Theophanes the Greek (ca. 1330-ca.1410)

Theophanes the Greek. From left to right: *The Dormition of the Virgin* (1392); *John the Baptist* and *The Virgin* (from the Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin -- 1405); *The Virgin of the Don* (1392). *The Dormition of the Virgin* and *The Virgin of the Don* are painted on both sides of one panel.

Theophanes the Greek is believed to have been born in the 1330's and to have died sometime between 1405 and 1409. He had been well read in religious literature and art before his arrival in Novgorod around 1378. During his self-contained, quiet, short-lived stay in Novgorod, Theophanes painted famous murals in the church of Transfiguration on the Ilyin Street. His works are also present in the Church-on-Volotovo-Field and in the Cathedral of St. Theodore Stratilates. After working in Kostroma in 1390, Theophanes moved to Moscow in 1395 as it was entering a new stage of history attempting to lead Russia to unification of divided lands and to the end of the Mongol yoke. Theophanes' first Muscovite work was the *Book of Gospels* of Boyar Koshka, for which he painted miniatures and which would later be used as the basis of the *Khitrovo Gospels*. Although Theophanes must have painted many icons throughout his life, scholars believe that the following nine are indisputably his: *The Dormition of the Virgin*, *The Virgin of the Don* (both 1392) and *The Saviour in Glory*, *The Virgin*, *St. John Chrysostom*, *Archangel Gabriel*, *St. Paul*, *St. Basil*, and *St. John the Evangelist*, all of which were painted in 1405 for the Deesis tier in Moscow's Cathedral of the Annunciation.

The fame of Theophanes in Moscow was so great that Epiphanios the Wise, a famous 14th-15th-century writer who knew the painter well, felt compelled to describe in a letter to his friend the master's method of work, apparently quite extraordinary at the time: *"When he was drawing or painting . . ., nobody saw him looking at existing examples, as would do some of our icon painters, who would*

constantly stare at them with amazement, looking here and there, doing less of actual painting than looking at examples. He, on the contrary, appeared to paint his frescoes with his hands while walking back and forth, talking to the visitors, considering inwardly what was lofty and wise and seeing the inner goodness with the eyes of his inner feelings."

Theophanes had invited Andrei Rublev to assist him in the painting of the murals for the Annunciation Cathedral, and in the process had done wonders to develop Rublev's genius. However, Rublev would later break away from Theophanes' dramatic severity of form, color, and expression, and become one of the greatest masters of Russian icon painting. Theophanes' beautiful colors and pure forms made him a remarkable artist who played a great role in laying the foundations of mature Moscow icon painting. [S.H. and A.B.]

Andrei Rublev (c.1370-1430)

Andrei Rublev. Top row, from left to right: *Christ in Majesty* (1410-1415), *The Holy Trinity* (ca. 1410), *The Transfiguration* (from the Cathedral of the Annunciation in the Moscow Kremlin -- 1405). Bottom row, from left to right: *The Archangel Michael*, *The Savior*, *The Apostle Paul* (all 1410-1420).

Born in a period of monastic revival, Rublev grew up in the period of increased public trust and support for the Eastern Orthodox Church. Although little is known about his life, sufficient evidence is available to begin to understand his work and the religious convictions that inspired it.

As a monk in the Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery, Rublev was doubtlessly a follower of St. Sergius (1314-1392), who was the founder of the monastery and

was in many ways considered the leader of the 14th century spiritual and political revival. Life in the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery emphasized "fraternity, calm, love (toward) God and spiritual self-improvement" (Andrey Rublev). In a time of great national division and strife, St. Sergius supported the unification of the quarreling Russian principalities and freedom from the foreign oppression inflicted by the Mongol Yoke.

Many of Rublev's surviving works were created in or near Moscow, and there is evidence to suggest that he received his training in this general area (although not exactly within the city) under the guidance of Prokhor of Gorodets. By 1405 he was collaborating with Theophanes the Greek, the foremost icon painter in Russia at the time, in the decoration of the Annunciation Cathedral in Moscow. This testifies to both his skill and his rising popularity as an icon painter.

Rublev is best known for his masterpiece *The Old Testament Trinity*. This icon exemplifies the simplicity and the skill of his style, as well as its ability to transcend pictorial constraints with spiritual and religious ideas. Renowned for its lyrical and rhythmic quality, the icon was an instant success and found many imitators. Perhaps Rublev contributed the most to icon painting, however, when he "broke away from the prevailing severity of form, color, and expression" that characterized the developing Russian style of icon painting, especially the work of Theophanes the Greek. Thus did he infuse his work, and that of icons to come, with the gentleness and harmony characteristic for his spiritual outlook. [C.B.]

[Source: Kurt Weitzmann (Knopf)].

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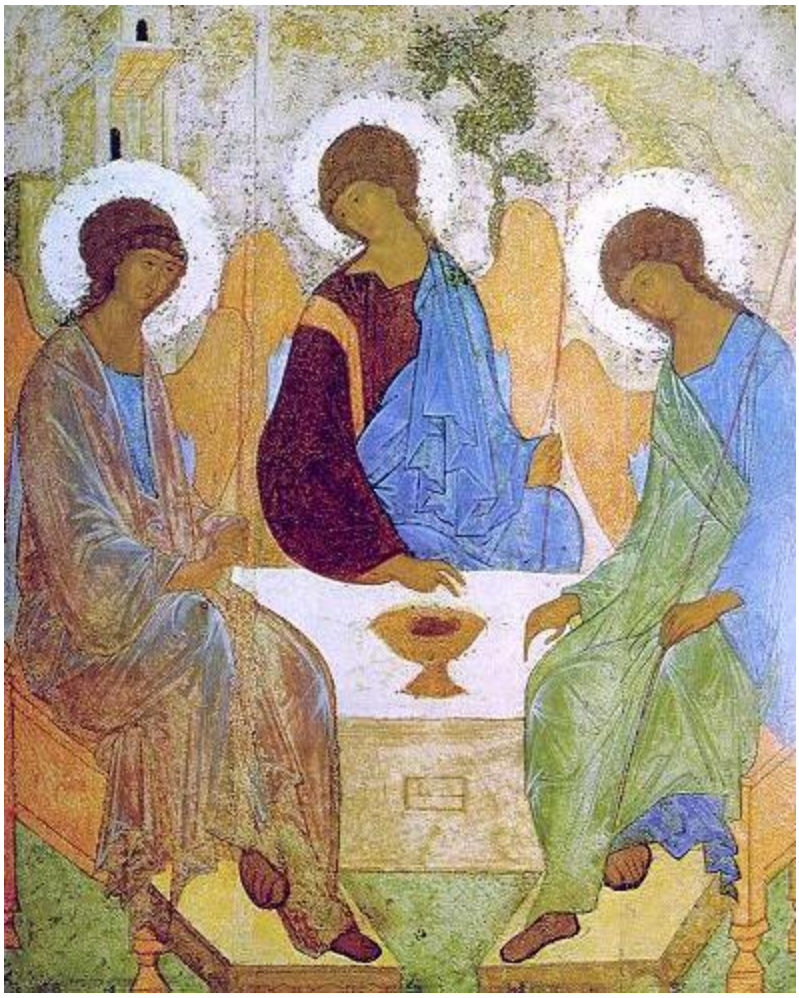
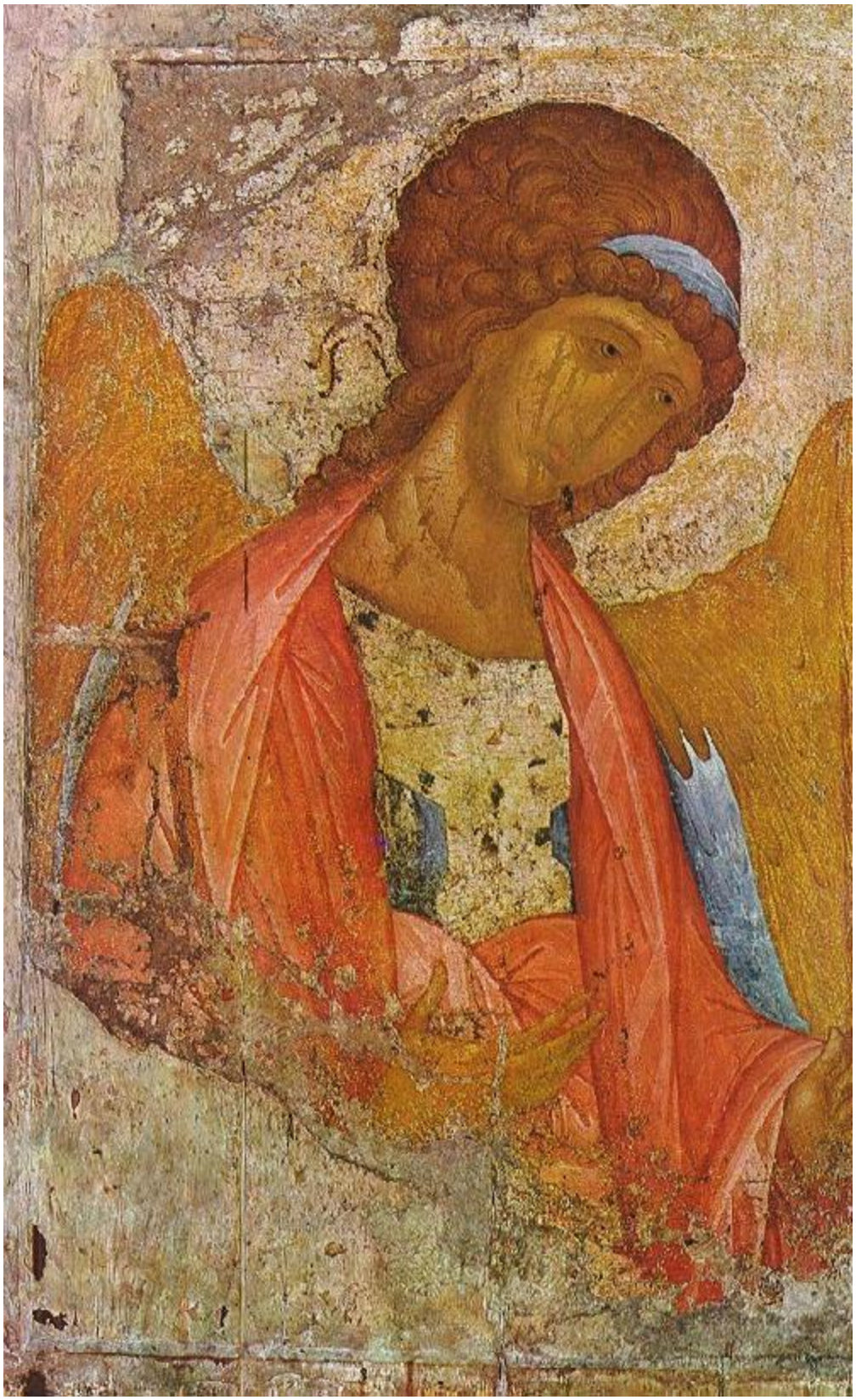
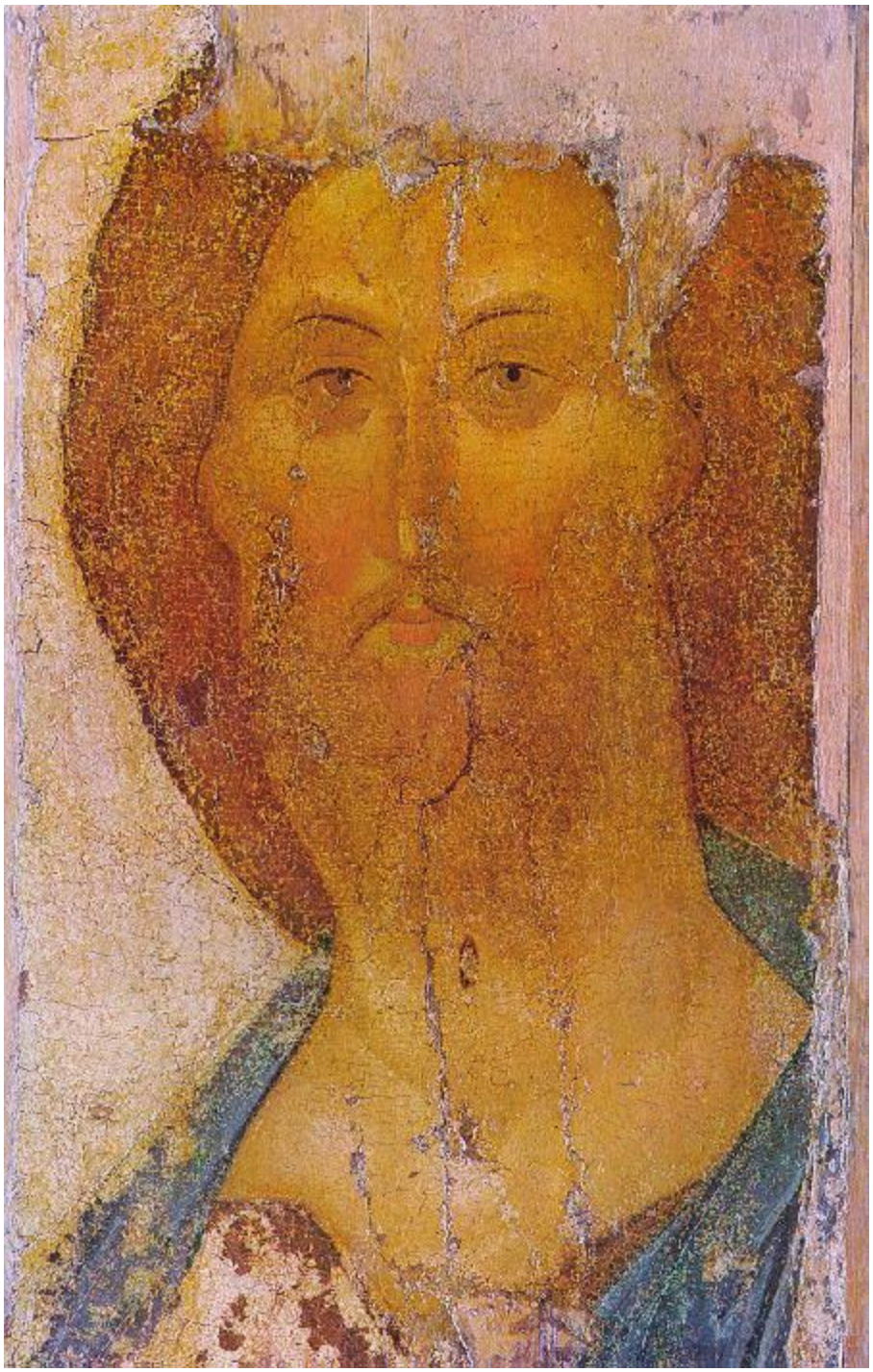
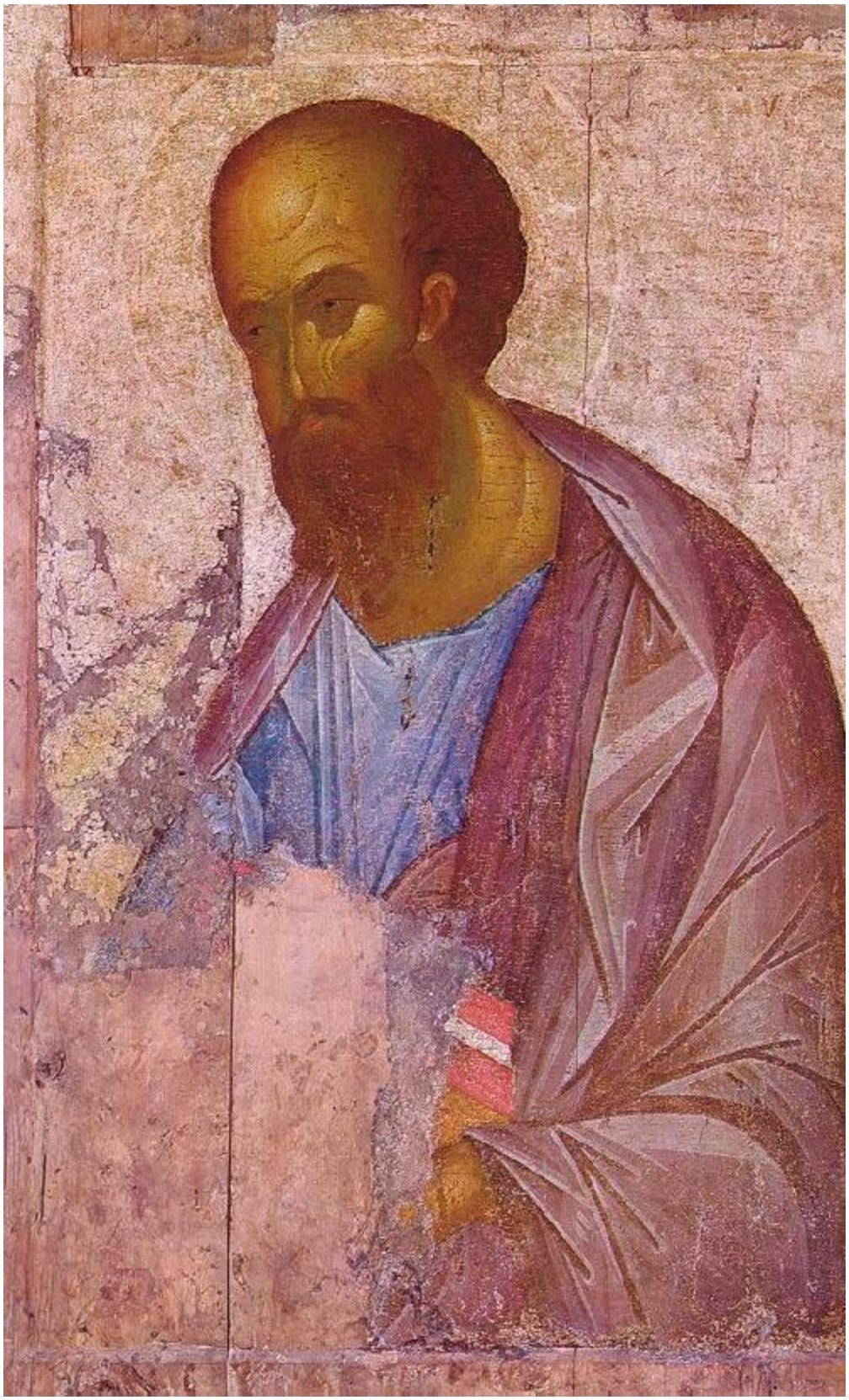








Dionisii or Dionysius (ca.1440-ca. 1510)

Dionisii. From left to right: *The Metropolitan Alexis, with Scenes from His Life* (1480s), *The Virgin Hodegetria* (1482), *The Virgin Hodegetria* (1502-1503), *The Metropolitan Peter, with Scenes from His Life* (1480s).

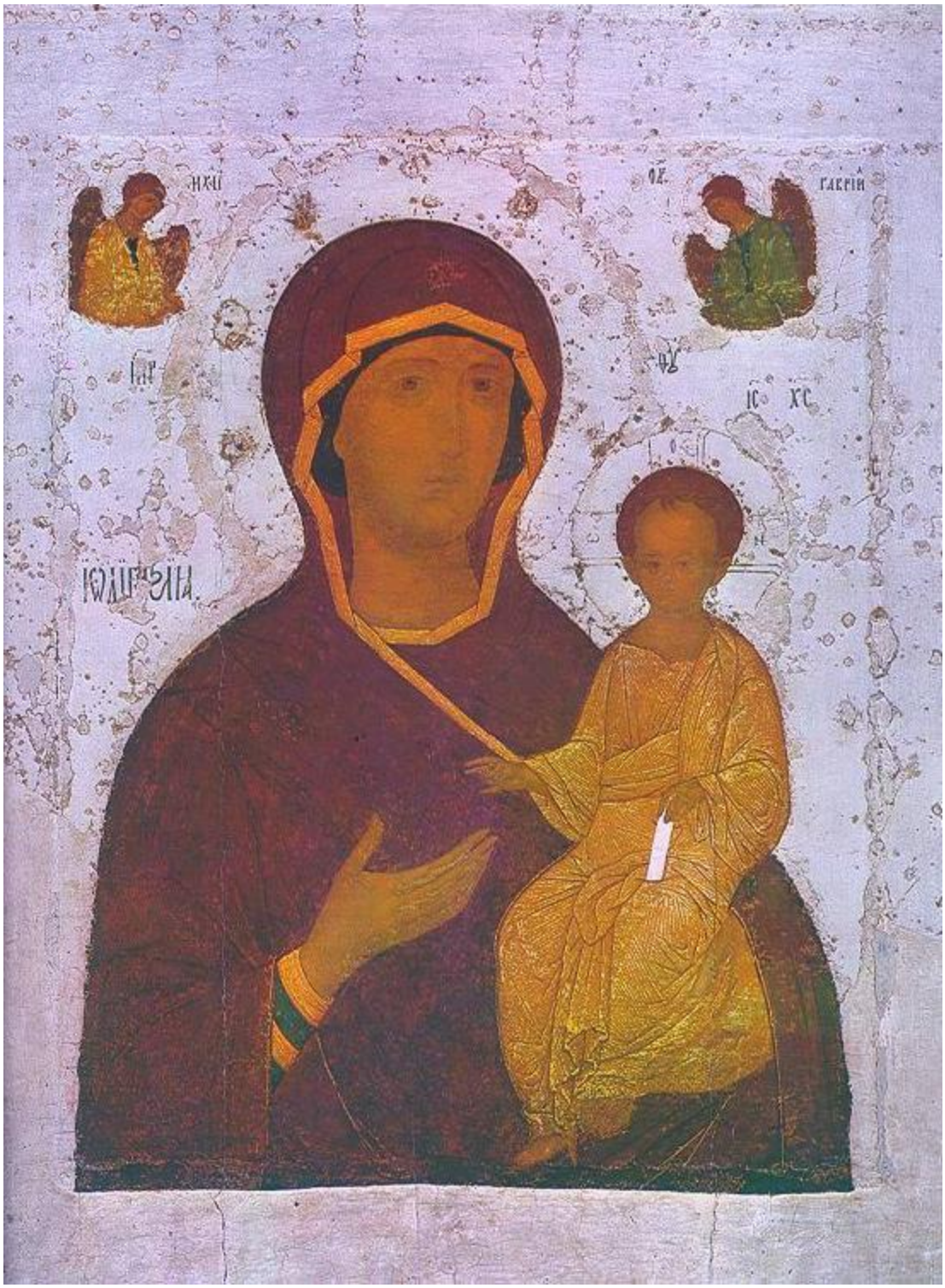
Dionisii (Dionysius) was born around 1440. He was first mentioned as a member of the team working on the paintings in the Cathedral of the Nativity in the Pafnutyev Monastery. During Dionisii's life the Muscovite state succeeded in finally subjugating the independent Republic of Lord Novgorod the Great and shaking off the yoke of the Mongol control.

Continuing the traditions of Moscow icon painting, Dionisii developed a light, elegant, and sophisticated style. While traditionally the head of a represented figure fit in the body about seven times, in Dionisii's art the ratio increased to nine, sometimes even ten. His figures became elongated and buoyant through a drastic reduction of the sizes of the heads, hands, and feet. To increase the effect of ethereal elongation Dionisii used "draperies in such a way as to outline the flesh and muscles which they cover." The color palette of Dionisii also differed from the traditional palette of the Moscow artists. He introduced pastel colors, especially turquoise, pale green, and rose. By using these painterly devices, Dionisii was able to "emphasize the mystical over the dramatic content of narrative scenes."

Among the most important works attributed to Dionisii were *The Crucifixion*, *The Metropolitan Alexis, with Scenes from His Life*, *The Metropolitan Peter, with Scenes from His Life*, and two icons of *The Virgin Hodegetria*. *The Crucifixion*, which was painted around 1500 has a refined color palette and elegant composition. Slightly earlier, Dionisii and his workshop completed the hagiographical icons of Alexis and Peter. In the first, probably painted by the master himself, we see the pastel color palette characteristic of Dionisii's later works. The delicate elongated figures almost float through the compositions of

the border scenes describing events from the bishops' lives, making the images deeply spiritual and detached from reality. [K.T.]

[Sources: *Britanica Online*, Bulkin].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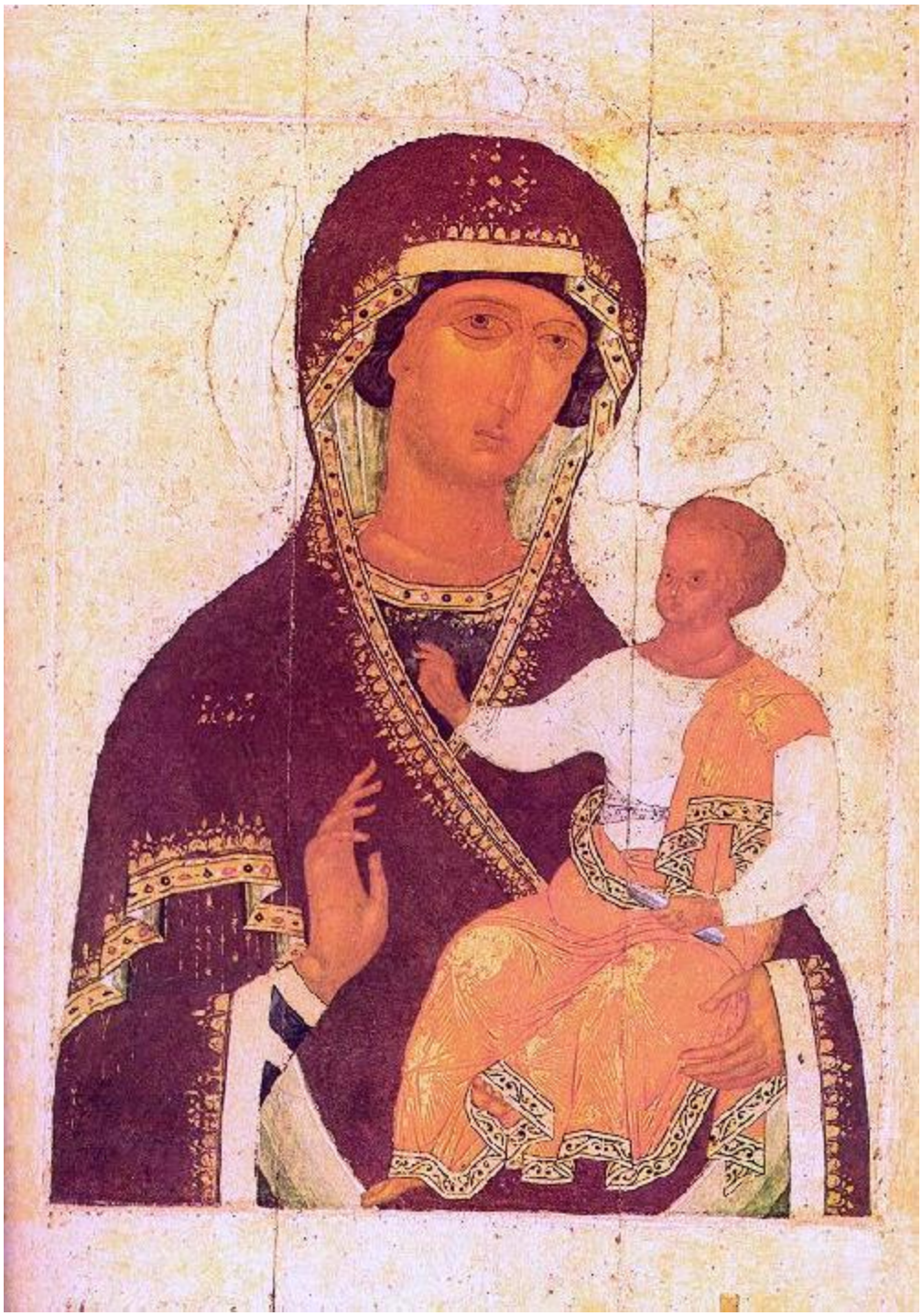

Simon Ushakov (1626-1686)

Simon Ushakov: First row, from left to right: *The Virgin Eleousa of Kykkos* (1668), *Christ Acheiropoietos (Mandylion)* (1660s), *St. John the Theologian* (1673), *Apotheosis of the Virgin of Vladimir*, otherwise known as *The Genealogical Tree of the Muscovite State* (1668). Second row: *The Last Supper* (1685).

Active in Moscow, Simon Ushakov combined the traditional style of Russian icon painters with realistic details of Western European art. He became a member of the "Kremlin Armory" workshops which was a unique "academy" of the arts. There, together with his friend Iosif Vladimirov, he created a new type of art, which was more rational and less spiritual. They managed to create a more three-dimensional type of icon using chiaroscuro for modeling the faces of their subjects. Nevertheless, Ushakov also preserved the traditional technique of applying paint, from light to dark (characteristic of icon painting). He also never traded tempera for oil paint. In order to increase the sense of depth, Ushakov's landscapes and architectural motifs were borrowed from Western European art. He invited Western masters to Russia to promote and teach the different styles of painting. In 1644 he became the head of the studio which he directed until his

death in 1686. At twenty-two, he was appointed a court painter. One can notice a marked duality in Ushakov. On the one hand he was an iconographer who respected and honored the traditional canons of art, on the other he was an innovator who desperately searched for new ways of artistic expression. Moreover, Ushakov was very versatile. His talent found an outlet in his work in silver shops, where he designed both jewelry and weapons. He became a famous engraver and founded his own workshop. His fame as an iconographer was established around mid-century. Most notable were his portraits of Christ, rendered in cool, pale colors. They reflect his fascination with the human face. Ushakov was an artist who helped Russian painters to make the transition to a more secular art. Some of his greatest contributions included the exterior frescoes in the Dormition Cathedral (Uspenskii Sobor) of the Moscow Kremlin. In 1664 he was officially appointed the first "iconographer of the Tsar," and worked on portraits of the Tsar (parsunas). He is also remembered for his version of Andrey Rublev's *Holy Trinity* and for designing a manual of icon-painting (*podlinnik*). Examples of his work can be found in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. [S.C.]

[Sources: *Art Treasures in Russia*, *Moscow: Treasures and Traditions*, Ivanov].

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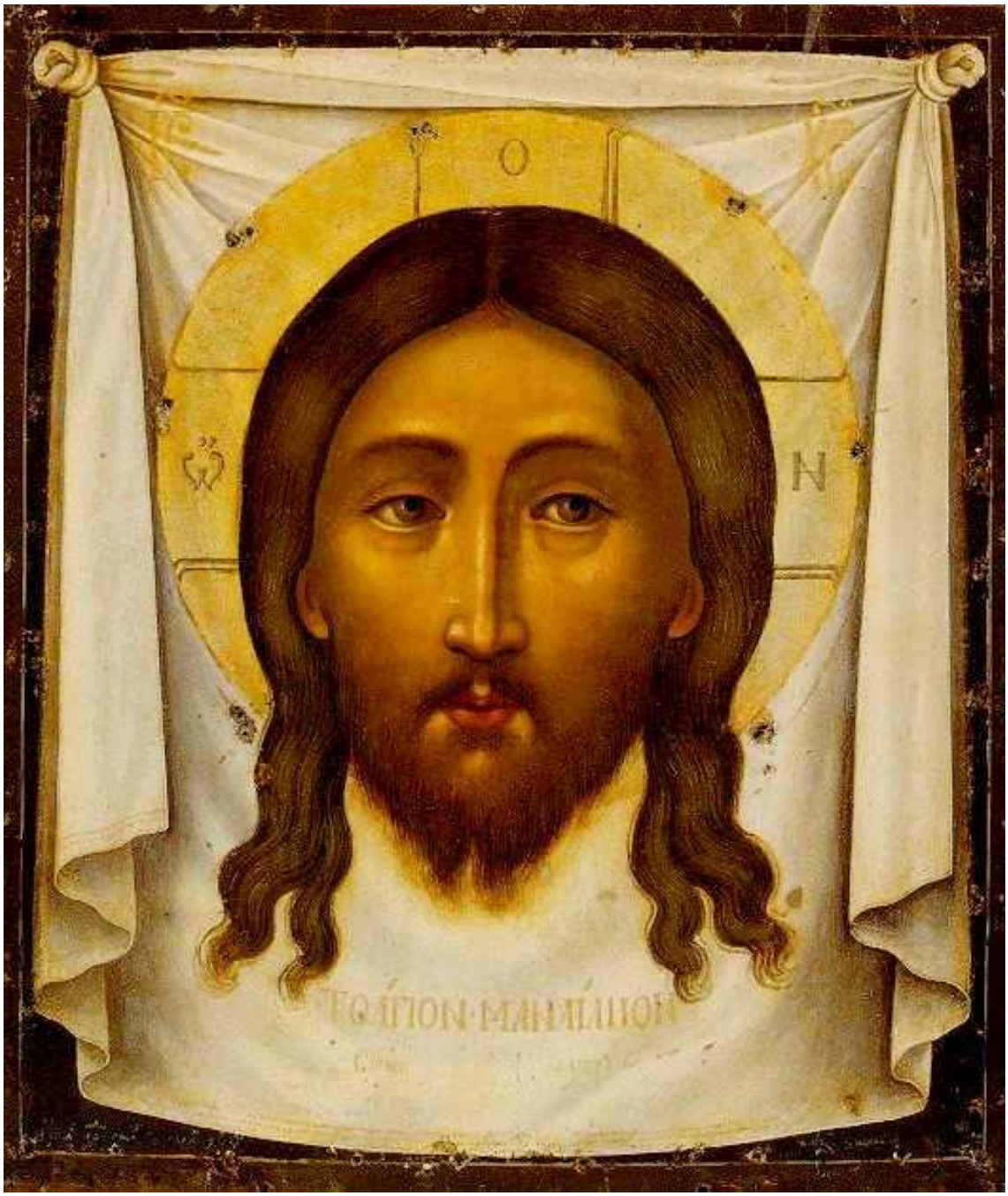
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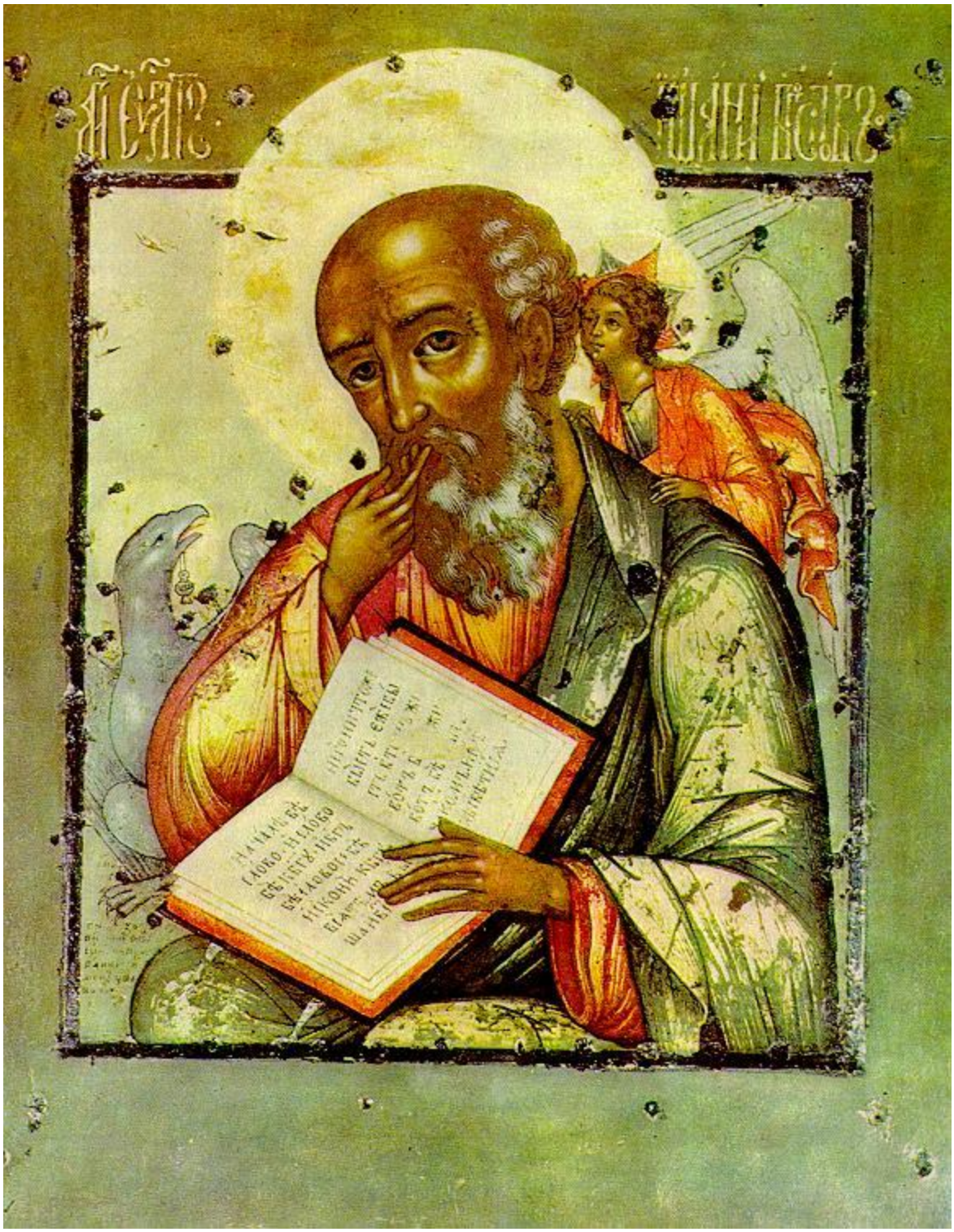
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