the complex family tree of Jesus Christ. What for modern interpreters seems to be "an ornamental vegetable network" [25, p. 27] wants to emphasize an organic relationship, of nature from salvation history. But this relationship of nature is embodied in personal ways of existence or hypostases that are the prophecies appearing in the mesh and cups of this link, just to show that by flesh Christ is foretold by the prophets as the Son of Man in his true connection of nature with his ancestors. Thus we have reached a new aspect of our study regarding the possibility of the uniform and continuous vision of a whole history of salvation which is rendered in the Romanian painting as a whole unit, where people are not lost in the whole, but

appear in their particularity and also in their relationship with others in the history of salvation.

Figure 4. Virgin Mary from Humor.

Figure 5. Catching Jesus from Dobrovat.

There is a unity in the personal multiplicity rendered in the iconography depicted in these churches. But these persons that are in a unitary history related on the inside to God's grace are not depicted in iconography as single sporadic simple projections, but rendered in their relation to specific events from their lives as it is the case of the saints, and even with saving events they live and participate at by the faith received through the Church.

For this reason saving events, such as *Miracles of Christ,* told in a register kept inside and outside the church do not remain isolated in that register, but are shown connected to the person of Christ and also to their relationships with the persons who live them in church life. Thus in the following records are presented these people that have acquired sanctity in relationship with Christ. In this regard the following records contain the Holy Apostles, the hierarchy of the apostolic period and the one of the subsequent periods, martyrs and hermits, etc.

Thus, understanding the history of salvation means understanding the grace of the Holy Spirit which is the same for everyone. While contemplating such an entirety one can notice the hypostatic variety of characters and their relationship given by the work of the inner grace. This is shown by the pictures of the Moldavian monastery Dobrovăț, built by Stephen the Great (1504).

7. Narrative cycle of Dobrovat: historical hypostasis expression of Christ in the doctrine of salvation

Made in 1529 on the initiative of Petru Rareș, the paintings from Dobrovăț nave form what modern interpreters call 'narrative cycle', which covers the entire cycle of the Passions, the lives of saints, directly illustrating historical texts (Figure 5). This cycle begins on the southeast corner near the altar; takes place on the south wall goes on the west and then goes on the north, on a continuous basis.

There should also be noted that the large number of episodes is therefore not crumbling the painted surface because in order to ensure the unity of its composition the painter has used a very scholarly distribution of the elements in a unified vision.

Like the other paintings of Moldova monasteries, at Dobrovăț we have an eloquent confirmation of our study regarding the historicity of the hypostasis acting in the salvation history, retaining the identity but also its relationship with others. Particularly the identity and its historicity are given by the connection with the absolute person, Christ. Therefore everything related to its rendering is linked to Christ as the creator and redeemer of the world. At Dobrovăț this reality is depicted by the composition that fully frames in the so-called 'complete type' where different episodes subordinate to a dominant idea in order to emphasis it.

This is shown at Dobrovăț on the west wall, where the Passion cycle, divided into three episodes, is united in a single composition. On the left side there is an impressive representation of *the Passion of Christ,* a work which by its artistic qualities places itself among our best old paintings. The compositional

centre is occupied by the person of Christ. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is depicted wearing a scarlet robe having as mace a cane and a crown of thorns on his head that tamped down by the executioners. Thin and tall, dominating as presence the whole picture, Christ's face expresses his sufferings assumed till the end in the middle of the convulsed bustle of those who mock him. The various movements are captured with the science of anatomical expressivity, the strong and varied drawing contributing to the overall power of expression.

That the painter of Dobrovăț has a particular attraction for the composition of a symbolic nature, less common, results from the importance he gives to the biblical episode of sharing clothes. Modern interpreters see this act as a secondary one [26]. About the clothes of Christ which were to be shared, the prophet David had to say: "Divided have been my clothes and for my clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 21.20) (Figure 6).
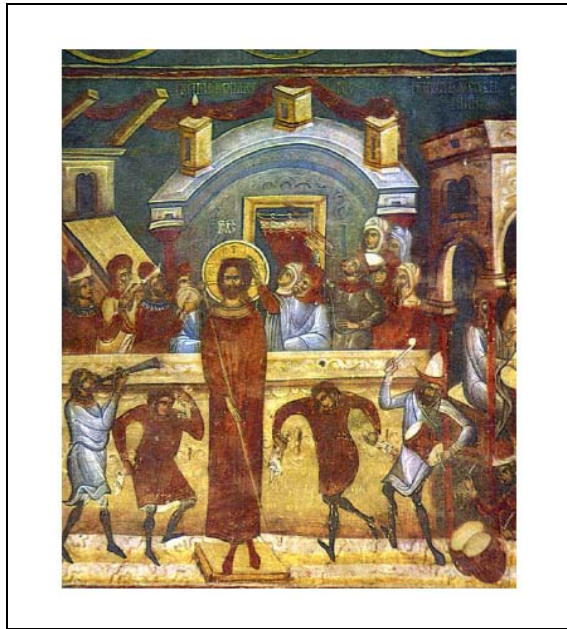
So what the painter has depicted at Dobrovat by sharing the clothes of Christ has a historic status retroactively proved through the prophecy of David in the sufferings of Christ.

This can be stated with certainty based on the biblical accounts as follows: a future event concerning the Person of Christ is said by a past time (they split), as being already fulfilled, implying a specific historical context in order to prove the veracity of the event (Christ's person, the clothes and those who share them in a certain time in the life of Christ) is now shown as fulfilled in the present taking into account the real person of Christ.
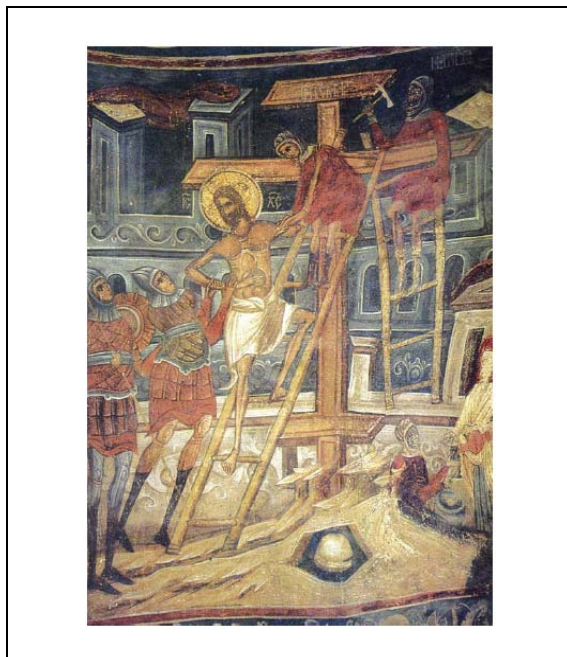
The historical person and the historical context this event happens, meaning the passions are the same as the one described by the prophet David long ago. But what was announced as historical fact is still true now through a historic event of a real person living in a well defined time and space, but which through its personal divine-human structure and through its works goes beyond history. Thus the stage of sharing clothing is not of a secondary nature, nor in Scripture, nor in iconography. We face an image with symbolic content resulting not only from the unexpectedly large proportions of this episode, but also from the settlement in the very geometric centre of the entire western wall.

The last section of the western cycle register of the Passion of Christ from Dobrovăț is not but the beginning of the long composition '*The Cross road*', composition continued on the north wall of the nave. Depicted on the frieze, with several groups and characters, it seems to have been preferred by the artist to show more convincingly the development in a real history with real characters and contexts, the suffering of Christ. For the images '*Climbing on the cross*' and the '*Crucifixion*' condensed compositions have been chosen that pay attention to the deep meaning beyond the story facts.

The climbing on the cross emphasizes one more time the talent of the anonymous artist. With the body weakened by suffering, Jesus climbs hardly the torture stairs pulled by an executioner and pushed by a soldier, against whom the convict's glance turn back meaning power for the deified body.

Figure 6. Jesus' Crowning from Dobrovat.

Figure 7. Accesion of Jesus on the cross from Dobrovat.

He lives the drama of death for disobedience, shows firmness not of a simple man, but of Christ, the God-Man. On Christ's face you won't see despair, but manhood, as suggested by his body, boundless by a cowardly fear, but by a fear assumed, defeated in the establishment of hypostasis, because the one who would receive the death penalty is not a simple man, but the Son of God made man.

But the return of Christ upright before the crucifixion shows at Dobrovăţ his stickiness to the fallen humanity, represented by the soldiers who push him to the supreme sacrifice of death. He, who sits right in his ascent on the scale of passions, on top of which there is the cross, is the one who cannot be defeated by death, standing triumphantly right in front of it as God-man (Figure 7). The vertical position of Christ in the way of his passions, as depicted in general in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting, particularly in the painting of Dobrovăţ, distinguishes him from The exhausted Christ, hung on the cross hanging without any power as in the Italian Renaissance paintings [27].

Therefore one cannot speak of „keeping the Dobrovat artist in the sensitivity zone of Baroque art, as asserts V. Dragut in his studies on Dobrovat Monastery. Representing Christ in a vertical position, like that of Dobrovăţ, before death is a specific theme for Theology and Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting and not for the Baroque one. Even the Crucifixion scene shows Christ triumphant over death, as the Lord over death and not as a man overwhelmed by death as nothingness, as Italian iconography suggests. This fact differs dramatically Baroque from Byzantine painting, Western respectively [28].

8. Virgin Mary and the apostles throughout the history of Dobrovat

In the iconographic scene of *Virgin's dormition* in the nave of Dobrovăţ church there is clearly depicted a return to an old Byzantine-Balkan model that has found a first monumental solution in the Romanian painting of the princely church of Curtea de Arges. "The symbolic link between the two images (the one of Death and of Virgin Mary placed on the throne with the baby on her knees, surrounded by two archangels, image located in the centre of the vault) is evident, reinforcing the belief that the paintings from Dobrovăţ were designed with a subtle understanding of dogmatic" principles [28, p. 21].

Another painting from the altar of Dobrovăţ which represents the Virgin seated on the throne with the baby on her knees, surrounded by two archangels, contributes through its features of compositional organization and qualities of pictorial expression to customize a valuable artistic achievement.

The connection between the two iconographic representations is obvious, underlying the belief that the paintings from Dobrovat [28, p. 22] were designed with a subtle understanding of dogmatic principles. In the iconographic scenes below that have an Christological character, describing the events of the Holy Week, the overall effect of motion is increased. The *Holy Communion of the Apostles* theme of old tradition in Balkan Byzantine painting first appeared in

the Romanian environment here at Dobrovăț, being mentioned later in Muntenia and Oltenia, as in well as in Cozia monastery (1542-1543).
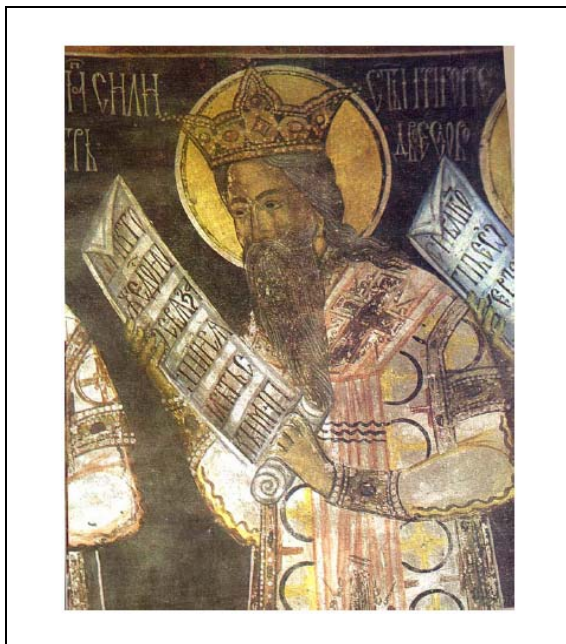
The lower register of the altar from Dobrovăț contains the representation of great hierarchs (Figure 8). From north to south we meet the faces of Saints Spiridon, Gregory, Athanasius, Nicephorus, Mitrofan, John miles, Cyril, John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, Pope Sylvester, Gregory Dialogue, Pope Martin, Herman, Sofronie etc. All hierarchs are bareheaded, except Pope Sylvester Martin who bears the royal crown. This is because Martin Pope († 655) died as a martyr for the Orthodoxy faith fighting for it with Pope Sylvester (†335) and Saint Maximus the Confessor [29], who fought for this Orthodoxy during the 1st Ecumenical Council (Figure 9).

Hypostasis historicity different from its nature and history of salvation from the Old and New Testament as well as the link between them are presented on the two arches from the narthex of the church Dobrovăț. Here are represented important and less important preachers and on the eastern part Joachim and Anne, Virgin's parents, and also the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth. The following registry is fully reserved by the seven Ecumenical Councils. What the painter suggests here is the continuation of the sacred history in church life. Holiness and its work do not stop at the last Apostle, but continues in the Church. It should be noted that the representation of the seven Councils has a great prestige in the Byzantine-Balkan painting of the XIVth century, amid hesychasm renewal movement. In the Romanian Country this representation first appeared at Cozia (1394). From the sixteenth century the theme of the seventh Ecumenical Councils will return regularly in the garnishing of the churches from Moldova.
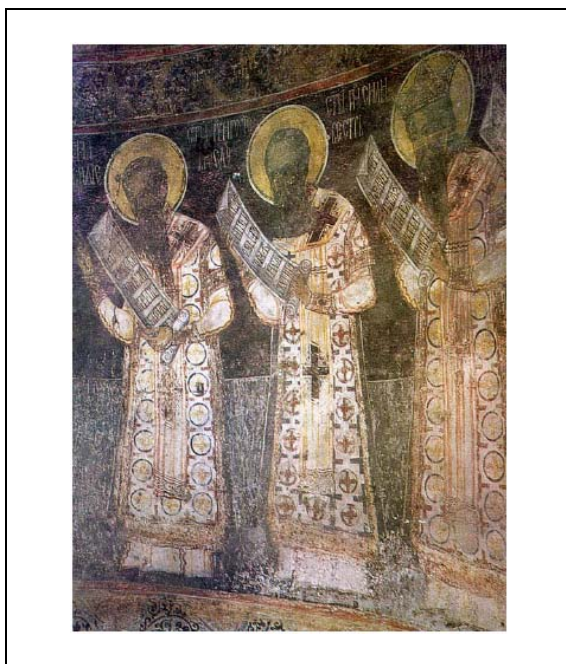
At Dobrovăț for the first time appears in Moldova the representation of the Divine Liturgy and the fact that it was painted in the narthex has to be connected to the ambitious theological load that this monumental painting had. The Divine Liturgy was ichnographically established during the XIVth century, amid the renewal imposed by the hesychasm movement being seen at Athos, Serbia and Macedonia [30]. Bearing unspeakable nobility, the holy characters rendered in the narthex always express positive human values, even if they are presented in suffering. On the contrary, tyrants, butchers and Pharisees are presented rather with stereotyped expressions; the lack of inner harmony is left to the gestures and attitudes that always betray a certain stickiness and coldness of the heart.

As in Dobrovăț, the painting of Voronet Monastery (XVIth century) makes this contrast between the vitality and vigorous movement of saints together with their quiet grace [31]. This stands in striking contrast with the direct realism, often cruel, of some faces. These way, are being put into opposed positions the ineffable beauty of saints and the dark faces of dammed. "The iconographic entirety does not present anything new to the topic naturalized in the South Slavic and Greek painting since Palaeologs" [31, p. 10].

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Figure 8. First hierarch with crown form Dobrovat.

Figure 9. The other hierarchs from Dobrovat.

And here the sacred history is the artist's favourite theme, like the scene of Jesse's Arbor. The idea stressed here as well as the scene of Virgin's Akathist, is the one of finality clear and precisely striking. The sacred history reaches finality through Christ's grace that sanctified and renewed it from the inside. That's why all the exterior painting of Voronet represents a single action of invocation of Christ and Virgin Mary in order to save the historical context of Moldova in danger of foreign invasion, which was likely to inspire faith to people in the final victory [32].

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