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Nicaea II, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, and the Illustration of the Byzantine Marginal Psalters

The Seventh Ecumenical Council, also called the Second Council of Nicaea (hereafter: Nicaea II) convened by the Byzantine emperors Irene and Constantine VI in 787 CE was a major turning-point in the history of Byzantine Iconoclasm (c. 700–843 CE).¹ In an attempt to heal the fractured unity of the Christian community, the council met to lay down a solid theological foundation for the re-introduction of religious images. The Acts of Nicaea II testify to the struggle of eighth-century theologians in expressing, for the first time and in contemporary religious terms, a multitude of complex issues, which are nowadays categorized as “image theory”. Thanks to Erich Lamberg, the first critical edition of the Acts of Nicaea II is now available.² His pioneering research on this important source document has created a firm foundation for textual and visual studies and other fields of research. In recognition of the pivotal scientific role played by this outstanding scholar, I dedicate this paper to Professor Lamberg for his *Festschrift* as a token of my deep gratitude and admiration.

1 Introduction

A central topic, which shaped the debates of Nicaea II is the equal value of image and word, as witnessed throughout the Acts. In an effort to describe the complex interrelation of the two media, Nicaea II resorted to a musical metaphor vaguely expressing a basic unity and harmonious coexistence of image and word in terms of the two “sounding together”. Addressing the fact that both, image and word were part of the ancient traditions of the Christian church, the *Horos* stated that:

1 The bibliography on Byzantine Iconoclasm is vast. For a recent survey together with older bibliography see the respective articles in M. HUMPHREYS (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*. Leiden / Boston 2021.

2 *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum*. Ed. E. LAMBERZ. *ACO II*, 3/1–3. Berlin / New York 2008.2012.2016; Erich Lamberg’s critical edition of the Greek-Latin text has recently been supplemented by an English translation of the Acts of Nicaea II together with a commentary by Richard Price, making the text available for modern readers. See R. PRICE, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787). Translated Texts for Historians*, 68. Liverpool 2020.

(...) ὧν μία ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ τῆς εἰκονικῆς ἀναζωγραφήσεως ἐκτύπωσις ὡς τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελικοῦ κηρύγματος συνάδουσα πρὸς πίστωσιν τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ οὐ κατὰ φαντασίαν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἐνανθρωπήσεως καὶ εἰς ὁμοίαν λυσιτέλειαν ἡμῖν χρησιμεύουσα. τὰ γὰρ ἀλλήλων δηλωτικά ἀναμφιβόλως καὶ τὰς ἀλλήλων ἔχουσιν ἐμφάσεις.³

Here is the English translation of the passage cited after R. Price:

One of these is the reproduction in painted images, as something that is in harmony with the narration of the gospel message for the confirming of the real and in no way phantasmal incarnation of God the Word, and which serves us by conferring the same benefit. For these two things provide indisputable proof of each other and give expression to each other.⁴

Authoritative figures from the past were called upon to support this claim. Thus, Nicaea II repeatedly cited a passage from a sermon by St. Basil of Caesarea on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste culminating in the sentence: “What a narrative account communicates through hearing, a silent picture displays through imitation.”⁵ In light of the prominence lent to the quote from St. Basil’s sermon in the Acts, the issues related to the text passage seem worthy of closer investigation.⁶ It should be noted from the outset that the concept of image/word-equivalence derived from St. Basil’s sermon was taken up on at least two more official occasions in the ninth century. In 843 CE, the Synodikon of Orthodoxy, confirming the end of Second Iconoclasm commemorated: “(...) those who believe and proclaim or preach ideas by writing, facts by figures, and that both the preaching by means of speech and the confirmation of the truth by means of images, contribute to the same benefit (...).”⁷ In 869/870 CE, the same claim was laid down in the third canon of the Fourth Council of Constantinople decreeing: “(...) that the sacred image of our Lord Jesus Christ, the redeemer and saviour of all, is to be venerated with equal honour as in the book of the holy gospels. For just as all obtain salvation through the eloquence of words contained in a book, so everyone, both the

3 LAMBERZ, Concilium t. 3 (as footnote 2 above) 824, 24–29. For a detailed analysis of the sentence and the use of the term „συνάδουσα“, see J.B. UPHUS, *Der Horos des Zweiten Konzils von Nizäa 787: Interpretation und Kommentar auf der Grundlage der Konzilsakten mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bilderfrage*. Paderborn 2004, 158–163, 174, n. 148, 175–176, 180–183, 195.

4 PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 564.

5 For an analysis of this statement see PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 548–555.

6 For a recent commentary on this passage and the other quotes in the scriptural and patristic florilegia of the fourth session, see PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 165, n. 103, 240–241.

7 Trans. my own. See J. GOUILLARD, *Le Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie*. *TM* 2 (1967) 1–313, esp. 49, 68–70.

wise and the uneducated, receive benefit, from what is readily at hand, through the iconic effect of colours.”⁸ Clearly, the basic idea that images and words have equal value continued to shape peoples’ minds throughout the ninth century. However, this was not the only idea expressed by St. Basil in the sermon which was adopted by Nicaea II. It seems that the sermon on the Forty Martyrs as a whole influenced the social and cultural values of the time.

Due to the near-total lack of visual representations of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia in this period scholars were, so far, unable to verify what role exactly images of the Passio of the Forty Martyrs played in the aftermath of Nicaea II. In my paper, I will present a hitherto overlooked fragment of a scene from their Passio cycle preserved in the ninth-century Khludov Psalter. Even in its very fragmented condition today, it can provide new evidence concerning a set of questions that in the past was not adequately explored. The aim of my paper is to examine the following issues: Can we assume that the concept of image/word-equivalence had an impact on the visual arts of Byzantium, and if yes, how? How did artists compose illuminated manuscripts and the visual layout of images and words so that readers/viewers could derive spiritual benefit? My paper is structured in two parts. First, I will consult the textual sources regarding information on the image/word-equivalence. In order to trace the practical implications of this concept at the intersection of image and word I will subsequently examine the layout of the so-called Byzantine marginal psalters. In the second part of my paper, I will reconstruct and interpret my recent discovery in the Khludov Psalter identified as a scene from the Passio of the Forty Martyrs. To trace the “spiritual benefit” deriving from the formal setting of images and texts, I will then expand the analysis to include the antithetical setting of visual material in this specific book opening in the Khludov Psalter.

2 The textual sources: “... as if in a painting”

It is a well-known fact that, in the period of Iconoclasm, *florilegia* of patristic excerpts were compiled to serve as rebuttal for the arguments advanced by the religious opponents. Sometimes, the same author was quoted in support of the

⁸ The English trans. is cited after R. Price. See R. PRICE (trans.), *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 869–870 (Concilium Constantinopolitanum 4 (869–870); introduction and notes by F. MONTINARO. Translated Texts for Historians, 79. Liverpool 2022, 392. For a slightly different English trans. of the canon see C. BARBER, The body within the frame: a use of word and image in iconoclasm. *Word & Image* 9/2 (1993) 140–153, esp. 140.*

respective party's cause. For example, in 754, the iconoclastic council of Hieréia quoted a passage from St. Basil of Caesarea to demonstrate that images are redundant.⁹ In 787, the iconophile council of Nicaea II also called upon the authority of St. Basil. The selected passage was excerpted from St. Basil's sermon on the Passio of the Forty Martyrs to support the iconophile notion that images and spoken, or written words were of equal value regarding moral benefit. In this text, the memory of the forty saints was invoked:

Δεῦρο δὴ οὖν, εἰς μέσον αὐτοὺς ἀγαγόντες διὰ τῆς ὑπομνήσεως, κοινὴν τὴν παρ' αὐτῶν ὠφέλειαν τοῖς παροῦσι καταστησώμεθα, προδείξαντες πᾶσιν ὥσπερ ἐν γραφῇ τὰς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀριστείας· ἐπεὶ καὶ πολέμων ἀνδραγαθήματα καὶ λογογράφοι πολλάκις καὶ ζωγράφοι διασημαίνουσιν, οἱ μὲν τῷ λόγῳ κοσμοῦντες, οἱ δὲ τοῖς πίναξιν ἐγχαράττοντες, καὶ πολλοὺς διηγείραν εἰς ἀνδρείαν ἑκάτεροι. ἃ γὰρ ὁ λόγος τῆς ἱστορίας δι' ἀκοῆς παρίστησι, ταῦτα γραφῇ σιωπῶσα διὰ μιμήσεως δέικνυσι.¹⁰

There are two recent English translations of this passage which differ significantly in rendering the complex term *graphe* (γραφῇ):

So come thither and bring them forward. Let us by means of commemoration make the benefit to be derived from them be shared by those who are present, as we display to all *as if in a painting*¹¹ the triumph of these people. For feats in war are also celebrated frequently by writers and painters. The former honouring them in words and the latter portraying

⁹ For the Greek text of the passage, see LAMBERZ, Concilium t. 3 (as footnote 2 above) 714, 21–25 (with notes). PRICE, The Acts of Nicaea (as footnote 2 above) 677 and n. 67. See also T. KRANNICH / C. SCHUBERT / C. SODE, Die ikonoklastische Synode von Hieréia 754. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar ihres Horos. *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum*, 15. Tübingen 2002, 52–53.

¹⁰ LAMBERZ, Concilium t. 3 (as footnote 2 above) 688, 18–24, 690, 1–3 (with notes). For an analysis of the passage, see UPHUS, Der Horos (as footnote 3 above) 247–248. For the text of the sermon, see Basil the Great, Εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους τεσσαράκοντα μάρτυρας (*hom. 19, On the Holy Forty Martyrs*). PG 31/2, 508C–509A. For the English trans. of St. Basil's sermon, see P. ALLEN, Basil of Caesarea, in J. Leemans / W. Mayer / P. Allen (ed.), Let us die that we may live: Greek homilies on Christian martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria, c. AD 350 – AD 450. London / New York 2003, 55–77. For the Greek text of the Passio of the Forty Martyrs, see O. VON GEBHARDT (ed.), Ausgewählte Märtyreracten und andere Urkunden aus der Verfolgungszeit der christlichen Kirche. Berlin 1902, 171–181. For the Syriac Passio, see W. WEYH, Die syrische Legende der 40 Märtyrer von Sebaste. BZ 21 (1912) 76–93. For an in-depth analysis of the Passio, see P. KARLIN-HAYTER, Passio of the XL martyrs of Sebasteia, the Greek tradition: the earliest account ("BHG" 1201). AB 109 (1991) 249–304.

¹¹ My emphasis (CSK).

them on panels, and both have spurred many to bravery. For what a narrative account communicates through hearing, a silent picture displays through imitation.¹²

The second translation of the term reads:

Come then, let us bring them into prominence by remembering them, let us present to those who are here the common benefit deriving from them, demonstrating to everyone, *as if it were in writing*¹³, the acts of the men's prowess (...).¹⁴

The difference in translation is due to the multivalence of the Greek term *graphe* (γραφή) which means both writing *and* painting. In the period of Iconoclasm, the term *graphe* and its derivatives were of crucial importance to the argumentation of both sides.¹⁵ We should therefore briefly trace its meaning in the context of the original text setting. In St. Basil's sermon on the Passio of the Forty Martyrs, the passage forms part of the introduction. Based on an early version of the Life of the Forty Martyrs, St. Basil reports that the forty men coming from different native lands and thus being "citizens of the world" were soldiers in the Roman army, sentenced to death by freezing because they publicly declared their Christian faith and steadfastly denied giving in to the will of the tyrant emperor.¹⁶ Here, the author instructs his audience that he will tell the dramatic story of the forty saints by employing a vivid, emotional language. Trained in ancient rhetoric including the use of *enargeia*, St. Basil was well-aware of the fact that the power of words directed at moving the audience emotionally would evoke mental images in their minds.¹⁷ Elaborating on this point he made the following

¹² English trans. cited after PRICE, The Acts of Nicaea (as footnote 2 above) 486.

¹³ My emphasis.

¹⁴ English trans. after ALLEN, Basil of Caesarea (as footnote 10 above) 68.

¹⁵ Cf. the standard reference works for the word *graphe*: G. LAMPE (ed.), A Patristic Greek Lexicon. Oxford 1961, and LSJ. For the use of the term *graphe*, see C. SCHÖNBORN, Die Christus-Ikone. Eine theologische Hinführung. Schaffhausen 1984, 32–33. 166. H. MAGUIRE, Art and Eloquence in Byzantium. New Jersey 1981, 9. BARBER, The body (as footnote 8 above) 140–153. C. BARBER, Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm. Princeton 2002, 127.

¹⁶ See ALLEN, Basil of Caesarea (as footnote 10 above) 68–69. Cf. KARLIN-HAYTER, Passio (as footnote 10 above) 261–264. In 787, the parallels that could be drawn between the struggle of the Forty Martyrs against a tyrant sovereign and his violent judges and the fight of contemporary iconophile defenders of faith against the iconoclastic policy of eighth-century Byzantine emperors did probably not go unnoticed.

¹⁷ For the ancient technique of *enargeia* or generating mental images through vivid verbal or written description, see R. SINGER, Intermediale Anschaulichkeit: *Enargeia* als rhetorisches Wirkungsideal von Text, Bild und *actio*, in H. Adler / S. Gross (ed.), Anschauung und Wirklichkeit: Visualisierung im Wahrnehmen, Lesen und Denken. Paderborn 2016, 157–177. T. KÖPPE / R. SINGER, Show, don't tell: Konzepte und Strategien anschaulichen Erzählens. Bielefeld 2018, 12–13.

comparison. On the one hand, he says, there are orators who, by the power of their words, activate the eyes of the mind in their audiences; on the other hand, there are painters who skilfully create images in material form by using lines, forms, and live-like colours.¹⁸ It is clear that the powerful verbal account of the orator was originally meant to be the winner of the implied competition.¹⁹ Therefore, the translation of *graphe* (“... as if in a painting”) certainly makes more sense. In the iconophile narrative constructed by Nicaea II in 787, however, the original meaning of the passage was adopted to empower the art of painting instead.

3 The textual sources: St. Basil’s quote in the Acts of Nicaea II

In the Acts of Nicaea II, the passage from St. Basil’s sermon on the Passio of the Forty Martyrs appears on three occasions. In each case, the quote serves to emphasize and reinforce the idea that images and words are equivalent. In the second session, the quote forms part of an iconophile *florilegium* compiled in Rome and sent by pope Hadrian to the Byzantine emperors to refute the iconoclastic argument that images are redundant.²⁰ In the fourth session, the passage from St. Basil’s sermon is cited in a letter by patriarch Germanos of Constantinople to emphasize the moral benefit that can be drawn from *both* media.²¹ The passage from St. Basil is quoted again in the sixth session as evidence of the equal value of the written lives of saints and the visual depiction of their martyrdom.²² Thus,

G. FRANK, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*. Berkeley 2000, 11, 18, 19, 28–29.

18 The intimate relationship of painting and poetry was a commonplace since Greco-Roman Antiquity. See G. LANGE, *Bild und Wort: die katechetischen Funktionen des Bildes in der griechischen Theologie des sechsten bis neunten Jahrhunderts*. Paderborn ²1999. G.K. SPRIGATH, *Das Diktum des Simonides. Der Vergleich von Dichtung und Malerei. Poetica* 36 (2004) 243–280, esp. 243–245.

19 Cf. PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 165, n. 103.

20 LAMBERZ, *Concilium* t. 1 (as footnote 2 above) 140, 1–5 (with notes). English trans. after PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 165.

21 LAMBERZ, *Concilium* t. 2 (as footnote 2 above) 460, 33–34, 462, 2–4 (with notes). English trans. after PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 345.

22 English trans. after PRICE, *Council of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 486. LAMBERZ, *Concilium* t. 3 (as footnote 2 above) 688, 18–24, 690, 1–3 (with notes). For an analysis of the passage, see UPHUS, *Der Horos* (as footnote 3 above) 247–248.

it seems that the quotes from the sermon of St. Basil were carefully coordinated and repeated at regular intervals to imprint this concept in the collective memory of the Christian community. As the subsequent historical events however show, the concept did not convince the religious opponents. Instead, it led to continuing debates ultimately ending in Second Iconoclasm.²³ An allusion to the passage from St. Basil's sermon in the *Second Antirrhētikos* by Patriarch Nikephoros, written around 818–820, shows that the patriarch was intimately familiar with the quote from St. Basil and the subsequent conclusions drawn from the concept of equal value of the two media by the opposing parties. As Charles Barber's comprehensive analysis has lucidly demonstrated, Patriarch Nikephoros addressed the topic in a lengthy reflection which, interestingly enough, called attention to illuminated manuscripts to show the interrelation and equivalence of image and word.²⁴ Following a detailed exposition of the ambiguous term *graphe* (γραφή) the patriarch stated:

[Graphe] directly and immediately leads the minds of the viewers to the facts themselves, as if they were present already, and from the first sight and encounter a clear and perfect knowledge of these is gained. And here I quote the voice of a Father: 'Whatever the word tells of the tale, painting shows silently by means of imitation.' Just as the deed differs from the discourse, so too will the imitation and the likeness of the deed differ from the utterance of words when manifesting things. This is why discourses often become more apparent and clearer through such a manifestation. For often some difficulties and disputes arise from words, and in all likelihood diverse thoughts are brought forth in souls. (...) but belief is gained from visible things, acquired anywhere free from ambiguity. Up to this point each of them has something in common, so that in one and the same book, as one can see in very ancient documents [δέλτοις], inscribed alternately [παρὰ μέρους γεγράφθαι], here [ἐντεῦθεν μὲν] the discourse in syllables, there [ἐντεῦθεν δὲ] through representation, and they show what is indicated in writing.²⁵

What type of ancient illustrated "document" did the patriarch have in mind and what kind of layout did the pages have? Did he refer to the text/image-

23 J. GOUILLARD, Fragments inédits d'un antirrhétique de Jean le Grammairien. *RÉB* 24 (1966) 171–181. Cf. also BARBER, Figure and Likeness (as footnote 15 above) 151–160, esp. 153. P.J. ALEXANDER, The Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definition (Horos). *DOP* 7 (1953) 35–66. Nicephori Patriarchae Constantinopolitani refutatio et eversio definitionis synodalis anni 815. Ed. J.M. FEATHERSTONE. *CCSG*, 33. Turnhout 1997.

24 See BARBER, Figure and Likeness (as footnote 15 above) 127–129. See also BARBER, The body (as footnote 8 above) 146–148. For the Greek text, see NICEPHORUS PATRIARCHA, *Antirrheticus* II. *PG* 100: 356A–B; *Antirrheticus* III. *PG* 100: 381CD–384A.

25 The English trans. is cited after BARBER, Figure and Likeness (as footnote 15 above) 128. For the Greek text, see Nicephorus Patriarcha, *Antirrheticus* III (as footnote 24 above) 381CD–384A.

arrangement of single pages in a codex with spaces reserved for the pictures alongside the writing columns? Or was he indicating the layout of image and text on a double page or book opening, made up of two consecutive folia? Both types of *mis-en-page* were known and used already by Late Antique book designers. For example, the layout of the book opening of f. 21v–22r in the so-called Vienna Dioscorides (Vienna, ÖNB, med. gr. 1, Diktyon 71026) dated to the sixth century (fig. 1), represents the plant on the left, or verso-side of a page which is paired with the written description of its medical properties and applications on the right, or recto-side of the opposite page.²⁶ In contrast, the fragments of a papyrus page (f. 6v) from the Alexandrian World Chronicle (Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine arts, inv. no. 310) (fig. 2) shows a narrow writing column in the centre of the folio framed on three of the preserved margins by miniatures corresponding to the written text.²⁷ In the above cited passage, the patriarch speaks of a “here” and a “there”. My conjecture is that the patriarch described one of these two designs and more likely the marginal format.²⁸ A survey of the preserved illuminated manuscripts that were produced in the ninth century indicates a certain preference for the marginal format. The fact, that different subtypes of marginal layouts were developed shows the particular interest of the designers in this format.²⁹ I therefore suggest that the patriarch probably referred to manuscripts with a marginal layout. This category was, as I will show, indeed well suited to visualize the equivalence of image and word.

²⁶ See K. WEITZMANN, *Illustration in Roll and Codex: a study of the origin and method of text illustration. Studies in manuscript illumination*, 2. Princeton 1947 (1970), 104–112. Weitzmann’s publication, although slightly outdated, is still worth consulting. For the Vienna manuscript, see A. GRIEBELER, *Botanical Icons: Critical Practices of Illustration in the Premodern Mediterranean*. Chicago / London 2024, 77–91, esp. 81. O. MAZAL, *Der Wiener Dioskurides: Codex medicus graecus 1 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Glanzlichter der Buchkunst*, 8. Graz 1998/99. O. MAZAL, *Pflanzen, Wurzeln, Säfte, Samen: antike Heilkunst in Miniaturen des Wiener Dioskurides*. Graz 1981.

²⁷ For the illustration principle guiding the layout of the insecurely dated Alexandrian World Chronicle, see K. WEITZMANN, *Roll and Codex* (as footnote 26 above) 114–115. For the reconstruction of the manuscript, see A. BAUER / J. STRZYGOWSKI, *Eine alexandrinische Weltchronik. Text und Miniaturen eines griechischen Papyrus in der Sammlung W. Goleništšev. Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 51,2. Wien 1905.

²⁸ A third type of layout incorporating the pictures inside the writing column should probably be excluded. For the development of column pictures, see WEITZMANN, *Roll and Codex* (as footnote 26 above) 72–77.

²⁹ Cf. WEITZMANN, *Roll and Codex* (as footnote 26 above) 112–123.

4 The equivalence of image and word in the Byzantine marginal psalters

The Byzantine marginal psalters are rightly considered prime representatives of a category of illuminated manuscripts with these specific formal characteristics. From the fact that the pages of the manuscripts were divided into individual areas on the page to hold both text and pictures placed side-by-side we may gather that the book designers planned the *mis-en-page* from the outset to include and emphasize the close relation of the visual material to the individual psalm verses. One of the pages in the so-called Khludov Psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum, Ms D 129 (Diktyon 44147) (fig. 3) serves to demonstrate the principle. While the text column comprising the psalm verses is restricted to the inner half of f. 23v, the surrounding outer or marginal space was reserved to accommodate the pictures accompanying the written text. In the upper part of the page, the iconophile Patriarch Nikephoros is depicted frontally holding a clipeate image of Christ. Next to the standing figure, the patriarch's name is inscribed vertically. Below, the iconoclastic patriarch and emperor presiding the iconoclastic council of 815 are represented. To their right, two iconoclasts are depicted attacking the image of Christ in an attempt to obliterate his face. Blood is dripping from an unspecified segment of wall and fills the ground signifying the reprobation of the evil iconoclastic dignitaries from which the iconophile patriarch above has distanced himself.³⁰ The designer of the Khludov Psalter used a system of coloured reference marks to highlight the connection between the respective images and their corresponding psalms. Thus, a tiny blue leaf placed above the head of Patriarch Nikephoros is repeated near the writing column linking the picture to a specific psalm verse. Besides, the artist took great care to place the patriarch's figure on the same level with, and near the letters of the corresponding psalm. The same principle is applied for the tandem of image and text in the lower part of the page. Here, a differently shaped reference mark connects the words of a second psalm verse close by with the image in the lower margin.

The evidence gleaned from this example in the Khludov psalter clearly points to the fact that the original intention of the ninth-century artists was to place the images as close as possible to their respective psalms. By visually indicating the intermedial link between the images and the words the system of differently shaped and coloured reference marks furthermore assisted the

³⁰ For the "Bloody Page in the Chludov Psalter", see G. PEERS, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium*. University Park (PA) 2004, 35–58.

reader/viewer to make the correct connection. The arrangement of words and images that can be observed in the Khludov Psalter also characterizes the other two manuscripts in the oldest marginal psalter group produced in the second half of the ninth century.³¹ They are the so-called Pantokrator Psalter preserved in the Monastery of Pantokratoros on Mt. Athos (Mt. Athos, Pantokratoros 61, Diktyon 29080; with some leaves in St. Petersburg, Ms 265, Diktyon 57337) and the fragmentary psalter Ms gr. 20 (Paris, BNF, grec 20, Diktyon 49581) in the collection of the National Library of France.³² Previous scholarship has aptly demonstrated that the specific cultural messages mediated by the multiple image/word-combinations in the three ninth-century marginal psalters, certainly predetermined by theological advisers, served as visual commentaries on the polemical issues of the iconoclastic period.³³ However, it is also true that the book designers and visual artists in charge of the production of the ninth-century marginal psalters were given the task to create a layout visualizing the concept of equal value of image and word.

Based on the above evidence, it therefore seems legitimate to conclude that the concept of image/word-equivalence, pronounced at Nicaea II for the first time played a decisive role for the creation of the three ninth-century marginal psalters. Unfortunately, there is no specific information regarding the precise historical circumstances in which the three oldest preserved manuscripts of the marginal psalter group were created.³⁴ In our context, it is important to note that there is common consensus in previous scholarship that the three manuscripts are more or less faithful copies of a lost common model (“the Psalter Prototype”)

31 It should be noted, however, that only the Khludov Psalter employs the system of reference marks systematically.

32 For an in-depth discussion of the three ninth-century marginal psalters, see K. CORRIGAN, *Visual polemics in the ninth-century marginal psalters*. Cambridge 1992.

33 Cf. WEITZMANN, *Roll and Codex* (as footnote 26 above) 118, 121–122. CORRIGAN, *Visual polemics* (as footnote 32 above).

34 The bibliography on the illuminated Byzantine marginal psalters is vast. Due to the limited space of this paper, I can cite only a limited selection of important studies. N.P. KONDAKOV, *Histoire de l'art byzantin considéré principalement dans les miniatures*, t. 1/2. Paris 1886, repr. New York 1970. J.J. TIKKANEN, *Die Psalterillustration im Mittelalter*. Helsingfors 1895/1900, repr. Soest 1975. K. WEITZMANN, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin 1935 (repr. Wien 1996). A. GRABAR, *L'iconoclisme byzantin: dossier archéologique*. Paris 1957, 196–202. For a useful recent summary concerning the date and origin of the three ninth-century marginal psalters, see Ó. PRIETO DOMÍNGUEZ, *Literary Circles in Byzantine Iconoclasm: Patrons, Politics and Saints*. Cambridge 2020, 115–116 (with older bibliography). I am currently preparing a monograph on the Pantokrator Psalter and its relationship with the other two ninth-century marginal psalters mentioned above.

with opinions varying between a pre-iconoclastic date of the visual prototype and the period around the year 800.³⁵ It is, in fact, extremely unlikely that the surviving ninth-century marginal psalters were the first manuscripts of their kind. C. Walter demonstrated that rather than reflecting the issues of Second Iconoclasm many of the miniatures refer to the issues discussed in the period of First Iconoclasm. He therefore concluded that the three ninth-century marginal psalters “...copy and adapt” a late eighth-century model.³⁶ While the subject cannot be discussed here in more detail, it should be noted that the postulate of a Psalter Prototype “around 800” matches our assumption regarding the artistic challenge to produce (or replicate) a format that was fit to visualize the concept of image/word-equivalence promoted by Nicaea II. While there is no material evidence of possible commissions of illuminated manuscripts by the patriarchate of Constantinople at the time, it is worth highlighting a passage in the *vita* of patriarch Tarasios written by Ignatios the Deacon soon after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843. Alluding once more to the concept of equal value of image and word the biographer recalled the decisive role of patriarch Tarasios. In an effort to reinstate material images of the saints in the churches the patriarch: “(...) reverently set up before the eyes of all an available picture [ἐτοίμην γραφήν] and a spontaneous book [βίβλον αὐτόματον] by depicting their struggles in holy churches.”³⁷

While the marginal layout was an ideally suited artistic solution to express the idea of equivalence formulated at Nicaea II and is typical for the ninth-century illuminated manuscripts, it seems surprising that the next “generation” of illuminated marginal psalters produced in the eleventh century sometimes softened this layout principle. In the Barberini Psalter (Città del Vaticano, BAV, Cod. gr. 372, Diktyon 64915) as well as the Theodore Psalter (London, British Library, Cod. gr. 19352, Diktyon 38960) this can be demonstrated by the illustration of

35 TIKKANEN, Die Psalterillustration (as footnote 34 above) 10–12. S. DUFRENNE, *Les illustrations du Psautier d'Utrecht: sources et apport carolingien*, Paris 1978, 56. It should be noted that Ševčenko argued for a later dating of the model, see I. ŠEVČENKO, The Anti-Iconoclastic Poem in the Pantocrator Psalter. *Cahiers Archéologiques* 15 (1965) 39–60, esp. 57. C. WALTER, ‘Latter Day’-Saints and the Image of Christ in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Marginal Psalters. *RĚB* 45 (1987) 205–222, esp. 217–219. CORRIGAN, Visual polemics (as footnote 32 above) 8–9.

36 According to WALTER, ‘Latter Day’-Saints (as footnote 35 above) 219, this model was originally produced in Palestine.

37 English trans. cited after S. EUTHYMIADIS, *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon* (BHG 1698). Introduction, text, translation, and commentary. Aldershot / Hampshire 1998, 194 (with commentary, 238–239) and Greek text (135–136. For a French trans. and commentary of the passage, see W. WOLSKA-CONUS, Un programme iconographique du patriarche Tarasios ? *RĚB* 38 (1980) 247–254, esp. 248.

Psalm 65 (66). On the recto- and verso-sides of the respective folio in both manuscripts, a sequence of eight scenes from the Passio of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia was represented next to the verses of psalm 65 (66).³⁸ While the pictures are aligned alongside the psalm text, in both cases starting with five scenes on the outer margin of the recto-side (fig. 4) and ending with three episodes on the verso-side (fig. 5), only one pair of reference marks remains in the Barberini Psalter (but not in the Theodore Psalter), indicating the link between image and psalm text. Interestingly, the reference mark in the Barberini Psalter highlights psalm 65 (66):12 which on f. 107v is loosely connected to the last three scenes of the cycle. In fact, this is precisely the psalm verse cited by St. Basil in his sermon on the Passio of the Forty Martyrs: “And so, as the day began, while they were still breathing, they were delivered over to the fire, and the remains of the fire were scattered on the river. (...) Theirs was the saying: We went through fire and water, and you have led us out into relief” [Ps. 65:12].³⁹ It seems that the artists were perfectly aware of the intertextual link of the psalm with St. Basil’s sermon. Curiously, the psalm verse is in both manuscripts connected to a secondary episode of the cycle rather than the central image of the cycle depicting the Forty Martyrs standing naked on the ice lake of Sebasteia. In both manuscripts, this scene appears on the recto-side of the page and is thus spatially distanced from the verse. Was the personal wish of the patron ordering a more comprehensive Passio cycle responsible for a change of the original scheme? At any rate, as a result of this change the concept of close image/word-equivalence was abandoned.⁴⁰

The continuous sequence of scenes from the Passio of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia preserved in the two eleventh-century marginal psalters offers comparatively late evidence of potential previous visual traditions regarding the martyrdom of the forty saints in Byzantine art. Dated only slightly earlier than the eleventh-century manuscript cycles, the oldest preserved Byzantine icons of

³⁸ For the cycle of the forty martyrs in the Barberini Psalter on f. 107r and f. 107v, see <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.gr.372> (last accessed: 03/09/2024). C. WALTER / J. ANDERSON, Description, in J. Anderson / P. Canart / C. Walter, *The Barberini Psalter: Codex Vaticanus Barberinianus Graecus 372*. Zürich / New York 1989, 95. S. DER NERSESSIAN, *L’illustration des psautiers grecs du moyen âge*, II, Londres, Add.19352. Paris 1970, 36. See also her important remarks on the cycle, *ibid.*, 92–93.

³⁹ Cf. ALLEN, Basil of Caesarea (as footnote 10 above) 74, chap. 8. Without any traces of reference marks, the same holds true for the Theodore Psalter on f. 81v.

⁴⁰ This means that both manuscripts copied a model in which the layout had already been changed. For the model of the two eleventh-century manuscripts, see WALTER, *The Iconographical Programme* (as footnote 38 above) 38–53.

the Forty Martyrs from the tenth century reflect a different iconographical scheme.⁴¹ Because of the complete lack of pre-iconoclastic Byzantine images of the Passio of the Forty Martyrs, scholars were left to speculate about their previous existence as well as their pre-iconoclastic iconography in Byzantium.⁴²

5 The Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia in Rome

In contrast, there is evidence of a thriving visual cult of the Forty Martyrs in seventh- and eighth-century Rome. The earliest extant representation of the central Passio episode is fragmentary preserved in the apse conch of the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs in Rome. (fig. 6) The wall painting is dated to the seventh century and was probably commissioned by pope Martin I (649–655).⁴³ In the apse conch of the oratory, the Forty Martyrs are depicted standing frontally clad in loincloths and immersed in the blue water of the ice lake of Sebasteia. Judging from the preserved part of the wall painting the saints were uniformly characterized as strong young men in the prime of their lives with muscular naked bodies, brown hair and short beards. As usual, one among them, the renegade, is represented on the right side of the composition ready to enter the heated bathhouse which is guarded by soldiers. A second Passio cycle of the Forty Martyrs, also dated to the seventh century, was executed in the nearby church of Santa Maria Antiqua. Unfortunately, only a few fragments of this cycle remain.⁴⁴ Finally, a second representation of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia was added on one of the side walls

⁴¹ For the tenth-century Byzantine icons of the Forty Martyrs and the past state of research on the issue, see the pioneering article by O. DEMUS, Two Palaeologan Mosaic Icons in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. *DOP* 14 (1960) 87–114. Recently, two important new articles on the visual representation of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia were published. See R.S. BINNING, Sacred Shivering. *Speculum* 98/2 (2023) 496–535. G. PEERS, Finding Faith Underground: Visions of the Forty Martyrs Oratory at Syracuse, in C. Hourihane (ed.), *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History*. Princeton 2010, 84–106.

⁴² Cf. DEMUS, Two Palaeologan Mosaic icons (as footnote 41 above) 99–100. C. Walter, An Iconographical Note. *REB* 38 (1980) 255–260, esp. 257. CORRIGAN, Visual polemics (as footnote 32 above), 10.

⁴³ See R. COATES-STEPHENS, The ‘Oratory of the Forty Martyrs’, in G. Bordi / J. Osborne / E. Ruberry (ed.), *Santa Maria Antiqua: the Sistine Chapel of the early Middle Ages*. London 2021, 195–214, esp. 197 and n. 10 (with older bibliography).

⁴⁴ The preserved material was collected and published by P.J. NORDHAGEN, *S. Maria Antiqua: The Frescoes of the Seventh Century. Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 8 (1979) 89–142, repr. in P.J. NORDHAGEN, *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting*. London 1990, 177–230, esp. 219–220. 221–226, pl. LVII–LXVI.

in the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs in Rome in the last quarter of the eighth century. (fig. 7) Significantly, this composition is attributed to the pontificate of pope Hadrian I (772–795).⁴⁵ The damaged scene depicts the saints standing “in glory” beneath the clipeate image of Christ. They are clad in the costumes of Byzantine military officials and seem to hold hand crosses in their right hands. The preserved representations of the Forty Martyrs in Rome provide clear evidence for an active image cult of the Forty Martyrs from the middle of the seventh century in the West. Under pope Hadrian I, the visual cult seems to have intensified. This is suggested by the invention of the new iconographical scheme depicting the Martyrs “in glory”.⁴⁶ The new iconography commissioned by the pope may have been inspired by the preparations for the Council of Nicaea II in 787. We can therefore not exclude that the reference to St. Basil’s sermon on the *Passio* of the Forty Martyrs in the letter of pope Hadrian read at Nicaea II was related to the thriving visual cult of the saints in Rome. Seen in this light, it is hard to believe that Byzantine pictures of the Forty Martyrs were created only from the tenth century onward. Instead, it is to be assumed that earlier images were probably destroyed by the iconoclasts. The literary description of a *Passio* cycle of the Forty Martyrs by Ignatios the Deacon in the *Life* of the Patriarch Tarasios thus seems to reflect a recently reinstated *Passio* cycle of the Forty Martyrs that the author had seen somewhere in or around Constantinople:

Who could gaze at men stiffened by wintry ice and frosty air, suffering in their nakedness, and enduring the fracture of their legs and being delivered into the fiery flames and having their corpses which escaped being reduced to cinders by virtue of the firmness of their nature and then floating in the river’s current, and would not yearn to have these men as protectors and would not appeal to them with supplications for fervent and speedy assistance?⁴⁷

Up until today, the passage by Ignatios the Deacon was the only evidence we possessed of the possible existence of a painted *Passio* cycle of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia in ninth-century Constantinople.⁴⁸ The discovery of a tiny fragment of

⁴⁵ See COATES-STEPHENS, Oratory (as footnote 43 above) 197, 203.

⁴⁶ For a further scene of the Forty Martyrs in the apse of Santa Maria in Via Lata, see COATES-STEPHENS, Oratory (as footnote 43 above) 203.

⁴⁷ The English trans. of the passage in the *vita* of the patriarch is cited after EUTHYMIADIS, *The Life* (as footnote 37 above) 195.

⁴⁸ For the opinion that the martyrdom cycles described by Ignatios the Deacon were in reality commissioned by the patriarch and thus do not belong to the realm of fiction, see L. BRUBAKER, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: image as exegesis in the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*. Cambridge 1999, 257.

an image in the Khludov Psalter that originally depicted a scene from the Passio of the Forty Martyrs now testifies to the existence of another ninth-century visual cycle made in the second half of the ninth-century. (fig. 8) As I will show below, the fragmentary scene once formed the visual equivalent to one of the verses of psalm 65 (66), suggesting that this image was probably also part of a small Passio sequence similar to, but certainly not identical with, the Passio cycles in the two eleventh-century marginal psalters.

6 The fragmentary scene in the Khludov Psalter: reconstruction and identification

Within the group of ninth-century marginal psalters, the Khludov Psalter is the only of the three manuscripts preserving faint traces of a once existing scene (or visual cycle) of the Forty Martyrs. Close inspection of the Pantokrator Psalter and the Cod. Paris. gr. 20 shows that there are heavy losses of original pages or replacements of the respective pages in this section. Thus, we have to exclude both manuscripts from our discussion. The respective folio in the Khludov Psalter was removed at an unknown date from the manuscript. Only a tiny strip near the inner margin of the book opening containing parts of the original substance survived the excision. (fig. 8) The narrow parchment strip was completely overlooked by past scholarship. This led to the erroneous assumption that scenes from the Passio cycle of the Forty Martyrs were not included in the group of ninth-century marginal psalters.⁴⁹

The following observations regarding the preserved parchment strip of the lost folio in the Khludov psalter are based on the new facsimile edition of the Khludov Psalter.⁵⁰ On the recto-side of the parchment strip one can still

⁴⁹ See CORRIGAN, Visual Polemics (as footnote 32 above) 10. It seems that the parchment strip was probably not visible in the microfilms used by scholars examining the manuscript outside Russia. Moreover, it was not recorded in the first facsimile edition of the Khludov Psalter, see M.V. ŠČEPKINA, *Miniatury khludovskoj psaltyri: Grečeskij illjustrirovannyj kodeks IX veka*. Moscow 1977, f. 62v–63r.

⁵⁰ I was able to consult the new full facsimile edition in the library of the *Bischöfliches Priesterseminar in Trier*. I am grateful to the director, Dr. Hans-Joachim Cristea, and the team of the library for generously allowing me to study the facsimile in the library. This full facsimile of the Khludov Psalter preserves the parchment strip which is visible between f. 62v and f. 63r. See *Salterio griego Jlúдов*, Coedición Museo Histórico del Estado: Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de

distinguish a series of nine vertically aligned rubricated initials which originally marked the beginning of each psalm verse contained on the folio.⁵¹ In view of the fact that the text portion on the preceding folio (today numbered as f. 62v) ends at psalm 65 (66):4b and the next preserved folio (today numbered as f. 63r) resumes the text at psalm 66 (67):2, it follows that the text portion on the lost folio in the Khludov Psalter comprised psalm 65 (66):5–20 including the following title of psalm 66 (67):1. From the fact that the lines per page of the upper layer of script in the Khludov Psalter usually amount to 23, and the last initial on the page is the letter *E* we can gather that the text column on the recto-side probably comprised the psalm portion starting with psalm 65 (66):5 (Δεῦτε καὶ ἴδετε τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ...) ⁵² and ending either with psalm 65 (66):11 (Εἰσήγαγε εἰς τὴν παγίδα, ἔθου θλίψεις ἐπὶ τὸν νῶτον ἡμῶν) ⁵³ or psalm 65 (66):12a (Ἐπεβίβασας ἀνθρώπους ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς ἡμῶν). ⁵⁴ I assume that the copyist was probably not able to accommodate the next line of the psalm (διήλθομεν διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος ...) ⁵⁵ on the page as there was little space left for this line, originally quoted by St. Basil in the sermon on the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia. Instead, the last lines written on the recto-side were probably the words of psalm 65 (66):12a: “You laid afflictions on our back. You mounted persons on our heads”. This is supported by the fact that the last initial to be observed on the strip is an *E*. ⁵⁶ Immediately below the last initial *E*, traces of paint can be detected. (fig. 9: detail) One can still clearly distinguish a wooden club painted in brown colour and held in the raised hand of an almost completely lost male figure. Further below, a small part of what seems to

Moscú of the Khludov Psalter: Moscow, State Historical Museum of Russia, Ms. D.129 (GIM 86795)/Khlud. 129-d, Madrid 2007.

⁵¹ Note that nearly the whole text of the psalms in the Khludov Psalter has been written over in minuscule, probably in the twelfth century. The red initials replaced the original ninth-century uncials, traces of which can still be seen underneath the upper layer.

⁵² “Come and see the works of God;” Septuaginta psalm 65 (66):5, cited after A. PIETERSMA / B.G. WRIGHT, *A new English translation of the Septuagint and the other Greek translations traditionally included under that title; [NETS; a new translation of the Greek into contemporary English – an essential resource for biblical studies]*. New York / Oxford 2007, 578.

⁵³ “You brought us into the snare; you laid afflictions on our back;” Septuaginta psalm 65 (66):11, PIETERSMA / WRIGHT, *A New English Translation* (as footnote 52 above) 578.

⁵⁴ “you mounted persons on our heads;” Septuaginta psalm 65 (66):12a, PIETERSMA / WRIGHT, *A New English Translation* (as footnote 52 above) 578.

⁵⁵ “we went through fire and water, ...” Septuaginta psalm 65 (66):12b, PIETERSMA / WRIGHT, *A New English Translation* (as footnote 52 above) 578.

⁵⁶ The other possibility being psalm 65 (66):11b, also starting with an *E*: ἔθου θλίψεις ἐπὶ τὸν νῶτον ἡμῶν = you laid afflictions on our back. In terms of meaning both lines are similar and would accord well with the illustration following immediately below.

be the right leg of the same male figure is preserved. He is clad in a light red, short tunic which in Byzantine art usually designates men of the working class or subordinates. Since the man wears white leg wrappings called *servoula* or *mu-zakia* we can identify the figure with some certainty as a soldier who was depicted clubbing the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia.⁵⁷ There is an irregularly drawn blue dot of paint in front of the soldier's leg which I am unable to identify. The fragmented figure on the parchment strip holding a club in his raised right hand can best be compared to a set of similarly devised male figures in the Khludov Psalter. The composition on f. 79r in the Khludov Psalter, for example, depicting the martyrdom of the Maccabees includes a soldier raising his sword and displaying similar contours. He is also dressed in a similar fashion to the fragmented figure on the lost folio.⁵⁸ The figure of David killing a bear with a wooden club on f. 147v in the Khludov Psalter can also be compared to the lost figure. Note that the club held by David is identical to the one preserved on the strip of parchment.⁵⁹ The visual parallels in the Khludov Psalter thus strongly support our assumption that the lost scene on the folio illustrating psalm 65:11–12 originally depicted a soldier (or soldiers?) beating the Forty Martyrs with a cudgel. This is suggested also by the fact that the interpolated Passio of the Forty Martyrs, in fact, contained episodes referring to the violent judges ordering tortures of the saints *before* their last trial on the ice lake of Sebasteia. In his sermon on the Forty Martyrs, St. Basil also alluded to the violent judges who: "(...) threatened them with blows, and death, and the experience of intolerable punishments."⁶⁰ The Syriac Passio of the Forty Martyrs is even more specific about the Saints' bloodshed: „Darauf befahl der Dux, sie zur Erde zu werfen und sie mit Ruten zu züchtigen, bis ihre Eingeweide zur Erde flössen. Und die Soldaten taten so mit ihnen. Als sie aber müde waren, die sie [sic!] schlugen, hatten die Heiligen (...) diese harte Marter nicht empfunden.“⁶¹ The literary sources thus support the argument that the

57 P.L. GROTHOWSKI, *Arms and armour of the warrior saints: tradition and innovation in Byzantine iconography* (843–1261). Leiden / Boston 2010, 200.

58 ŠČEPKINA, *Miniatury chludovskoj* (as footnote 49 above) f. 79r. There is, in fact, a close relation between the story of the Maccabees and the Passio of the Forty Martyrs, highlighted by P. Karlin Hayter. See KARLIN-HAYTER, *Passio* (as footnote 10 above) 268.

59 ŠČEPKINA, *Miniatury chludovskoj* (as footnote 49 above) f. 147v.

60 Cited after the English trans. by ALLEN, Basil of Caesarea (as footnote 10 above) 70. For the Greek text of St. Basil's sermon, see PG 32, 513A: Πληγὰς αὐτοῖς, καὶ θανάτους, καὶ κολάσεων ἀνηκέστων πείραν ἐπαντείνετο.

61 WEYH, *Die syrische Legende der 40* (as footnote 10 above) 82. For a discussion of the interpolated episodes in the Passio, see KARLIN-HAYTER, *Passio* (as footnote 10 above) 267–268, 270, 277–281.

ninth-century designers of the lost folio in the Khludov Psalter, in an effort to visualize the close correspondence of the Passio episode to the words of psalm 65 (66):11–12, depicted the beating of the Martyrs' bodies with clubs and probably also included the figure of the violent judge.⁶² According to P. Karlin-Hayter the military punishment of the soldier saints *before* their final torture on the ice lake of Sebasteia was the *fustuarium* which consisted of both, *ξυλοκοπία* (the beating with clubs) and the stoning.⁶³ It is reasonable to assume that the *fustuarium* scene was followed on the verso-side of the lost page in the Khludov Psalter by the central scene of the Passio cycle, depicting the Forty Martyrs standing on/in the ice lake of Sebasteia.⁶⁴ This hypothesis, however, cannot be verified. The concept of image/word-equivalence applied as the leading principle regarding the overall planning of the *mise-en-page* in the ninth-century marginal psalters, on the other hand, forms a secure basis for the reconstruction of the lost image and text portion on the missing folio in the Khludov Psalter.

7 The book opening (double page) in the Khludov Psalter

It is probably no coincidence that on f. 62v of the Khludov Psalter, an eminent scene representing the inspiration of the apostles from above was juxtaposed with the today lost *fustuarium* episode of the Forty Martyrs ordered by the cruel judge. (fig. 8) The image is placed in the lower margin of the verso-page directly opposite the preserved strip of parchment indicating the position of the violent clubbing of the Forty Martyrs in the lower margin of the missing page. The visual strategy of placing the two pictures side-by-side brought out the stark semantic

⁶² The eleventh-century artists, instead of representing the *ξυλοκοπία* dismissed this scene from the cycle. Instead, they selected two miracle scenes which followed the second part of the *fustuarium* (the stoning of the Saints) and depicted the following events. For the episodes depicted in the eleventh-century cycles, see Der Nersessian, L'illustration (as footnote 38 above) 36 and fig. 130–131, 92. C. WALTER / J.C. ANDERSON, Description, in The Barberini Psalter (as footnote 38 above) 95.

⁶³ KARLIN-HAYTER, Passio (as footnote 10 above) 278–279, and n. 63.

Her source is Polybios, Histories, Book 6, 37. <<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234%3Abook%3D6%3Achapter%3D37>> (last accessed 04/09/2024).

⁶⁴ For the different textual traditions regarding the martyrs immersed in the water or standing on the icy lake, see KARLIN-HAYTER, Passio (as footnote 10 above) 265–267 and K.M. DZWIGALA, Death of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. *Saeculum Christianum* 29/1 (2022) 21–30, esp. 22.

discrepancy of the scenes to evoke a clearer understanding of the underlying religious meaning. At first sight, the composition on f. 62v simply seems to depict the biblical episode of Pentecost (Acts 2,1–13).⁶⁵ Two barely visible blue reference marks connect the image to the beginning of Psalm 65 (66):1: Ἀλαλάξατε τῷ θεῷ, πᾶσα ἡ γῆ, ψάλατε δὴ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, δότε δόξαν αἰνέσει αὐτοῦ.⁶⁶ The symmetrical composition represents two groups of apostles seated on either side of an empty golden throne. From two segments of blue sky above each group of apostles, blue rays of light and red fiery tongues descend on their heads, symbolizing their divine inspiration from above. The idea of inspiration by the Holy Spirit is also accentuated by the white dove depicted in mid-air above the empty golden throne in the centre of the composition. The Holy Spirit hovers over the faded contours of an open book placed in upright position on the empty golden throne symbolizing, since early Christianity, the *Hetoimasia* or future Last Judgment. In the Khludov Psalter, the motive alludes to the judicial aspect of the scene. The apostles are represented as assessors in the eschatological court to come at the end of times by echoing Byzantine compositions of the Last Judgment and, at the same time, referring to the Psalm title: Εἰς τὸ τέλος (...).⁶⁷ On closer inspection, Peter and Paul can be identified by their physical traits. They are seated in the places of honour next to the golden throne in the centre of the composition. In an effort to give a more prominent position to Paul as the apostle of the eastern empire⁶⁸ he is depicted carrying a red gospel book, while the four evangelists are featured holding golden books.⁶⁹ The emphasis on the red book held by Paul may reflect the intention of the designers to show that the law based on the *Logos* of God foremost belonged in the hands of this apostolic leader thereby, on a second level of meaning, implying a leading role for his successors in the East.⁷⁰ The fact

⁶⁵ For the nearly identical scene in the Cod. Vat. gr. 510 in Paris, see BRUBAKER, Vision and Meaning (as footnote 37 above) 239–243.

⁶⁶ “Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; do make music to his name give glory to his praise.” Septuaginta psalm 65(66):1–2, cited after PIETERSMA / WRIGHT, A New English Translation (as footnote 52 above) 578.

⁶⁷ “Regarding completion. An Ode. Of a Psalm.” Septuaginta psalm 65(66) cited after PIETERSMA / WRIGHT, A New English Translation (as footnote 52 above) 578.

⁶⁸ Cf. BRUBAKER, Vision and Meaning (as footnote 48 above) 242.

⁶⁹ For the reasons of giving visual priority to the apostle Paul in this composition, see BRUBAKER, Vision and Meaning (as footnote 48 above) 240–242.

⁷⁰ It should be noted that no gospel book placed on a throne was depicted in the scene of the iconoclastic council on f. 23v of the Khludov Psalter discussed above. For the miniature of the iconoclastic council in the Pantokrator Psalter including a gospel book, see BRUBAKER, Vision and Meaning (as footnote 48 above) 212–213, fig. 102. For a discussion of divine inspiration in the context of church councils, see UPHUS, Der Horos (as footnote 3 above) 128–129.

that the apostles are seated on a *synthronon* recalling the depictions of church councils support the idea that the designers, on a second visual level, alluded to the spiritual leaders of their time.⁷¹ Here, the central motive of the open book placed upon the golden throne in the Khludov Psalter certainly meant to evoke the typical setting of the *bema* and *synthronon* in Byzantine churches, where the bishops gathered for their conciliar meetings.⁷² This was also intended by patriarch Tarasios describing in his first letter to pope Hadrian the spatial setting in the church of Hagia Sophia at Nicaea: “With all of us presiding, we made Christ our head; for there was displayed on a sacred throne the holy gospel-book, which pronounced to all of us priestly men gathered there, ‘Make a just judgment. Judge between the holy church of God and the innovation that has arisen.’”⁷³

While the scene perfectly illustrates the divine inspiration of the apostolic leaders as eschatological judges alluding to biblical Pentecost and the initial establishment of law and order in the Christian church, it is not entirely clear how the composition reflects the “music making” and the “singing the sounds” expressed in the verse of the corresponding Psalm. Does this, perhaps, refer to the equivalence of image and word which in the Horos of Nicaea II was described as a basic unity and harmonious co-existence of the two media “sounding together”?⁷⁴ Judging from the representation in the Khludov Psalter, the words of the Horos should, on a deeper level, be extended to mean the harmonious co-existence and unity of ecclesiastical councils voicing the correct “orthodox” faith.

71 As highlighted by BRUBAKER, *Vision and Meaning* (as footnote 48 above) 242. A similar arrangement depicting the apostles seated on a *synthronon* is found on a fragmentary icon in the collection of St. Catherine’s monastery at Sinai dated by Kurt Weitzmann to the second half of the ninth century. See G.H. FORSYTH, *The monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai: The icons: from the sixth to the tenth century*, vol. 1. Princeton 1976, 73–76, esp. 74.

72 Cf. M. ALTRIPP, *Überlegungen zum Synthronos der Hagia Sophia in Iznik/Nikaia*. *BZ* 92 (1999) 448–454. C. WALTER, *L’iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine*. Paris 1970.

73 English trans. cited after PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 627. LAMBERZ, *Concilium* t. 3 (as footnote 2 above) 928, 14–17. Cf. also ALTRIPP, *Überlegungen* (as footnote 72 above) 454.

74 Cf. above, my introduction and footnote 3.

8 Moral Benefit: “...reading the colours as if looking at letters”

By simultaneously depicting on the opposite side of the book opening in the Khludov Psalter the unjust treatment of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, who are violently punished for their Christian faith but did not give in to the will of the tyrant,⁷⁵ the layout of the double page in the Khludov Psalter opened up a way for contemporary readers/viewers to gain moral insight and derive moral benefit from the visual juxtaposition of righteous versus unjust judgment. As repeatedly expressed in the Acts of Nicaea II images could bring forth: “(...) tears and compunction”.⁷⁶ The same was insinuated by Ignatios the Deacon when describing the efforts of patriarch Tarasios, setting up pictures of the martyrs: “... to open up a gateway of compunction to the beholders and establish the fighters (for the faith), who, by their zeal to imitate them, are eager to take up the same blessed struggle, should circumstances call for it.”⁷⁷ Like words triggering the eye of the mind in audiences, images by delineating the dramatic content in forms and life-like colours, nourished the imagination of the beholders. By modifying traditional image formulas and/or arranging the visual presentations in artful opposition, painters arrived at creating dogmatic content that activated the imagination. In this way, religious emotions resulting in moral benefit could be powerfully stimulated at the intersection of images and words in ninth-century illuminated manuscripts like the Khludov Psalter.

⁷⁵ See above, footnote 16.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, the passage in the fourth session of Nicaea II: “See how deeply moved was our father at the depiction, with the result that he even wept.” English trans. cited after PRICE, *The Acts of Nicaea* (as footnote 2 above) 266. LAMBERZ, *Concilium t. 2* (as footnote 2 above) 296,9–13.

⁷⁷ See *supra*. The English trans. is cited after EUTHYMIADIS, *The Life* (as footnote 37 above) 194. For a discussion of this issue, see L. BRUBAKER, *Perception and Conception: art, theory and culture in ninth-century Byzantium*. *Word&Image* 5/1 (1989) 19–32.

Figures

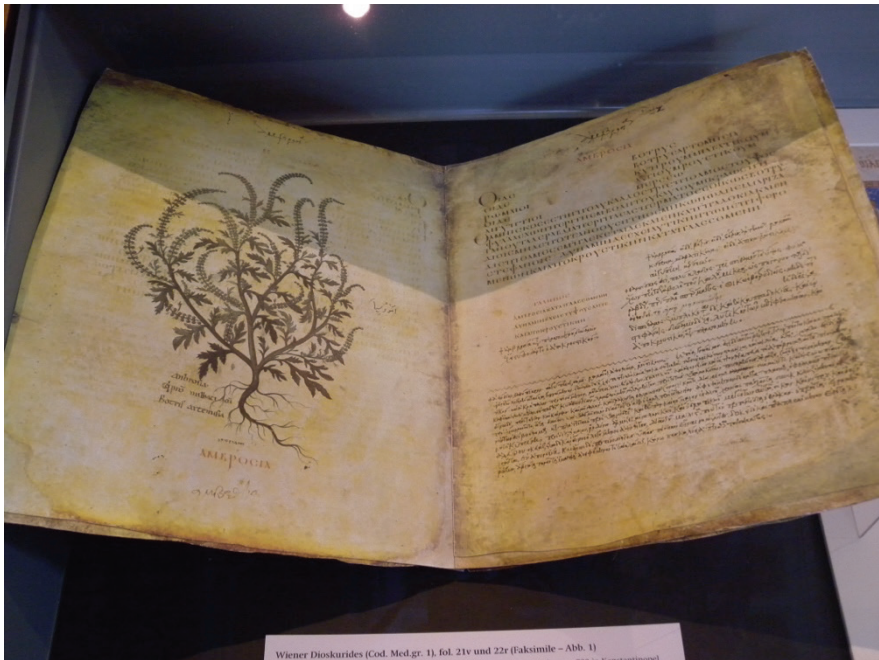


Fig. 1: Vienna, ÖNB Cod. med.gr. 1 (The Vienna Dioscorides), f. 21v–22r. Image source: (artwork in the public domain; Wikimedia Commons. Link: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/Nationalbibliothek_Vienna_Dioscurides_%289194008962%29.jpg (last accessed 04/09/2024))



Fig. 2: Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 310 (The Alexandrian World Chronicle), f. 6v. Image source: (artwork in the public domain; Wikimedia Commons. Link: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/44/Alexandrian_World_Chronicle_-_6v.jpg (last accessed 04/09/2024))



Fig. 3: Moscow, State Historical Museum, Ms D 129 (The Khludov Psalter), f. 23v. Image source: (artwork in the public domain; Wikimedia Commons. Link: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Chludov_sobor.jpg (last accessed 04/09/2024))



Fig. 4: London, British Library, Ms Add 19 352 (The Theodore Psalter), f. 81r. Image source: Ch. BARBER (ed.), *Theodore Psalter: electronic facsimile*, University of Illinois Press in association with the British Library 2000 (From the British Library Collection, with kind permission of the British Library) (last accessed 04/09/2024)



Fig. 5: London, British Library, Ms Add 19 352 (The Theodore Psalter), f. 81v. Image source: Ch. BARBER (ed.), *Theodore Psalter: electronic facsimile*, University of Illinois Press in association with the British Library 2000 (From the British Library Collection, with kind permission of the British Library)



Fig. 6: Rome, Oratory of the Forty Martyrs, Apse Conch: fresco fragments of the martyrdom of the forty martyrs of Sebaste. Image source: (artwork in the public domain; Wikimedia Commons. Link: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oratorio_dei_quaranta_martiri,_affreschi_sui_40_martiri_di_sebaste,_VIII-IX_secolo,_martirio_02.jpg (last accessed 04/09/2024)



Fig. 7: Rome, Oratory of the Forty Martyrs, Side Wall: fresco of the forty Martyrs of Sebaste 'in glory'. Image source: artwork in the public domain; Wikimedia Commons. Link: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Oratorio_dei_quaranta_martiri%2C_af-freschi_sui_40_martiri_di_sebaste%2C_VIII-IX_secolo%2C_02.jpg (last accessed 04/09/2024)



Fig. 8: Moscow, State Historical Museum, Ms D 129 (The Khludov Psalter), Book opening showing rest of cut parchment folio between f. 62v and f. 63r. Image source: photograph by Christine Stephan-Kaissis, provided by the author (from facsimile edition: *Salterio griego JIúdov*, Coedición Museo Histórico del Estado : Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Moscú of the Khludov Psalter: Moscow, State Historical Museum of Russia, Ms. D.129 [GIM 86795]/Khlud. 129-d, Madrid 2007) (last accessed 04/09/2024)

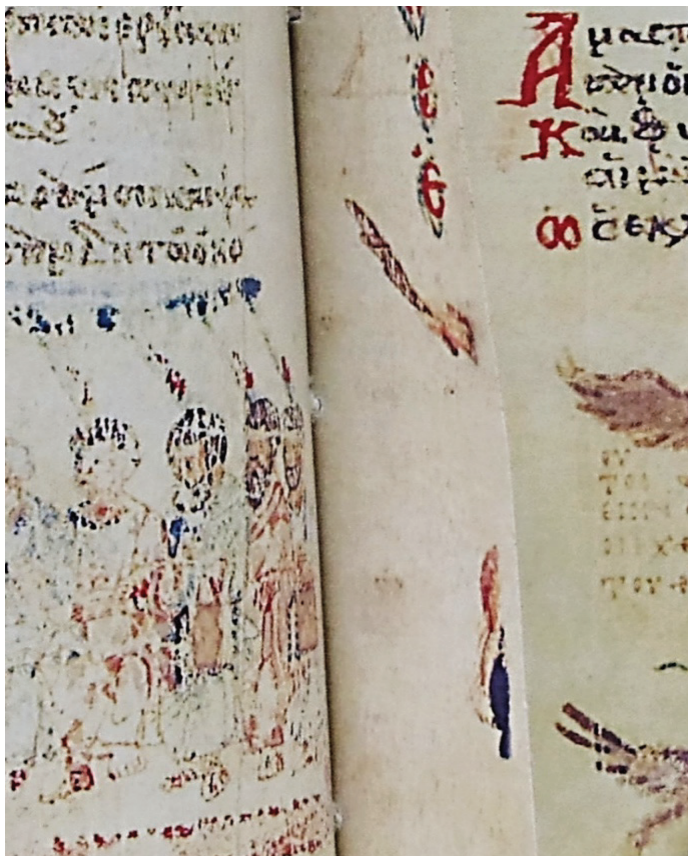


Fig. 9: Moscow, State Historical Museum, Ms D 129 (The Khludov Psalter), Detail: Book opening showing rest of cut parchment folio between f. 62v and f. 63r. Image source: photograph by Christine Stephan-Kaissis, provided by the author (from facsimile edition: *Salterio griego Jlúдов*, Coedición Museo Histórico del Estado : Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Moscú of the Khludov Psalter: Moscow, State Historical Museum of Russia, Ms. D.129 [GIM 86795]/Khlud. 129-d, Madrid 2007) (last accessed 04/09/2024)