

**LEGAL BASIS FOR SYMBOLISM DISAPPEARANCE  
IN SACRAL ART  
(Abolition of regulations that were not good [Ezek 20, 25])**

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**Abstract**

Symbolism is a characteristic of the ancient Christian art. Symbolic and character representations did not seek realism and credibility. Its sacral meaning considered as consecrated was wrapped in esoteric language, but behind simple images, reality lies deep within. Symbolic language expanded and developed easily. However, clear art relieved old symbols and all elements hiding its content. The Quinisext council rule gives first more specific shape of art theory and foundation for the further art growth. In the previous period symbolism was dominant but it was temporary in nature. Symbolism was “other statutes that were not good” (Ez 20, 25).

**Key words:** Sacral, Symbolism, Realism, Quinisext council.

**ПРАВНИ ОСНОВ ЗА ИШЧЕЗАВАЊЕ СИМВОЛИЗМА  
У САКРАЛНОЈ УМЕТНОСТИ  
(укидање уредби које нису добре [Јез. 20, 25])**

**Апстракт**

Символизам је карактеристика старе хришћанске уметности. Символичка и знаковна приказивања нису претендовала на реализам и веродостојност. Њихов сакрални смисао, схваћен као посвећени, био је завијен езотеричним језиком, али иза споља једноставних слика стајала је дубока реалност. Језик симбола лако се развио и распространио. Ипак, у 7. веку је јасна уметност сменила старе симболе и све елементе који су сакривали њен садржај. Једно правило Петошестог васељенског сабора (691–692) даје први одређенији облик теорији уметности и темељ за даљи уметнички развој. У претходном периоду доминирао је символизам који је био привременог карактера, прецизније, то су биле „уредбе које нису добре” (Јез. 20, 25).

**Кључне речи:** сакрално, символизам, реализам, Петошести сабор.

### INTRODUCTION

God is essentially invisible and radically different than man. Yet, Christians have icons<sup>1</sup> of Christ. To what extent iconography was a present problem among ancient Christians? Science claims iconography did not enter church at once, but gradually. However, the fathers of the seventh council state: "Tradition of making icons dates from time of the apostolic preaching" (Mansi, XIII). According to these stances the mediate and immediate support and source of Christian art has been the Bible. Questions regarding religious art surely did not bring too much attention during the first religious enthusiasm (Флоровский, 1990: 247). After religious freedom Christianity develops its own creativity. Church artistic creativity did not happen immediately (Флоровский, 1990: 247). It came gradually over a long time period. Christian art has preserved monuments from the first centuries where the Christians gathered. In many praiseworthy sermons of the church fathers during anniversary of the martyrs' death, there is a testimony of their painted performances (Σιώτου, 1990: 69). This testimony along with the wide prevalence of icons in the next centuries<sup>2</sup> would be inexplicable and incomprehensible without depiction in the early period. The art blossoming occurred after religious freedom of Christianity in the fourth century. This might be conceivable only under the assumption of existing and widespread roots (Bigham, 1992: 124). The period before Emperor Constantine is the period of germination of artistic tradition where the seed is Jewish heritage (Bigham, 1992: 124). New Christian outlook on faith is a fertile land in which God (who is essentially invisible) was incarnate and became visible in order to restore humanity and cosmos and bring them into His Kingdom (Bigham, 1992: 124). "when the climate changed with Constantine, the (Christian) plant luxuriated so much it has squeezed out everything else and dominated the garden" (Bigham, 1992: 124-125). This early Christian art comparison with plant growth is of course imperfect, but it evokes requirements needed for art. The Christian tradition claims the establishment of the holy icons (Σιώτου, 1990: 79) from the very beginning of the Christian faith as of the apostolic origin (Σιώτου, 1990: 65). Christianity in its earliest

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<sup>1</sup> The word Icon is widely accepted among orthodox Christians. In this study the term icon means Christian art in all techniques and formats (miniature, wooden icons, wall icons-composition) as well as Christian sculpture.

<sup>2</sup> Icons during Constantine period were transferred from homes to great temples which testifies the wide spread use of icons. There are two phenomenon influencing the appearance and development of Christian iconography in time of Christ: wide spread and use of many icons and images of rulers and kings (in public places where the honor to them is due) and "the most wide spread practice" of producing icons of personalities without public role. "According to the rule of iconographic presentation, personalities without public role had ordinary character" (Σιώτου, 1990: 54, 71). (Regarding spiritual reasons of the sacral art development of the first centuries in: Ракићевић 2016: 78-82).

period has not been hostile to fine art.<sup>3</sup> A chronological factor, that is antiquity of pros and cons icon testimony was not crucial for Christians, but agreement or disagreement of that testimony with Christian revelation (Успенский, 1997: 18) which recognizes art as something of its own as one of the most prominent features of the early church and its necessary characteristic.<sup>4</sup> Uninformed often think of icon as contrary to the Old Testament. It is actually its outcome and fulfillment.<sup>5</sup> Existence of icon directly proceeds from the absence of a real representation of God in the Old Testament, so it could be realized as a consequence and purpose of icon. Ideologically speaking, pagan idolatry does not precede icon, but absence of true and solid representation before Christ's Incarnation and the Old Testament symbol. The Biblical Israel has bans (Ex. 20, 4, Deut. 5, 12–19). These clear bans were pedagogical and necessary for their cold-heartedness (Ιωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός, Λόγος δεύτερος: PG 94: 1301), but actually they are "statues that were not good" (Ez. 20, 25). This is all testimony that Church's ancestor is not pagan, but ancient Israel (Успенский, 1997: 20).

#### *KEY TO UNDERSTANDING OF THE OLD TRADITION*

According to Dagron there has been a certain hesitation and even repulsiveness regarding make of Christ's icon especially to Christ's realistic representation on icon.<sup>6</sup> The same author thinks that after search for authenticity was over, the odds were for Christ's image<sup>7</sup> that is not "the most authentic one," but the most suitable expectation of Christians. Christ's icons conventionally and wide recognized as orthodox presumably are not appearing before fifth or sixth century.<sup>8</sup> However, the image of

<sup>3</sup> Synthesizing the early Christian written sources and archeological findings it could be stated that literacy and art of the first centuries of Christianity denied hostility theory of first Christians toward (fine) art. Archeology reveals enough marks of the Christian fine art so it existed "de facto" (Bigham, 1992: 123). Church art grows spontaneously with goal to help believers experience catechism and Liturgy; to prosper linearly – from the present state to the future Kingdom of God. Ракићевић, 2011: 301; Ракићевић, 2012: 391.

<sup>4</sup> First icons become popular especially through their copies.

<sup>5</sup> Since existence of icon in the New Testament is assumed based on bans in the Old Testament (Успенский, 1997: 20).

<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, Isaiah's prophesy (Is 52, 2–3) и Ps. 22, 7, served to "first exegesists to conclude Christ was ugly looking and it was enough to prevent His representation." "On the other hand, there is a praxis close to orthodoxy which speculates about two images of Christ—one before and the other after Transfiguration (meaning after seeing his transfigured face and his clothing white as light); Dagron, 1994: 132.

<sup>7</sup> That kind of long hairdo, "long bearded and of uncertain age are 'divine' features which in antiquity were mixing 'human' features of heroes who achieved immortality and representations of apotheosis in antiquity. This is an artistic solution used by artist to express idea of metamorphosis idea". (Dagron, 1994: 136)

<sup>8</sup> The illustrated Sermon of the Mount (probably) in the catacomb, Christ is represented (without halo) with all His individual features and at "His age" (with beard which is not

Christ as we see it on today's icons did not seek explanation. (Dagron, 1994: 136–137). One of the oldest, famous and widespread wooden icons (with an imperial characteristics that is of great artistic value) is the most popular Pantocrator of Mount Sinai painted in post antique technique of encaustic (connective tissue is warm wax). This icon was made virtually in a luscious manner and very realistic.<sup>9</sup> This and other<sup>10</sup> preserved icons which are mutually very close testify time period before iconoclasm in which the icon of Jesus Christ was fully formed. There was need to theologially justify existence of icons which was done during the iconoclastic polemics (Языкова, 1995: 59). Greek letters „ὁ ὢν”– I am who I am (I am being) date from later period. In a byzantine representation of Christ we often see halo and letters around it alpha and omega (see in Jn. 1, 8). Meaning of these inscriptions is the same: they are signs of one-essence of God the Father (Языкова, 1995: 61).

Iconography of the post Apostolic period was developing after Christ's icon as prototype.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, there was a development of the oral tradition transmitted through ecclesial teaching. In that period there is a

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apollonian-solar type who take over after the synthesis of beliefs of emperor Constantine the Great before and after his conversion October 27/8, 312 AD) (Grabar, 1966: 109, fig. 107). Also, on the mosaic of Ostia in Rome at the end of the fourth century presented with Opus sectile technique (panel with bosom 40×30), Christ is represented as a recognizable person (with halo and without Cross). Age of Spirituality 1979: 523, cat. nr. 468. Under the influence of the monumental decoration of roman basilica's apses of that time, Christ is represented in the same way within the scene of Traditio legis, the fresco from the fourth century in the catacomb of St. Peter and Marcelline (Grabar, 1966: 212–213, fig. 223 и 224).

<sup>9</sup> This icon is characterized by realism unusual for classical icons. It gives some impression of sensibility of icon which form according to this understanding was completely fixed. Icon as such, decisively influenced on later representation image of the Lord and thus we have many visage features through centuries till present time (Языкова, 1995: 59). Development of iconography helped the image of Jesus Christ in the consciousness of believers obtain permanent traits. Dynamism of establishing icons through centuries gives an impression of a great diapason of hesitation from 1) the early medieval icons based of Christ external ugliness claim (Is. 53, 2–3) as opposed to external imperial beauty of antique gods and heroes to 2) a “like a living” delightful beauty by iconographer Ushakov (See: Языкова, 1995: 71).

<sup>10</sup> The early representation of Jesus Christ does not include the Savior's icon in the composition of Transfiguration from the monastery of St. Caterine on Mt. Sinai in sixth century, the icon of Christ's coming on clouds from the church of Ss. Cosma and Damian in Rome from sixth-seventh century, the pectoral icon of Pantocrator from the church of Santa Maria foris Portas in town Kastelseprio seventh-eight century.

<sup>11</sup> Most of the researchers' opinion is that in first century and half Christian did not have figurative presentation, but this does not have to be true, so we are not considering this presupposition. It is certain that in that rime there was no ramified network of catacombs since there were not so many buried martyrs around which believers were buried.: Wilpert 1901; Volbach, 1961; Gerke, 1973; Elsner, 1998; Grabar, 1966; Weitzmann, 1975.

special devotion to Theotokos icon<sup>12</sup>, the “fact” recognized by the church as “guaranteeing fidelity of that which relates to its historical characteristics.” Church does not explicate that “fidelity” photographically, but tends to express transcendent reality (Τσελεγγίδης, 1984: 114). Prototype of first icons of Christ and Theotokos were surely diligently preserved and honored houses of their authors or the first mediators. Christ’s icon as the icon of the incarnate Divine person was considered prototype, while Theotokos icon as the one who proclaims the Incarnation of God was not “considered independent.” It had primarily dogmatic meaning pointing to the Incarnation of God the Logos and confirmation of it. Thus, the acknowledgment of Divine economy is not just the case with Christ’s icon, but with Theotokos’ icon as well.

It shows the first human being accomplishing the goal of Incarnation—theosis of man, the first person who entered the unity with Divine. Theotokos in her human personality united with God and “she is not a subject to resurrection or Judgment” (Σιώτου, 1990: 66–68; compare Τσελεγγίδης, 1984: 112–113 and Лосский, 2003: 251). Gregory Palamas writes that as “if God made Theotokos a bond of all divine, angelic and human perfections” so that she is “the boarder of created and uncreated” (Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμάς, PG 151: 468B–472B). Her personal perfection “reveals a path toward theosis of all creation” (Лосский, 2003: 252).

Therefore, Theotokos’ icon is not independent. The Church tradition witnesses existence of Christ’s icon from the period of his earthly life<sup>13</sup> and Theotokos’ icon after the Pentecost<sup>14</sup> when the Holy Spirit once more came upon her.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Priscilla’s catacomb „Cuniculum Velatio“ is place where lies one the oldest representation of Theotokos with Christ Emmanuelle right in the context of symbolic figures of philosophers and orante (as personification of souls). Thus, philosopher instructs about the Incarnation and soul prays on that foundation for its salvation Grabar, 1966: 116, fig. 115.

<sup>13</sup> Historical tradition about representation of Christ is created out of non biblical sources (Σιώτου, 1990: 84, 68). It is connected to so called, the icon of Savior *not made by hand* as the icon of icons. Its name is the basis for any concept of icons in general since it testifies its creation and purpose beyond human creativity (See: Языкова, 1995: 59).

<sup>14</sup> First icons made at the same time with Christianity are icons of Christ and Theotokos. The entire iconography of Church is based on these two personalities. “The mystery of church is sealed in two perfect personalities: divine person of Christ and human person of the Mother of God” (Лосский, 2003: 254) „, in the consciousness of Church the strongest tradition is linked to the icon of Theotokos attributed to evangelist Luce. Certainly, historic testimonies about them originate much later. Σιώτου, 1990: 81.

<sup>15</sup> This did not happen in order to use her nature as a medium like it was the case with the Incarnation, but the Holy Spirit gives Himself over to her personality in order for her to become deified (Лосский, 2004: 252).

Icon agrees with essence of Christianity theologically speaking. It is an artistic expression of theology and worship of the Church (Успенский, 1997: 19). It is based on the fact of Christ's incarnation as the foundation and key to orthodox iconography. Representation of person of Christ on icons makes ontological link between icons and Christianity and His person is the key to understanding icon and therefore tradition relating to icon.

There is an apostolic tradition of icon painted by saint apostle Luce. This tradition is to be understood in the same way as apostolic rules or apostolic liturgies where term apostolic carries apostolic character or authority and not because they were written by apostles (Успенский, 1997: 46). Understanding the tradition in Church is a precondition of understanding origin of iconography. From the day of the Pentecost "Spirit is among us" and with the Spirit the light of Tradition (Lossky, 2003: 18/1): "therefore not just that transferred (as it would be the case with some storage rome, holy and motionless), but the force itself of transferring is given to Church. Tradition follows everything being transferred and it is a unique way of receiving and possessing revelation (Lossky, 2003: 18/1).

#### *ALLEGORY AND NEW UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY*

Representation of mostly biblical motives and martyrs was characteristic till fourth century (Флоровский, 1990: 247). In the catacomb art priority was given to martyr's image and not his martyrdom. The latter is later praxis (Σιῶτου, 1990: 71). There is no representation of martyrs before 313 AD since the martyrdoms were the reality of contemporary Christians persecuted by roman emperors. After year 313 there are martyrdom scenes in Confessio (confession rooms) underneath the church of St. John and Paul in Rome (Grabar, 1966: 218, fig 241). In fact, the early Christian art of "new style" is totally characteristic and natural to the Christian church.

Eschatological character of the Church gave new meaning to this art. It does not tend to represents daily life, but to offer meaning and answer through the gospel. There is no life or psychological content in any of catacombs. According to this art it is impossible to show daily life of Christians (Успенский, 1997: 69). At the dawn of Christian iconography<sup>16</sup> there was no difference which in today's sense would separate profane and church art (Dagron, 1994: 125). In the oldest biography painting there is no "icons" in the true sense of the word (Флоровский, 1990: 247), but there are overseeing elements for later development. It revealed new world outlook and new understanding of reality. Its characteristic is tendency to show

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<sup>16</sup> Icon in greek means image. Icons—images existed in the Greco-roman world just like in early Christian world and later in byzantine period and those profane images were made according to the same artistic rule as later cult images. (Dagron, 1994: 125).

spiritual content of painted which is desire to transmit that invisible (for physical eyes). Having this goal, the early Christian art used allegories—usually gospel stories, the Old Testament archetypes, sometimes apocalyptic visions with decorative and didactic in nature (Флоровский, 1990: 247). Beside that, forms of antique Rome and Greece art are used too and even some pre-Christian symbols and themes from Greco roman mythology filled with new content of course. Instead the term “allegory” the more adequate term is used “symbolic representation” since allegories (popular in paganism) appear till thirteenth century in art of Giotto and Siena artisans.

Either proselytes or pagans, disciples of pagan artisans worked for Christian purchasers by the end of the second century. Yet, their art becomes “co-presentation (saobrazniti) of new religion.” The tomb repertoire was inspired exclusively by the Bible (See: Dulaey, 2001: 37–38). Therefore, the new content slowly changes the form of expression. The newly created art is co-presentation of the Bible, liturgical and patristic writings. Iconography took the elements from artistic drifts of the ancient world assimilating them in a creative way. Artistic language of the period borrowed and reformed almost morphologically ennobled its elements. Iconography accepted “dimmed form by giving them inner light” enabling thus to express high truths with it.

#### *PERIOD OF MILK FOOD SYMBOLS (Heb. 5, 12-14)*

We come to symbolism which is of the main characteristics of the old Christian art. In the period of first Christians, art was filled with symbolic and sign representation which did not seek realism and credibility (Языкова, 1995: 58). Its sacral meaning understood as “sanctified” was “unavailable for people outside who lived across the border of Christian community and it was coated with esoteric language. But, behind simple paintings there was a deep reality”(Языкова, 1995: 59–60).<sup>17</sup> Symbolical language was easily developed<sup>18</sup> and expanded in the early church especially for necessary need where by way of art expresses truth which immediately is not possible to represent.

Christians of the first centuries considered the belief that everything important is not immediately available and it takes effort to discover hidden

<sup>17</sup> For example, Christ was often depicted as fish since the first letter are connected with: Jesus Christ the Son of God, Savoir. The Symbol of Christ was pelican since pelican feeds its children by tearing its bosom. Later we have representation of Christ as the Good Sheppard and often appears on reliefs of sarcophagi in which were buried famous people who usually anonymously confessed Christianity. The Mosaic “Christ the Good Sheppard” with a sheep next to His feet beautifies the tomb of Gala Placida in Ravenna (fifth century): Языкова, 1995: 59.

<sup>18</sup> During its development, iconography was touched by Platonism of eastern patology, its philosophical transcendence where symbolism was implied: returning of sensual to its heavenly roots; Evdokimov, 1970: 143.

meaning normal.<sup>19</sup> Hiding Christian truths for a certain time is totally justified and usual. As soon as it comes to the question of mystery its meaning is never revealed directly.<sup>20</sup> Beside that, period of catechumens lasted long so the gradual revelation is reasonable. There is also a practical cause for hiding—persecution and need to painted scene look incomprehensible to the enemies. Biblical symbols in the beginning (lamb, Noah's ark...) were comprehensible, but with entry of pagans in church, starts take over and cleansing even pagan symbols for its own representation (with scope to educate people).

Christian symbolism was saved from arbitrariness (Dulaey, 2001: 48). There is a very complete order which "tends to express truthful meaning of the Bible" (Dulaey, 2001: 48). Symbols discovered Christian faith, sanctified and educated multitude of Christians.<sup>21</sup> Iconographic symbolism of the first centuries had mere co-presented items as symbols such as fish or grape vine.

However, historic scene itself had symbolic meaning, e.g. resurrected Lazarus accepted as an image of the future general resurrection of dead.<sup>22</sup> And beside the disappearance of symbols, even today as a decorative motive, grape vine<sup>23</sup> exists in the church with the same symbolic meaning.<sup>24</sup> In the next chapters the theme is some symbolism and its disappearance.

In the life of the early church there are representations of Orante which is not taken to be Theotokos. She is represented in Jacob's Star,

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<sup>19</sup> This is a meaning of vagueness in the Bible so it is understandable with art as well. The word of God cannot be reduced to the scripture only just like the work of teacher and preacher is not explaining some text only. The interpreter ought to bring listening to inner teacher who Himself alone truly teaches and reveals. Vagueness of the Bible had two-fold purpose: hiding from ones and stimulus for others: Dulaey, 2001: 49–51.

<sup>20</sup> It is not given directly, "but it is expressed via mediators: angels, symbols, icons, every messenger and carrier of mysterious message"; (Evdokimov, 1970: 143)

<sup>21</sup> It is surprising how literal exegesis occupies little attention for ancient teachers of faith. But, "reading our commentaries they were surprised even more to see how little importance contemporary authors give to interpreting symbols, since for them the true meaning of Bible is found in symbols"; Dulaey, 2001: 48.

<sup>22</sup> Each of that symbols as a form of expression once found and accepted by all church, did not change no more, but it was used and understandable to every Christian independently from his nationality or culture; (Успенский, 1997: 73)

<sup>23</sup> Christ said: "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15, 4–5). Vine indicates Christ and His Church: "I am the vine; you are the branches" (Jn. 15, 5). Birds eating grapes has Eucharistic meaning: Успенский, 1997: 60. "In the old Testament, vine brought by Moses' ministers from Hannah, was a symbol of the Promised Land. In the New Testament, vine also serves as a symbol of paradise, e.g. promised land to those who take communion in Body and Blood of Christ, who are members of Church"; (Успенский, 1997: 60)

<sup>24</sup> According to the words of Clement of Alexandria: "Vineyard gives wine just as the Word give its Blood." (Κλήμης ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς, PG 8: 634)



Isaiah's prophesy, on the fresco of Priscilla's catacomb (Grabar, 1966: 98–99, figs. 94 и 95). Orante representation with lifted hands during prayer highlights the role of prayer.<sup>25</sup> Christ was often represented in symbols during same time period.

In the language of the third century, Orante is not an immediate illustration of Theotokos represented though Orante was represented next to her.<sup>26</sup> It is a personification of soul. Therefore, body decays and the soul pray for salvation. Why is there such abundance of symbols? Symbol was more cognizable than immediate image. The main reasons for abundance of symbols in the first centuries of Christianity are most likely to be gradual preparation for comprehension of mystery of the Incarnation. Even though these symbols are characteristic of Christian teaching (Dulaey, 2001: 33), that is still as stated by Apostle Paul, a milk food for children (Hebr. 5, 12–14). Art was slowly and painstakingly strived toward true iconography. Manifested sacred art slowly replaced early Christian symbols and cleared Christian art from all foreign elements which hide its content (Vrame, 1999: 1).

First and basic meaning of fish is Christ. This is a meaning of every present orthodox icon since every icon is Christ-centric. Here lies the appearance and prevalence of this early Christian symbol. Fish was linked to the gospel statement which led Christians to adopt it as a symbol. Addressing the apostles—fishermen, Christ used comprehensible symbolism of fish and fishing.

Referring to apostolic serving, Christ called them “hunters of men” (Mt. 4, 19). Images of fishermen and fish, as the symbols of preacher and proselyte are completely understandable. Christ said to the Apostles: Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people. (Mt. 4, 19; Mk. 1, 17). He compares God's Kingdom with a net full of all different kinds of fish. The symbol of fish represents heavenly goods (Mt 7, 9–11; 13, 47–48; Lc 5, 10). There is no need for emphasizing that the symbolism of fish is linked to the symbolism of water and Sacrament of Baptism.

The greek word for fish (ἰχθύς) was very early understood as ideogram meaning person and title of Jesus Christ, that is Jesus Christ the

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<sup>25</sup> The oldest image of Theotokos originates from second or thirds century. She is represented in the scene of Three Magi, the Annunciation (Priscilla's catacomb), the Incarnation (St. Sebastian's catacombs fourth century). Simplicity is one of the main characteristics of early Christian iconography, but also clarity and prayer of represented images. The language is pretty clear. This clarity and precision was necessary to represent invisible since in spiritual matters precision and clear expressions are very much needed. That is why Christian art strives toward simplicity as being one of the characteristic of orthodox art till the present day: to express and present deep contents in a simpler way and in less details; (Успенский, 1997: 72)

<sup>26</sup> Priscilla's catacomb “Cuniculum Velatio“. See: Grabar, 1966: 116, fig. 115.

Son of God—the Savior (Gerbran, Ševalije, 2004: 782; compare: Biderman, 2004: 326). Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Υἱός Θεοῦ Σωτήρ. Uspensky said that “in symbolism of fish we have the oldest formula of creed, thickened in one word“ (Успенский, 1997: 61). The importance of this symbol of which the small objects were made and worn around, was so great for the early christians that its meaning was hidden much longer than other symbols. The eucharistic meaning in this symbol is specially emphasized. Fish points to the meaning of bread and wine so that each time when the Eucharist is served whether as agape, the service itself or the mere symbol, there is a fish next to bread.<sup>27</sup> In order to indicate re-presentation of the Eucharist it was added as an external sign—eucharistic symbol of fish. That detail carried a meaning displayed as totally different “sanctifying it from inside with salvific content” (Успенский, 1997: 68).

From the first century in the Christian art there is another important symbol of Christ—the symbol of lamb. The symbol of lamb just like the fish bearing the meaning of Christ Himself was applied to Christians in general especially to the Apostles. Lambs drinking from the upper springs indicate satisfaction of desiring human souls for the living water of gospel teaching. In case there are two lambs, one signifies Church created by Israel and the other Church created by pagans.

The lamb is Christ’ old testament archetype. As the basic symbol of Christ, lamb will be replacing the true image of Christ the Savior whether in historic scenes or in compositions of Baptism and Transfiguration. In these scenes the baptized Christ along with John the Baptist and Apostles are represented as lambs (Успенский, 1997: 61–64). Also, there is a combined symbolism of Paschal victorious lamb associated to the sacrificial death of Christ, the path of those who believe rise up, that is, pass—achieving victory (See: Morris, 1998: 127–129).

*ABOLITION OF REGULATIONS THAT WERE NOT GOOD*  
(Ez. 20, 25)

Symbolism in sacral art performed well through time. Time has come to abolish the *statues which are not good* (Ez. 20, 25). Personality in icon is a necessary goal of representation as an archetype and it cannot be replaced by a symbol. Need to preserve historical consistency increased. The corner stone of the history of Christian icon is Canon 82 of the Quinisext council (“that iconographers do not depict lamb, but Christ’s image”) (*Свештени Канони Цркве*, 2005: 187; *Κώδικας Ιερών Κανόνων και Εκκλησιαστικών*

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<sup>27</sup> That is represented in Calistos’s catacombs (crypt in Lucina, first half of the third century) with fish next to the panner with loaves of bread and a spot of wine on each loaf. Grabar, 1966: 83, fig. 82.

*Νόμων*, 2000: 166). This canon abolishes archaic symbolism of the Old Testament “symbols” and “types” (Флоровский, 1990: 248) but affirms evangelical and fixes sacred-historic realism. Creators of this rule accepted and applied “old archetype and shadows which were passed to Church as symbols and foretold of Truth” (that is, they honored conceptual symbolism and typology with great gratitude), but precedence were “Grace and Truth” (Jn 1, 17) which they received as the “fulfillment of Law.” Fathers of the council speak of ancient symbols as a completed and overcome stage in life of the church emphasizing the historicity of Christ which needs to lead us via “remembrance (commemoration) of His life in body” to remembrance, commemoration “of His resulting redemption of the world.” That is why they established Christ’s representation on icons: “instead of the Old Testament lamb, He is depicted as the image of (God’s) Lamb according to human nature that takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1, 29)” and through that while understanding the greatness of God the Logos’ humility we are being lead to remember (commemorate) His life in the body and suffering, and salvific death and His resulting redemption of the world” (*Свештени Канони Цркве*, 2005: 187; *Κώδικας Ιερών Κανόνων και Εκκλησιαστικών Νόμων*, 2000: 166).

Unlike the “old representations (types) and shadows”, icon has its own support in truth of the New Testament; in fulfilled not old testament Christology which has been excepting the fulfillment (Зизјулас, 2001: 25). The Incarnation made the Son of God historical reality and thus “the Incarnation” imposes “icon-isation” (Зизјулас, 2001: 25). This rule (82 canon)<sup>28</sup> of the Quinisext council in 691–692 AD is of a crucial importance for icons.<sup>29</sup> The beginning of this rule talks about lamb only, but later the Council in general mentions “representations (types) and shadows.” Obviously, the symbolism of lamb is not just a mere symbol among others, but the basic symbol (Успенский, 1997: 96) which contains in itself all other symbolical themes (Успенский, 1997: 96).

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<sup>28</sup> The Old Testament paschal lamb was an archetype of the Lord Christ. Iconographers depicted Christ as lamb (images—frescoes in catacombs from the second to fourth century, mosaics from Justinian period, sixth century). The Fathers of Trullo determine depiction of Christ’s image instead of archetype. “Balsamon based on that thinks that dove, a symbol of the Holy Spirit should be allowed to enter church (even today some practice this rite during the blessing of Jordan), or to light a candle instead of Bethlehem’s star, or represent the Incarnation as a small child in bed. Roman Catholics accepted this representation of the child (as a doll) in Bethlehem’s crib (part of the holy Grotto belongs to them as well) in their temples; also some orthodox do the same, viz. imitate same custom *Свештени Канони Цркве*, 2005: 187; *Κώδικας Ιερών Κανόνων και Εκκλησιαστικών Νόμων*, 2000: 166.

<sup>29</sup> The Roman church did not recognize the Quinisext council (πενθέκτη, Quinisextus) as of ecumenical importance and the roman theologians were often called it fallacy (erraticum). Каргашов, 1995: 177.

Icon-isation emphasizes historicity, but if we limit representation of the Savior only as an ordinary man, art in that case would point to his earthly life, suffering and death only. This is a characteristic of the profane art. But, Christ is the Godman so art should not point His earthly life only, but His glory and sublimity. Icon is not satisfied with historic facts. Icon should point out that depicted Christ is “the Lamb of God which takes sin of the world” (Jn. 1, 29). Historicity is one, but the mode of representation which is an outcome of the ever restoring experience of the Church ought to reflect higher reality; that by leading toward “remembrance (commemoration) of His resulting redemption of the world” (*Свештени Канони Цркве*, 2005: 187; *Κώδικας Ιερών Κανόνων και Εκκλησιαστικών Νόμων*, 2000: 166), inducing panorama of His divine glory. Thus, the canon 82 is not limited to overcoming symbols and basic dogmatic definition of biography, but indirectly indicates meaning of sacred art. This rule (canon) by which Church for the first time expresses her teaching about icons, shows the iconic symbolism of church art cannot be other but historic.

The essence of this symbolism is not the theme which presents, but how and in what way is presented the theme. So church started to build her artistic language which suits her experience and her unceasing knowing of revelation. Since then, her artistic potential directs toward historic symbolism which more and more within reveals other, deeper spiritual reality. This rule emphasizes true significance of the historic realism<sup>30</sup> which points to spiritual reality and encloses possibility to represent reflection of divine glory by means of art and specified symbolism (Успенский, 1997: 99). These open possibilities of icon will increase importance of the sacred art. Its spiritualized realism of passing down orthodox teaching and tradition is unique. Honored “Representations (types) and shadows” answered needs of a certain time period, but now they are not able to express fullness of grace. That kind of symbolism is secondary even though it is not completely turndown. Even today iconographers use symbols, e.g. three stars on Theotokos’ vestments (to indicate her virginity before the birth of Christ, during the birth and after giving birth); representation of the blessing hand (denoting God’s presence). However, this symbolism holds secondary importance and it does not replace representation of personality.

### CONCLUSION

Having in mind that personality depicted in icon is a necessary goal and cannot be replaced by symbol led to occurrence of the canon 82 of the Quintisext council in 691–692 AD. The mentioned canon as the corner

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<sup>30</sup> St. German of Constantinople says “representation of the Lord’s image on icons serves to dishonor heretics who claim His ostensible, not real Incarnation; Γερμανός Κωνσταντινουπόλεως; PG 98, 173.

stone in the sacred art is not limited to overcome symbols, but indirectly indicate the essence of sacred art. It leads artists to follow certain historic facts and strictly preserve historic consistency. Thus, personality in icon is a necessary first cause and goal and it cannot be replaced by symbol or abstraction. Only following the given historic facts each icon can offer a possibility of personal communication with the represented image by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Успенский, 1997: 195). That is why orthodox sacred art nurtures portrait and physical characteristics of the represented saints giving these icons everlasting character. This is how living and direct link with a represented person is preserved. Icon needs minimum of resemblance with a saint it depicts. Even though the icon does not have enough likeness with the original, e.g. saint's countenance or image, it deserves attention since it has been made to represent his personality. Personality is the carrier of divine grace in icon which needs to show its sanctity. Christ's icon ought to point out His divinity according to the words: "Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father" (Jn. 14, 9).

Therefore, historicity though needed, is not sufficient to create icon out of work of art. The fact is that icon indicates sanctity of the represented one. Saints were filled with grace of the Holy Spirit during their life time "and after their death grace of the Holy Spirit inexhaustibly abides in their souls in their bodies and tombs, in their marks and holy images"<sup>31</sup> (artistic representations) stated John Damascene. After the abolition of the *statutes which were not good* (Ez. 20, 25), the sacred art became completely focused to distinguish teachings of the Church and thus there won't be individual insights of artists. Church stylizes artistic language which will express her truths, as same as Church shaped the Bible which in an authentic, God inspired and infallible way testifies and depicts all that church experiences from the beginning. Through different historic circumstances that artistic language was becoming more precise, wider and deeper.

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## ПРАВНИ ОСНОВ ЗА ИШЧЕЗАВАЊЕ СИМВОЛИЗМА У САКРАЛНОЈ УМЕТНОСТИ (укидање уредби које нису добре [Јез. 20, 25])

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### Резиме

Бог је суштински невидљив и радикално друкчији од човека. Ипак, хришћани имају иконе. Иконопоштовање у Цркву није уведено наједном, већ постепено. Посредни и непосредни ослонац и извор хришћанске уметности било је Свето писмо. После добијања слободе, хришћанство постепено, али незауостављиво развија сопствено стваралаштво. Сагледајући корене овог стваралаштва, идеолошки гледано, увиђамо да икони не претходи многобожачки идол, већ одсуство правог и конкретног изображења у периоду пре Христа, као што јој претходи и старозаветни символ. Старозаветни јеврејски народ, Израил, имао је одређене забране (Изд. 20, 4, Понз. 5, 12–19). Ове јасне уредбе за њега су биле педагошке мере које су биле неопходне због окорелости његовог срца, али оне су заправо „уредбе које нису добре“ (Јез. 20, 25). Све ово нам говори да предак Цркве није пангански свет, већ древни Израил.

Символизам је карактеристика старе хришћанске уметности. У симболичком приказивању, иза споља једноставних слика, стајала је дубока реалност. Језик символа се лако развио и распространио. У време првих хришћана у уметности беху заступљена симболичка и знаковна приказивања која нису претендовала на реализам и веродостојност. Језик символа лако се развио и распространио у раној Цркви, посебно због неопходне потребе да се путем уметности изрази истина коју није могуће непосредно приказати. Символи су открили православну веру, посветили и образовали мноштво хришћана.

Ипак, у 7. веку јасна уметност званично је сменила старе симболе и све елементе који су сакривали њен садржај. Једно правило Петошестог васељенског сабора даје први одређенији облик теорији уметности и темељ за даљи уметнички развој. У претходном периоду доминирао је симболизам који је био привременог карактера, тј. „уредбе које нису добре” (Јез. 20, 25).

Свест да је личност у икони неопходан циљ приказивања и да не може да се замени симолом довела је до настанка 82. правила Петошестог сабора 692. године. Поменуто правило, које је камен међаш у сакралној уметности, не ограничава се само на превазилажење симбола већ посредно указује на суштину сакралне уметности. Оно води ка томе да уметници треба да прате конкретне историјске чињенице и строго чувају историјску доследност. Самим тим је у икони личност неопходан првоузор и циљ и не може да се замени симолом или каквом апстракцијом. Временом је симболизам у сакралној уметности обавио потребну функцију. Услед духовног и културног развоја у хришћанству дошло је време за укидање уредби које нису добре (Јез. 20, 25). Поменути 82. канон Петошестог васељенског сабора каже „да иконописци не сликају јагње, него Лик Христов”. Овај канон собом укида архаични симболизам старозаветних „симбола” и „типова”, а утврђује јеванђелски и устаљени свештено-историјски реализам. Саборски творци овог правила говоре о древним симболима као о етапи која је испуњена и превладана у животу Цркве и нагласак стављају на историчност Христову и памћење спомена Божијег искупљења света.

Укидањем уредби које нису добре (Јез. 20, 25) сакрална уметност постала је потпуно усредсређена да истакне духовно учење. Црква савршеније обликује уметнички језик који ће изражавати њену истину. Тај уметнички језик је кроз разне историјске прилике постајао је све прецизнији, шири и дубљи.