

# Images of the Mother of God

Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium

Edited by Maria Vassilaki



ASHGATE

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## Praying for the salvation of the empire?

*Maria Vassilaki*

The subject of this paper is an icon, the Freising 'Lukasbild', which, though it has long been well known to art historians<sup>1</sup> (Plates 17 and 18a, Fig. 22.1), still continues to withhold many of its secrets. It is for this reason perhaps as much as any other that, at a conference held under the auspices of the Benaki Museum's 'Mother of God' exhibition, I chose to talk not about one of the items on view there, but rather about one that was not. I should for the record, though, mention that we originally intended to bring this icon to the Benaki Museum and indeed made every effort to do so, through visits to Freising, discussions with Dr Peter Steiner, director of the city's Diözesanmuseum, and consultation with the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Friedrich Wetter. All seemed to be going well until, at the very end of May 2000, we were notified of the Freising museum's condition report, which stated that some of the icon's enamel medallions had begun to disintegrate. This obviously put an end to any further discussion, as we could not think of bringing the icon to Athens in these circumstances. However, it should not be thought that the choice of this icon for my paper was made merely out of frustration. The truth is that I wanted to set down a few of the thoughts that occurred to me at various times during the preparation of the exhibition, especially as I had the opportunity to observe and study the icon at close hand when it was on view in the exhibition 'Rom und Byzanz' at the

<sup>1</sup> J. Sighart, *Der Dom zu Freising. Eine kunstgeschichtliche Monographie mit artistischen Beilagen* (Landshut, 1852), 68–73. M. Kalligas, 'Φορητή εικόν εν Freising', *AE* (1937), 501–6, Pl. A', Figs 1–3. A. Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδιασµα ιστορίας της θρησκευτικής ζωγραφικής µετά την Άλωσιν* (Athens, 1957), 17–18, Pl. 1.2. S. Benker, *Philipp Durr und die Entstehung des Barock in Baiern* (Munich, 1958), 95, 183–4, Fig. 27. *Byzantine Art, an European Art*, exh. cat., Athens, Zappeion Exhibition Hall (Athens, 1964), no. 214, 260–1 (A. Xyngopoulos). C. Wolters, 'Beobachtungen am Freisinger Lukasbild', *Kunstchronik* 17 (1964), 85–91, Figs 1–4. J. Deér, 'Die byzantinisierenden Zellschmelze der Linköping-Mitra und ihr Denkmalkreis', in *Tortulae, Studien zur altchristlichen und byzantinischen Monumenten (Römische Quartalschrift, Supplementheft, 30)* (Rome, Freiburg and Vienna, 1966), 49–64, esp. 59 n. 36. K. Wessel, *Die byzantinische Emailkunst vom 5. bis 13. Jahrhundert (Beiträge zur Kunst des christlichen Ostens, 4)* (Recklinghausen, 1967), no. 65, 196–8, fig. on p. 196. A. Grabar, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines du moyen âge (Bibliothèque de l'Institut Hellénique d'Études Byzantines et Post-byzantines de Venise, 7)* (Venice, 1975), 7, no. 16, 41–3, 44, 46, 48–9, Figs 39–41. F. Fahr, H. Ramisch and P. B. Steiner (eds), *Diözesanmuseum Freising. Christliche Kunst aus Salzburg, Bayern und Tirol, 12. bis 18. Jahrhundert (Diözesanmuseum für christliche Kunst des Erzbistums München und Freising, Kataloge und Schriften, II)* (Freising, 1984), 244–51 (S. Benker). A. Legner (ed.), *Ornamenta Ecclesiae. Kunst und Künstler der Romanik*, exh. cat., Cologne, Schnütgen Museum (Cologne, 1985), no. H.69, 171–2, colour pls on pp. 169–70 (P. Steiner). F. Fahr, H. Ramisch and P. B. Steiner (eds), *Freising. 1250 Jahre Geistliche Stadt (Diözesanmuseum für christliche Kunst des Erzbistums München und Freising, Kataloge und Schriften, IX)* (Freising, 1989), no. IV.1, 298–9 (S. Benker). R. Baumstark (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz. Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen*, exh. cat., Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (Munich, 1998), no. 84, 244–9 (M. Restle). D. Buckton, 'Byzantine Enamels in Bavaria', *Mitteilungen zur spätantiken Archäologie und byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* 2 (2000), 93–105, esp. 97–9. Id., 'Enamelled Metal Icons of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Byzantine Icons: Art, Technique and Technology*, International Symposium, Gennadius Library, Athens, 20–21 February 1998 (Heraklion, 2002), 313–17, Pl. XXI.2, Fig. 1.

Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich in 1998–1999,<sup>2</sup> and on two separate visits to the Freising Diözesanmuseum.

The dimensions of the icon are relatively small; 27.8 cm in height and 21.5 cm in width. The central panel depicts the Virgin in the Hagiosoritissa iconographic type,<sup>3</sup> accompanied by the abbreviations Μή(τη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ and the inscription Ἡ Ἐλπίς τῶν Ἀπελπισμένων, 'Hope of the Hopeless'. The background and the Virgin's halo are covered by an elaborate revetment made from a gilded silver sheet, repoussé, chased and pierced. The frame consists of a parcel-gilt silver sheet and was originally adorned with ten enamel medallions, nine of which still survive intact; these show (top row) the *Hetoimasia* (Preparation of the Throne) between the archangels Michael and Gabriel; (second row) the apostles Peter (left) and Paul (right); (third row) Sts George (left) and Demetrios (right); (bottom row) Sts Kosmas, Panteleemon and, on the missing medallion, Damianos, as the surviving inscription indicates. These medallions alternate with rectangular plaques containing an inscription in enamelled lettering, which reads as follows:

*top row*

Ψυχῆς πόθος ἀργυρὸς καὶ χρυσὸς τρίτος  
σοὶ τῇ καθαρᾷ προσφέρονται Παρθένω  
ἄργυρος μέντοι καὶ χρυσοῦ φύσις ὄντως  
δέξαιτο ρῦπον ὡς ἐν φθαρτῇ οὐσίᾳ

*right side*

ἐκ δὲ ψυχῆς ὁ πόθος ὦν ἀθανάτου  
οὔτ' ἀ(ν) σπῖλον δέξαιτο, οὔτε μὴν τέλος  
κἂν γὰρ λυθεῖ τὸ σῶμα τοῦτ' Ἄδου τόπω

*left side*

τοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς οἴκτου σὲ δυσωπῶν μένει  
Κανστρίσιος ταῦτα σοὶ προσφέρων λέγει  
Μανουὴλ Δισύπατος τάξει λεβίτης

*bottom row*

καὶ ταῦτα δέξαι συμπαθῶς, ὦ Παρθένε  
τὸν ρευστὸν τοῦτον ἀντιδιδούσα βίον  
ταῖ[ς σαῖς] διελθεῖν ἀνώδυνον πρεσβείαις  
ὡς ἡμέρας δεΐξιας καὶ φωτὸς τέ[λος].<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For full reference, see n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The Hagiosoritissa iconographic type is connected with the devotional icon of the same name, associated with the Hagia Soros and the holy 'relics' of the Theotokos, her girdle and her mantle, housed respectively in the Chalkoprateia church and the Blachernai monastery in Constantinople. *ODB* 3, 1929 (A. W. Carr). The image of the Virgin Hagiosoritissa is found in all Byzantine media: icons, marble relief plaques, steatites, enamels, coins, lead seals, etc. *ODB* 3, 2171 (N. P. Ševčenko). For numerous examples, see Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, nos 14, 21, 38 and Pls 87, 90, 113, 118–20, and 191. See most recently, A. W. Carr, 'Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople', *DOP* 56 (2002), 75–92, esp. 78–80.

<sup>4</sup> Kalligas read the final word of this inscription as τέκνον (child). Kalligas, 'Βυζαντινὴ εἰκόν', 505. Grabar

The soul's yearning, silver and thirdly gold are offered to you, the pure Maiden. But silver and the nature of gold may suffer taint, being of a transitory substance. Yet yearning, being of an immortal soul, will never be unclean, nor know an end. For though this body suffers dissolution in Hades, the soul's sorrow, it remains imploring you. In offering this to you, Manuel Dishypatos, Kanstresios and of the Levite order, addresses you as follows. Take it graciously, Maiden, and in return allow us to pass this transitory life free from pain, thanks to your supplications; may you show [this joy] to the end of day and light.

According to the inscription, the donor of the icon was the deacon Manuel Dishypatos, whom M. Kalligas identified with the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki of that name who held office from 1258 to 1261.<sup>5</sup> This identification and a consequent dating to the third quarter of the thirteenth century are totally consistent with the icon – at least as regards the frame with the medallions, since the representation of the Virgin in the centre is thought to be a late fourteenth-century overpainting, and X-ray examination during its restoration (Fig. 22.2) confirmed this: an earlier layer of paint lies under the surface visible today.<sup>6</sup> The revetment of the central panel is considered to be contemporary with the over-painting.<sup>7</sup>

The special interest of this icon lies in its alleged connection with the emperor Manuel II Palaiologos and his travels in Europe. It is well known that between 1399 and 1403 Manuel, in a desperate search for economic and military assistance from Europe to confront the Ottoman threat during the siege of Constantinople by Bayezid I (1399–1402), set out on a journey that would take him to Venice, Padua, Milan, Paris – even as far as London.<sup>8</sup> On his return to the troubled capital of his empire he sent an illuminated manuscript containing the works of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite<sup>9</sup> as a gift to the abbey of St Denis, where he had attended a liturgy together with King Charles VI of France.<sup>10</sup> A full-page miniature in the manuscript (Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d'Art, MR 416, fol. 2) portrays the emperor and his family under the Virgin's protection (Fig. 22.3), while the colophon states that it was delivered to the abbey of St Denis in 1408 on behalf of the emperor Manuel

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adopted the reading τέλος suggested to him by M. Manoussacas, which makes better sense. Grabar, *Les revêtements*, 43. Strangely enough, Kalligas' reading is still used by German scholars. Legner, *Ornamenta Ecclesiae*, 171 (P. Steiner). Baumstark, *Rom und Byzanz*, 246 (M. Restle).

<sup>5</sup> Kalligas, 'Βυζαντινή εικόν', 506. For information on Manuel Dishypatos, see *PLP* 3 (1978), nos 5543–4, 54. P. Gounaridis, *Το κίνημα των Αρσενιατών (1261–1310). Ιδεολογικές διαμάχες την εποχή των πρώτων Παλαιολόγων* (Athens, 1999), 62–4, and *passim*. George Pachymeres makes a specific reference to an alleged miracle that occurred in 1258 during a vigil organized at the Akapniou monastery in Thessaloniki by the Metropolitan Manuel Dishypatos. The miracle, which took the form of a mysterious loud voice that pronounced the incomprehensible word ΜΑΡΠΠΟΥ, was taken as prophesying the ascent of the Palaiologoi family to the throne of Constantinople. George Pachymeres, *De Michaele Palaeologo* I, *PG* 143, 460–2; ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1835), I.27–8; ed. A. Failler (Paris, 1984), I.46–9.

<sup>6</sup> Wolters, 'Beobachtungen', 85–91. Buckton, 'Enamelled Metal Icons', 316. Buckton, however, says that the central painted panel appears in the X-ray photograph to be earlier than the mid-thirteenth century enamelled frame. This view is also expressed by S. Benker, who gives a date c. 1200 in his entry in the catalogue Fahr, Ramisch and Steiner, *Diözesanmuseum Freising*, 244–51.

<sup>7</sup> Baumstark, *Rom und Byzanz*, 249 (M. Restle). Buckton, 'Byzantine Enamels', 99.

<sup>8</sup> J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1969), 123–99, esp. 171–99.

<sup>9</sup> *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, exh. cat., Paris, Musée du Louvre, 3 November 1992 – 1 February 1993 (Paris, 1992), no. 356, 463–4 (J. Durand).

<sup>10</sup> Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 181.

Palaiologos by Manuel Chrysoloras, who was responsible for composing the text of the colophon.<sup>11</sup>

Absolute confirmation of the manuscript's connection with Manuel Palaiologos is thus contained in the colophon, while, in the case of the icon, support comes from later evidence alone. This evidence takes the form of a Latin inscription engraved on the baroque-style altarpiece in Freising cathedral (Fig. 22.4), where the icon was placed in the seventeenth century (1629);<sup>12</sup> it reads as follows:

Hanc Virginum Virginis Iconem  
 Penicili St Lucae ab Imperatore  
 Orientis Ioannes Galeacius Insubrum Dux  
 Accepit, ab isto Comes Anglade Chent, ab hac  
 Bronorius de la Scala, qui dono misit fratri  
 Suo Nicodemo Frisingensium Episcopo A[nn]o 1440  
 23 Septemb[ris]. Ex inhic, colitur, non donatur;  
 Nec alij donassent, si satis novissent  
 Vitus adamus Frisingensium  
 Episcopus Ec[clesiae] Dei Matrem Dei  
 Matri posuit A[nn]o MDCXXIX.

This icon of the Virgin of Virgins, painted by St Luke, was received from the Emperor of the East by Giangaleazzo Duke of the Insubres, and from him by the Earl (*comes*) of Kent in England, and from her [*sic*] by Brunoro della Scala, who sent it as a gift to his brother Nicodemo, the bishop of Freising, on 23 September 1440. From henceforth it is an object of veneration, and not a gift: nor would others have given it, if they had been sufficiently knowledgeable. Veit Adam, the Bishop of the church of Freising, placed the Mother of God on behalf of the Mother of God, 1629.

The Virgin in prayer of the Freising icon may be thought to be in perfect sympathy with the purpose of Manuel II Palaiologos' visit to Europe, and this view is strengthened by her appellation 'Hope of the Hopeless', to the left and right of the halo, which exactly describes the psychological climate in which he undertook the journey. But are these clues sufficient to link the icon with Manuel when there is no specific reference to him in the inscription, which merely states that the icon was presented to Giangaleazzo Visconti by 'The Emperor of the East', i.e. an

<sup>11</sup> 'Τὸ παρὸν βιβλίον ἀπεστάλη παρὰ τοῦ ὑψηλοτάτου βασιλέως / αὐτοκράτορος Ῥωμαίων κυροῦ Μανουὴλ τοῦ Παλαιολόγου εἰς τὸ μο/ναστήριον τοῦ Ἁγίου Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐν Παρυσίῳ τῆς Φραγγίας ἢ Γαλατίας / ἀπὸ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, δι' ἐμοῦ Μανουὴλ τοῦ Χρυσολωρᾶ, πεμ/φθέντος πρέσβεως παρὰ τοῦ εἰρημένου βασιλέως. Ἐτει ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου, ἕξακισχίλιοστῶ ἔννεακοσιοστῶ ἑξκαδεκάτῳ, ἀπὸ σαρκώσεως / δὲ τοῦ Κυρίου, χίλιοστῶ τετρακοσιοστῶ ὀγδόῳ: / ὅστις εἰρημένος βασιλεὺς ἦλθε πρότερον εἰς τὸ Παρύσιον πρὸ ἐτῶν τεσσάρων'. Translated in Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 264, as 'The present book was sent by the most excellent Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans, lord Manuel Palaiologos, to the Monastery of Saint Dionysios in Paris of Phranga, or Galatia, [France] from Constantinople through me, Manuel Chrysoloras, who has been sent as ambassador by the said Basileus, in the year from the Creation of the Universe, the six thousandth nine hundredth sixteenth, and from the Incarnation of the Lord, the thousandth four hundredth and eighth. The said Basileus himself came formerly to Paris four years before'. A transcription of the Greek text also in Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, Appendix XXIV, no. 4.

<sup>12</sup> The altarpiece was made for the 'Elisabethaltar', constructed at the same time on the initiative of the Freising bishop Veit Adam von Gepeckh, and is the work of Philipp Dirr. Benker, *Philipp Dirr*, 95, 183-4.



anonymous Byzantine emperor? Of course the fact that Giangaleazzo was Duke of Milan at the time of Manuel Palaiologos' visit to the city<sup>13</sup> might be considered support for the theory that the icon was one of the gifts which the Byzantine emperor brought with him to Europe. Moreover, we know that Manuel was welcomed in Milan by Giangaleazzo Visconti, who promised to give aid to the emperor and even to go to Constantinople in person, if this should prove necessary.<sup>14</sup> It is also recorded that during his stay at the court of Giangaleazzo, Manuel offered him a precious relic of the Passion, one of the thorns from the crown worn by Christ on the Cross.<sup>15</sup> Giangaleazzo's connections with the arts are well known and consequently the emperor's gift of a Byzantine icon would have been directed to a recipient who was fully capable of appreciating it.<sup>16</sup>

According to its Latin inscription, the icon passed from Giangaleazzo to an anonymous Earl (*comes*) of Kent in England, but this figure has always remained obscure. No attempt has ever been made to identify this person and clarify the conditions under which he obtained the icon. However, Veit Arnpeck in his late fifteenth-century history of the bishops of Freising, *Liber de Gestis Episcoporum Frisingensis* speaks of the 'countess' of Kent, that is, a woman: '... Que ymago prius donata fuit per illustrissimum principem Grecorum imperatorem Constantino-politanum Johanni Galiatz, tandem duci Mediolanensi, post cujus mortem prescripta ymago pervenit ad manus cujusdam comitisse de Chent et partibus Anglie ...'<sup>17</sup> C. Meichelbeck in his *Historiae Frisingensis* of 1724 and 1729 also states '... post cujus obitum Matriona quaedam nobilis ex Anglorum Regno Comitissa de Chent dicta eadem veneranda imagine...'<sup>18</sup> This may explain the discrepancy of the Latin inscription on the altarpiece, which after mentioning the 'Earl' of Kent, goes on to say *ab hac* (from her), which denotes a female. This woman must have been Lucia, sister-in-law of Giangaleazzo Visconti, who in 1407 married Edmund Holland, the Earl of Kent.<sup>19</sup> By that time Giangaleazzo was dead, as was his wife Caterina (†1404), the sister of

<sup>13</sup> Giangaleazzo Visconti was co-lord of Milan and its dominions from 1378 to 1385, sole lord from 1385 to 1395, and the first Duke of Milan from 1395 to his death in 1402. D. M. Bueno de Mesquita, *Giangaleazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan (1351–1402). A Study in the Political Career of an Italian Despot* (Cambridge, 1941).

<sup>14</sup> Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 171–2.

<sup>15</sup> 'De deux épines possédées par la cathédrale de Pavie, où elles entrèrent le 2 septembre 1499, l'une venait de Philippe de Valois, qui l'avait détachée de la couronne de Paris ... L'autre avait été donnée au duc Jean Galeazzo Visconti, en 1400, par Manuel II Paléologue, empereur de Constantinople, lors de son séjour à Pavie'. F. de Mèly, *Exuviae Sacrae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1904), 268, 342. See also S. Mergiali-Sahas, 'Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics. Use, and Misuse, of Sanctity and Authority', *JÖB* 51 (2001), 56.

<sup>16</sup> G. A. dell'Acqua, 'I Visconti e le arti', in M. Bellonci, G. A. dell'Acqua and C. Perogalli, *I Visconti a Milano* (Milan, 1977), 123–217, esp. 165–90. Giangaleazzo is mainly known for his passion for manuscripts. The first inventory of the Visconti library, made in 1426, included 988 volumes, most of which had probably entered the collection by the time of Giangaleazzo's death in 1402. E. W. Kirsch, *Five Illuminated Manuscripts of Giangaleazzo Visconti* (University Park and London, 1991), 1–2. See also M. Meiss and E. W. Kirsch, *The Visconti Hours. Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence* (London, 1972), for a richly illuminated manuscript especially commissioned by Giangaleazzo, and K. Sutton, 'Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron: a Prayerbook Illuminated by Pietro da Pavia', *Apollo* 137 (1993), 89–96.

<sup>17</sup> Veit Arnpeck, *Sämtliche Chroniken herausgegeben von Georg Leidinger, Quellen und Erörterungen zur Bayerischen und Deutschen Geschichte* (Munich, 1915; repr. Darmstadt, 1969), 896.

<sup>18</sup> C. Meichelbeck, *Historiae Frisingensis, tomus II. Posteriora quinque ab adventu S. Corbiniani I episcopi saecula seu res ab anno Christi MCCXXIV usque ad anno MDCCXXIV Frisingae gestas exhibens* (Augustae Vindelicorum, 1729), 224.

<sup>19</sup> *Storia di Milano, VI. Il Ducato Visconteo e la Repubblica Ambrosiana (1392–1450)* (Milan, 1955), tavola genealogica della famiglia Visconti – II. See also D. Hay and J. Law, *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance 1380–1530*

Lucia. It seems probable therefore that the icon was already in Lucia's possession at the time of her marriage in 1407. Edmund Holland died in September 1408 and Lucia in 1424.

According to the Latin inscription, the next owner of the icon was Bronorius (Brunoro) della Scala, a member of the former ruling family of Verona, who was resident at the court of Vienna.<sup>20</sup> We do not know under what circumstances and on whose initiative the transfer was made – whether, for example, it was by Lucia herself before her death (1424), or on some occasion afterwards. In any case, the icon must have been given to Brunoro and passed on by him to his brother by 1437, the year of Brunoro's death. Nicodemo della Scala was appointed bishop of Freising in 1421 and he held the office until his death in 1443.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned in the Latin inscription, Nicodemo presented the icon to the cathedral of Freising on 23 September 1440. It has remained in Freising ever since, first in the cathedral treasury, then from 1629 on the altarpiece, and since 1974 in the city's Diözesanmuseum, just opposite.<sup>22</sup>

The Latin inscription seems to provide the Freising icon with a historically authenticated provenance from the time it reached Europe. It remains therefore to try to piece together the various stages in the icon's history before 1400. Kanstresios Manuel Dishypatos of the order of Levites (i.e. a deacon), who is mentioned on the frame, has been identified with Manuel Opsaras Dishypatos, Metropolitan of Thessaloniki from 1258. If this identification is correct, the icon must have been commissioned by Manuel Dishypatos before 1258, since he is referred to as a priest and not a metropolitan. André Grabar, who discussed the icon's revetment, acknowledged that, although from the stylistic point of view the enamels on the frame could date from the fourteenth century, the dedicatory inscription makes the mid-thirteenth century the most likely date.<sup>23</sup> At the same time he expressed doubts as to whether the revetment of the central panel was contemporary with the frame, and seems rather to have believed that the central representation of the Virgin Hagiosoritissa, the halo, the revetment of the background and the inscriptions Μή(τη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ and Ἡ Ἑλπίς τῶν Ἀπελπισμένων post-dated the frame. However, the information then available to him did not permit him to take the argument further and put an exact date to those elements of the icon which he considered to be of a later period. David Buckton has studied the icon and was also able to consult the technical data which emerged during the icon's restoration and X-ray examination at the Doerner-Institut in Munich in 1964.<sup>24</sup> He too concludes that the icon contains features dating from different periods and dates the entire frame to the mid-thirteenth century, since on the basis of the analysis of the glass used for the enamel he confirms that its technical features permit a certain dating around the middle of the thirteenth century. I would myself also place great significance on his remark that, while the letters of the inscription on the frame are made of enamel, the pounced black and red letters of the appellation (Ἡ Ἑλπίς τῶν Ἀπελπισμένων) and of the abbreviations (Μή(τη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ) are composed of pigment in an organic binding medium.

(London and New York, 1989), 240. The husband of Lucia is mistakenly called Edward and not Edmund Holland.

<sup>20</sup> *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 37 (Rome, 1989), 389–93.

<sup>21</sup> *Meichelbeck's Geschichte der Stadt Freising und ihrer Bischöfe. Neu in Druck gegeben und fortgesetzt von A. Baumgärtner* (Freising, 1854), 162–8. *Dizionario biografico*, 453–6.

<sup>22</sup> Fahr, Ramisch and Steiner, *Diözesanmuseum Freising*, 244–51.

<sup>23</sup> Grabar, *Les revêtements*, 41–3.

<sup>24</sup> Buckton, 'Byzantine Enamels', 97–9. Id., 'Enamelled Metal Icons', 315–16.

As revealed by X-ray examination, the original layer of the paint surface does not permit any significant stylistic analysis, but the second, visible, layer displays similarities with works of the second half of the fourteenth century.<sup>25</sup> I would in particular mention the two-sided icon in the Pantokrator monastery on Mt Athos with John the Baptist on one side and the Virgin and Child with the Baptist on the other (Plate 18b, Fig. 22.5), which has been associated with the monastery's foundation and dated to 1363;<sup>26</sup> the icon of the Virgin and Child in the Tretyakov Gallery (Fig. 22.6), from the last third of the fourteenth century;<sup>27</sup> and the Virgin from the Crucifixion scene in the two-sided icon of Christ Psychosostis and the Crucifixion from the Virgin Peribleptos, Ohrid (now in the Icon Museum there), with a possible date of the late fourteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Stylistically the face of the Virgin in the Freising icon belongs to this tradition of painting.

If we believe that this icon was a gift from Manuel Palaiologos to Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti, what arguments can be adduced to support a link with Thessaloniki on the one hand and Manuel Palaiologos on the other? Manuel was twice resident at Thessaloniki, first as governor (despot) of the city from 1369 to 1373 and then as co-emperor from 1382 to 1387.<sup>29</sup> During his term as despot he resorted to the sale of church treasures in order to provide economic assistance to his father, Emperor John V, and during both periods he was accused of disposing of ecclesiastical property belonging to monasteries and to the metropolis of Thessaloniki for the city's defence requirements against the Turks. These charges and his well-attested ruthlessness are strong indications that in times of crisis he did not hesitate to take advantage of his direct access to ecclesiastical estates and treasures to appropriate some of their contents; it is thus entirely possible that this particular icon, which had very probably been donated by Manuel Dishypatos to some church in Thessaloniki, came into his possession in this manner. It should also be noted that the Virgin's appellation, 'Hope of the Hopeless',<sup>30</sup> used in the Freising icon but rarely elsewhere, also occurs in a fourteenth-century icon now in the icon-stand in the narthex of the church of the Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki.<sup>31</sup>

The reign of Manuel Palaiologos was associated with the practice aptly characterized by John Barker as 'reliquary diplomacy'<sup>32</sup> – in other words, he made use of venerable relics to serve his diplomatic activities throughout his desperate attempts to secure assistance from the West. Particular mention may be made of his dispatching of relics to Henry III of Castile, Charles III

<sup>25</sup> Restle in his entry on the Freising icon suggests comparisons with the Poganovo icon of c. 1395, and the diptych with the Virgin and Christ (Akra Tapeinosis) in the Transfiguration monastery, Meteora, and consequently dates the central panel of the icon to the last decade of the 14th c. Baumstark, *Rom und Byzanz*, 249.

<sup>26</sup> M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, 'Παρατηρήσεις σε δύο αμφιπρόσωπες εικόνες της Μονής Παντοκράτορος στο Άγιον Όρος', *DChAE* 20 (1998/9), 309–16, Fig. 4. T. Papamastorakis, 'Icons 13th–16th Century', in *Icons of the Holy Monastery of Pantokrator* (Mt Athos, 1998), 52, 62–70.

<sup>27</sup> *Vizantiia, Balkani, Rus'. Ikoni kontsa XIII–pervoi polovinii XV veka, XVIII Mezhdunarodnomu Kongressu Vizantinistov*, exh. cat., Moscow, Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow, 1991), no. 74, 243–4 (O. Korina and G. Sidorenko).

<sup>28</sup> *Trésors médiévaux de la République de Macédoine*, exh. cat., Paris, Musée national du Moyen Âge – Thermes de Cluny, 9 February – 3 May 1999 (Paris, 1999), no. 27, 78–9 (V. Popovska Korobar).

<sup>29</sup> G. T. Dennis SJ, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica, 1382–1387* (Rome, 1960).

<sup>30</sup> This comes from a prayer to the Virgin for supplication, read at the Great and Small Apodeipnon: 'ή τῶν ἀπεπισμένων μόνη ἐλπίς, καί τῶν πολεμουμένων βοήθεια'.

<sup>31</sup> As far as I am aware, this icon is unpublished.

<sup>32</sup> Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 265. Mergiali-Sahas, 'Byzantine Emperors', 41–60, esp. 47, 52, 55–9.

of Navarre, John I of Portugal, Martin I of Aragon,<sup>33</sup> and even Pope Boniface IX.<sup>34</sup> The Spanish ambassador Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo tells us that Manuel himself held the keys of the treasury of St John's church near the Blachernai monastery.<sup>35</sup>

Yet Manuel's religious devotion cannot be called into question. As well as the testimonies of his contemporaries (Demetrios and Manuel Chrysoloras, Demetrios Kydones and Isidore Glavas, Metropolitan of Thessaloniki), his own letters and speeches provide a clear indication of his deep theological erudition and devoutness.<sup>36</sup> In this context it is of particular significance that he composed a 'paracletic canon to the holiest Mother of God for the present situation'<sup>37</sup> – a situation which was none other than the siege of the city by the Turks (1399–1402). And the raising of Bayezid's siege in 1402 was considered to have occurred through a miraculous intervention by the Virgin, as is joyously proclaimed in the thanksgiving addressed 'to the holy Virgin' by Manuel's close associate, Demetrios Chrysoloras,<sup>38</sup> and in the elegant narrative on the subject, attributed to the same author.<sup>39</sup>

All the above seems to point to the following conclusion. The Freising icon came into the possession of Manuel Palaiologos during the period he spent in Thessaloniki. He then had the central panel over-painted and covered with a revetment. A precious work like this would have been ideally suited to Manuel's suppliant diplomacy towards a European ruler like Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan, who was a great enthusiast for the arts. It also seems that from very early times the icon was credited with the legend of having been painted by St Luke,<sup>40</sup> and was therefore considered almost a relic. Lastly, the Virgin as 'Hope of the Hopeless' is the perfect expression of the psychological climate of the endangered capital, which also dictated the emperor's political initiatives. And we should not forget Manuel's special relationship with the Virgin, whom he implores for the safety of the capital in the paracletic canon which he composed in her honour. If we interpret the Freising icon in this way, the question mark attached to the title of this paper is no longer required. I think it is now clear that in the icon the Virgin is praying for the salvation of the empire.

<sup>33</sup> Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 176–83.

<sup>34</sup> G. T. Dennis, 'Two Unknown Documents of Manuel II Palaeologus', *TM* 3 (1968), 397–404.

<sup>35</sup> Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 408 n. 22.

<sup>36</sup> *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus*, ed. G. T. Dennis (*Dumbarton Oaks Texts*, IV) (Washington, DC, 1977).

<sup>37</sup> É. Legrand, *Lettres de l'empereur Manuel Paléologue publiées d'après trois manuscrits* (Amsterdam, 1962), 94–102.

<sup>38</sup> P. Gautier, 'Action de grâces de Démétrius Chrysoloras à la Théotokos pour l'anniversaire de la bataille d'Ankara (28 juillet 1403)', *REB* 19 (1961), 340–57.

<sup>39</sup> P. Gautier, 'Un récit inédit du siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394–1402)', *REB* 23 (1965), 100–17.

<sup>40</sup> The Latin inscription ('Hanc Virginum Virginis Iconem Penicili Sanctae Lucae opus'), Veit Arnpeck ('ymaginem gloriose virginis, quam Beatus Lucas evangelista propriis manibus laboravit') and C. Meichelbeck ('hanc Imaginem Gloriosissima[e] Virginis Mariae, Beati Evangelistae Lucae manibus depictam') all speak of the icon as painted by St Luke. They seem to repeat an old legend created around the icon.



22.1 The Freising  
'Lukasbild'  
(source: Freising,  
Diözesanmuseum)



22.2 The Freising  
'Lukasbild'.  
X-ray photograph  
(source: Freising,  
Diözesanmuseum)



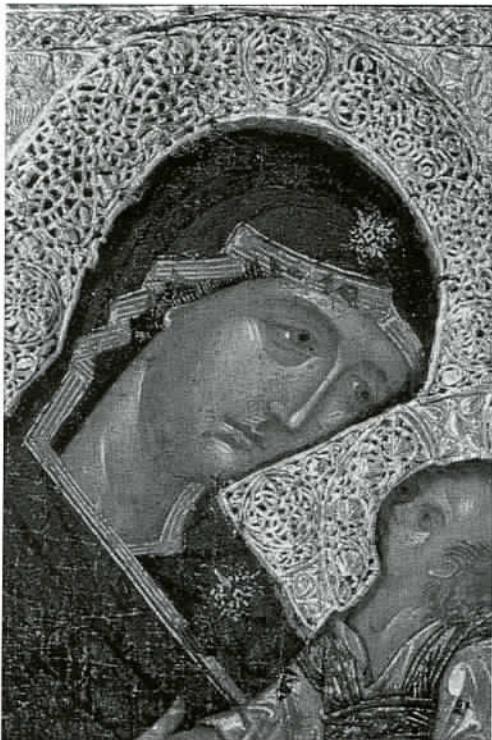
22.3 Paris, Musée du Louvre.  
Département des Objets d'Art, MR 416, fol. 2  
(source: Cutler and Spieser, *Byzance médiévale*, Fig. 356)



22.4 The Freising 'Lukasbild' in its baroque setting  
 (source: Freising, Diözesanmuseum)



22.5 Mt Athos,  
Pantokrator monastery.  
Detail from a two-sided  
icon of the Virgin and Child  
(source: Mt Athos,  
Pantokrator monastery)



22.6 Moscow,  
Tretyakov Gallery.  
Detail from an icon of  
the Virgin and Child.  
(source: Moscow,  
Tretyakov Gallery)





PLATE 17 The Freising 'Lukasbild'  
 (source: Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum;  
 photo: Walter Haberland)



PLATE 18a  
The Freising 'Lukasbild' (detail)  
(source: Munich,  
Bayerisches Nationalmuseum;  
photo: Walter Haberland)



PLATE 18b  
Mt Athos, Pantokrator monastery.  
Detail from a two-sided icon of the  
Virgin and Child  
(source: Pantokrator monastery)