

# ON THE QUESTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE CREATION AND FORMATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE FRESCO PAINTING OF THE POKROVSKY CATHEDRAL (SOBOR OF THE INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN) OF BARNAUL

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**Abstract.** *The establishment of Soviet power in Barnaul is connected with tragic events for the Orthodox Church: the closing of churches, the punishment of priests who did not accept the “godless power”, confiscation of church property, and the ban on religious education for children and the preaching of the Orthodox faith<sup>1</sup>. In the context of historical events, it is appropriate to reflect on the visual narrative of the fresco painting of the*

1 Kozik, E. A. *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov' i organy gosudarstvennoy vlasti v period stanovleniya Sovetskoi vlasti na Altae (1917–1927 gg.)* [The Russian Orthodox Church and the Public Authorities during the Period of Establishment of the Soviet Government in Altai (1917–1927)]. *Makar'evskie chteniya: materialy Shestoi mezhdunar. konf. (21–23 noyabrya 2007 g.)* [Makarii Readings: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference (21–23 November 2007)]. Gorno-Altai: GAGU, 2007, p. 153–158.

*Pokrovsky Cathedral and understand what is presented here: a standard set of copies of well-known examples from the capital recommended by the Holy Synod, selected by the Prior and mechanically transferred by a Siberian artist into the interior of a provincial church or an original fresco programme, although based on the well-established system of iconographic canons and images but created for the purpose, which form the code-narrative, understandable only for the believer from the “recognisable” models and story-telling scenes, to create a unified spiritual space, “the mirror of consciousness”, sensitively reflecting the inner life of the individual (his doubts, fears, hopes), reinforcing it through the visualisation of marks of the Divine power – the analogy of his own pain with the suffering of the Son of God. The purpose of this research is to analyse the meaningful content of the frescoes and the system of their interaction – connectedness to the architectural space of the church. At the same time, the research concentrates primarily on the meaning of the painting programme. There will be no attempt to criticise the artistic value of paintings since it is difficult to distinguish the original message after numerous renewals and restorations.*

**Keywords:** *fresco painting, iconography, icon, church fresco decoration of the 20th century, Russian church painting, Art Nouveau, regional fresco, regional architecture, Siberian churches, Siberian art, Pokrovsky Cathedral (Sobor of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin) of Barnaul.*

The Pokrovsky Cathedral (further – Pokrovsky Sobor. The word Sobor corresponds more closely to the name of the Orthodox church in Russian language and is more familiar to the people) of the city of Barnaul is the only church built in the city before the revolution, which survived in its original form. The rest were demolished<sup>2</sup> or reconstructed<sup>3</sup> into clubs, warehouses, etc. in the 1930s. The frescoes of the cathedral, executed in academic style with oil on dry plaster, have survived from the beginning of the 20th century<sup>4</sup>. For almost a century, these frescoes were not just a decorative arrangement, which decorated the walls and ceilings of the cathedral, but also spiritual support, a symbolic code encouraging everyone, who attended the church and prayed inside. It seems important to present the history of the creation of the fresco paintings of the Pokrovsky Cathedral, to establish the name of the artist and the charterer, and also to analyse the visual concept embodied in the large-scale decoration, covering almost the entire interior of the church<sup>5</sup>.

2 The Cathedral of Peter and Paul (was built in 1771 and completely destroyed in 1935), the Odigitrievskaya Church (was built in 1795, demolished in 1935) and others.

3 The Church of St. Dimitry of Rostov (which was built in 1829–1840, closed in 1920 to become the art museum, and later the cinema), Znamensky Church of the Convent (which was built in 1853, in the early 1930s, the church was closed and turned into a granary) and Nikolskaya Church (which was established in 1902, in 1924 it was passed on to the Red Army club). A similar fate happened to other city religious buildings.

4 It is known about two restorations of the church frescoes from archival documents: in the summer-autumn of 1924, the “renovation” of the walls was carried out by painter A. P. Nekhoroshev [GAAK F. 130.Op. 1. D. 55. L. 139ob.-143]. In the 1950s, Gennady Borunov, then a very young student of B. Ioganson, the famous future Altai painter, was engaged in the restoration of the murals of the cathedral.

5 In connection with the numerous repressions, the painting of the church was suspended and the western part of the central nave was decorated with frescos only in the 1950s.

Initially, the Pokrovsky Sobor, without pretence to maintain the “grand” cathedral mission, was erected for the “needs” of the inhabitants of the poorest part of the city – the Zayachya Sloboda settlement in 1898–1904, where, since the 1860s, was a small wooden church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin<sup>6</sup>. The main fundraising organiser and inspirer of the construction of the brick building of the cathedral was the first Prior of the church, Archpriest Ioann Smirnov, and the contractor and main benefactor was the second guild merchant, the owner of the Barnaul shipyard and gold mines Vonifaty Bodunov<sup>7</sup>. Under the suggestion of father Ioann Smirnov, the architectural design of the church was developed by Tomsk architect Stanislav Khomich (1864–1914), a graduate of the St. Petersburg Institute of Civil Engineers.



**Picture 1.** *The Pokrovsky Sobor in the 1920s*

The heavy one-domed red brick building was constructed in the Russian style. Here, the reference to the example – the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow (architect Konstantin Ton) is visible in the details and the layout of the church. In the drawings, the shape of the Pokrovsky Sobor, like the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, is the equidistant Greek cross. Cross-shapedness as the original form of the entire church corresponded to the general idea: the cathedral as a symbol of God’s sufferings on the cross, as well as a symbol of its power and glory. The church was built on a hill; it towered above the private houses and until the mid-1990s was the architectural dominant of this part of the city. The church had three altars: the main one was in honour of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin and two at the sides in the name of the Holy Panteleimon the Great Martyr and Healer (the southern) and the name of the Holy Blessed Prince Alexander Nevsky (the northern).

6 Earlier, there was a small wooden church in the name of the Saints Righteous Zechariah and Elizabeth. (See in Krivososov, Ya. E., Skvortsova, T. V. *Pravoslavnye khramy Barnaula* [Orthodox Churches of Barnaul]. Barnaul: Azbuka, 2001, p. 28)

7 Ibid.



Picture 2. *The Pokrovsky Sobor now*

One of the main aims of this research is to understand when and by whom the programme of the fresco painting of the cathedral was developed and implemented. The archivist of the Barnaul diocese T. V. Skvortsova puts forward the version that the painting of the church before the revolution was done by the artist Nikolai Vasilievich Shvaryov, who lost his life during this work. According to Skvortsova, Shvaryov was also the author of the fresco painting programme of the church<sup>8</sup>.

This assumption casts some reasonable doubts. Nikolai Shvaryov is the husband of the sister of the famous Altai artist Andrey Osipovich Nikulin, a famous Barnaul restorer. He owned a photo studio where he printed postcards with reproductions of the works of his brother-in-law. It is known that Shvaryov was engaged in the restoration of churches and died, falling from the scaffolding of the domed space of the church<sup>9</sup>, though it is not known which one. The findings of Skortsova are based on the fact that Yekaterina Osipovna, the widow of Shvaryov, who was left with many children to look after, filed a petition to the church to grant her allowance. However, in the parish account books for 1915–1917<sup>10</sup>, there is no mention of Shvaryov and his work on the painting of the church<sup>11</sup>. Also, it seems illogical that the trustees of the church would order the painting to the artist, and not to the icon painter, although there were icon painting workshops in Barnaul<sup>12</sup>.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

9 Information about N. V. Shvaryov is taken from: Babina, O. A. A. O. *Nikulin. Khudozhnik bol'shoi strany* [A. O. Nikulin: The Artist of the Great Country]. Sankt-Petersburg: KOSTA, 2014, p. 76.

10 GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 39.

11 Shvaryova received the allowance from the church but only in the 1920s. According to the information from the case GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. DD. 5. E. O. Shvaryova received her first allowance on February 12, 1923, for January of the same year in the amount of 30 rubles [GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 55. L. 128] and since then received monthly benefits (until the end of 1924). According to information from the cases of GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 40, 41, 43. in 1925–1929 Shvaryova received monthly allowance of 3 rubles. She got the last allowance on May 2, 1929 for the month of May, 1929 [GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 3. L. 88].

12 Rodionov, A. M. (ed.) *Barnaul. Letopis' goroda* [Barnaul: The City Chronicle]. Barnaul: Altai, 1994. Vol. 1. 1701–1919, p. 133, 140, 145.

In the expense books of the Pokrovsky Cathedral for the periods of 1906–1911 and 1915–1917, there is no mention about the painting of the walls of the church or the collection of funds for this purpose. Furthermore, only in 1917, a permanent iconostasis was erected in the cathedral. The assumption that the painting of the walls started only after installing the iconostasis is more realistic. According to the available copy of the “Insurance evaluation of the Church”, June 14, 1910: “The Pokrovsky Sobor is built of bricks, plastered inside, and painted with oil paint”<sup>13</sup>. Obviously, at that time the walls of the church had not been painted, but only covered with a primer, while the “The Inventory of the Church”, October 8, 1924, “indicates that “the church inside <...> is painted with oil paint, the walls and ceiling of the church are decorated with murals”<sup>14</sup>. So, it is a possibility that the walls of the building most likely were painted in the period from 1918 to 1924. Here the question arises again about both, the icon painter and the more significant person, the Prior of the cathedral, who managed this painting process. Formulating the assumption about the author of the church fresco painting programme, in the context of church mentality, it is unlikely that the artist<sup>15</sup> could decide independently on the nature of the frescoes and their religious and philosophical orientation. Without excluding the role and importance, which the icon painter brings to his work, the master ideologist has always been the rector of the church or the spiritual mentor of the icon painter, blessed by the church.

Most likely the painting process of the cathedral took place in 1918–1919<sup>16</sup>, i.e. the most difficult years for the church to exist. During this time, the government in Barnaul changed several times (the Soviets – the Kolchak command – the Bolsheviks), and when the Bolsheviks finally came to power at the end of 1919, they began seizing the church valuables, looting the cathedral and then started the execution of priests<sup>17</sup>.

It is known from archival documents that since 1918 the Prior of the Pokrovsky Sobor was father Nikolay Dobroserdov, hereditary priest, son of the archpriest of the Mayminsky Church of Piotr Alekseevich Dobroserdov, a graduate of the Tomsk Theological Seminary<sup>18</sup>. Father Nikolai Dobroserdov has devoted all his life to the Pokrovsky Sobor. In 1906, he was ordained as a priest in this church. From 1918 to 1923 father Nikolay Dobroserdov was the Prior of the Sobor. In 1923, father Nikolay was arrested, and his fate is unknown – there are no references in the Barnaul archives. One can only assume that this arrest was followed by the court, the exile and the inevitable death of the priest<sup>19</sup>.

13 GAAK F.130. Op.1. D.67. L. 44, 44ob.

14 GAAK F.130. Op.1. D.68. L.119–124.

15 Unless it was Vasnetsov or Nesterov, but even these artists were supervised and directed.

16 T. V. Skvortsova also insists on this version. P. 37.

17 Kreydun Y. A., Fisun S. A. “Church in Altai in the 20th century and the Revival of the Barnaul Diocese”.

18 GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 5.5.

19 The fact, that by decision of the community of the church, his family was given a monthly cash allowance from June 1925 onwards, points out the tragic fate of father Nikolay [GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 41. L. 11, 19, 46, 57, 66, D. 49. L. 22, 30, 46].



**Picture 3.** *The church service in the Pokrovsky Sobor in 1949*

According to the archival documents of the cathedral of 1918–1919, father Nikolay Dobroserdov organised work on painting the church. The papers point out some “artist I. Kuznetsov”<sup>20</sup>. Unfortunately, this name could not be identified among the artists of Altai and Siberia. Presumably, I. Kuznetsov was a relative of the famous Biysk artist Dmitry Ivanovich Kuznetsov<sup>21</sup>. The “archival confusion” could well have taken place – the name of the person, who painted the church in 1918–1919, was registered incorrectly, or, perhaps, foreseeing the anti-church terror, the church clergymen simply concealed his personality, protecting him from repression for serving a divine cause<sup>22</sup>. It is known that “the artist I. Kuznetsov” received a sum of 2,000 roubles for coating the cathedral with “wall art paintings” in June 1919 and another amount of 3,500 roubles<sup>23</sup> in July of the same year. In 1919, it was big money<sup>24</sup>. Probably, the artist received it not for a one-time job but as payment for work lasting throughout the year. According to the considerations above, it can be assumed that the “artist I. Kuznetsov” was the first artist to paint on the walls of the Pokrovsky Sobor.

20 GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 5.5.

21 Kuznetsov Dmitry Ivanovich (1890–1979) – a native of Biysk, a student of Grigory Ivanovich Gurkin, teacher and the first member of the Artists’ Union of Altai.

22 Unexpectedly, Barnaul icon painters S. A. Suslov (in 1923) and E. I. Markov (in 1924) passed away, and the talented Altai icon painter V. F. Balykin (1860–1932) died in the Gulag camp (see Krasnotsetov, p. 217–218).

23 GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 55. L. 79ob.-81.

24 At the same time the widow of Shvaryev receives a benefit of 30 rubles [GAAK F. 130. Op. 1. D. 55. L. 128].

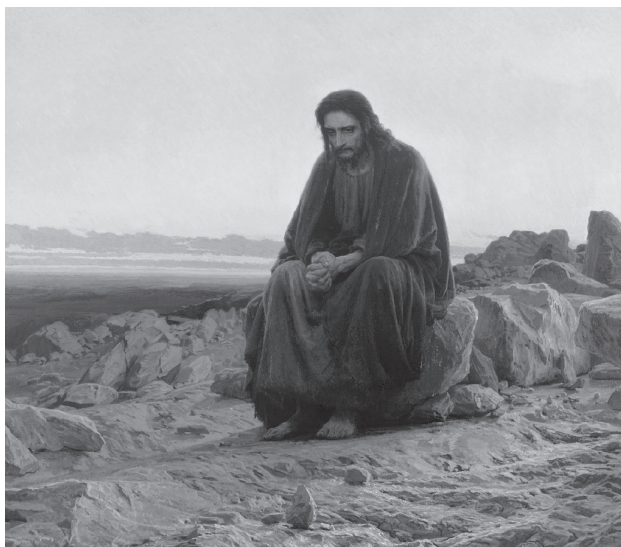
At the heart of the decorative programme of the cathedral is the orientation on the examples of murals of the most famous churches of Russia of the late 19th century: the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, 1883, the Church of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (known as the Church of the Saviour on the Spilled Blood) in St. Petersburg, 1883–1907, Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev, 1885–1896, as well as paintings by popular artists Kramskoy, Vasnetsov, Siemiradzki and others. The paintings on canvases, which served as examples for the decoration of the cathedral hung not only in various churches but also in museums and private collections.



**Picture 4.** *The Temptation of Christ (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

The originality of the decoration programme of the Pokrovsky Sobor begins with the narthex – a church porch. Until the 1950s, the porch remained unpainted, except the space of lunette above the main entrance to the church. The entering person faced (and still sees) the fresco *The Temptation of Christ* – a copy of a famous painting *Christ in the Desert* (1872) by Ivan Kramskoi. Its appearance in the narthex raises many questions. The confusion is caused not only by the reference to the painting of Kramskoi, with its implicit atheism<sup>25</sup>, where Christ appears in his human and not Divine nature, but also in the interpretation of Kramskoi work by the icon painter from Barnaul.

25 Ivan Kramskoi (1837–1887) is the famous Russian artist-peredvizhnik (they were called the Wanderers), the admirer of Renan. Alexander Benois was able to catch the best mood of the works of I. N. Kramskoi: “As a person infected with positivism, he allowed the general obsolescence of Christianity into the future, but at the same time, having an unconscious inclination for mysticism, he believed in the divinity of Christ and even sought the supersensitive revelation” [Benuea, A. F. *Istoriya russkoi zhivopisi v XIX v.* [A History of Russian Painting in the 19th century] Moskva: Respublika Publ., 1995, p. 258].



**Picture 5.** *Christ in the Desert* (1872) by I. Kramskoi

Before coming back to the image in the Cathedral's lunette, it would be useful to reflect on several points in the original – the oil canvas of Ivan Kramskoi, because the painting was ambiguously perceived by both, his contemporaries and the subsequent generations of connoisseurs of the Russian painting. Already at the first exhibition of the painting in the art community, a fierce discussion developed regarding the main character: who is this – Christ the Son of God or a rushing Russian intellectual? The essence of his hero Kramskoi reveals his painful (reflecting on the mood of the letters) correspondence with the Russian writer Vsevolod Garshin.<sup>26</sup> Reflecting on the nature of his hero, Kramskoi writes: “Is this the Christ? I do not know.” However, in the same letter just below, he adds: “So, this is not Christ. It means that I do not know who it is. It is an expression of my personal thoughts.” The answer of Barnaul artist, copying a picture of Kramskoi, is exactly the opposite. The head of a figure mournfully sitting in the desert is crowned with a crested nimbus, it unequivocally indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Saviour of the world, is depicted in the lunette of the Pokrovsky Sobor. The first thing, what person sees entering the church, is one of the most difficult moments in the life of Christ, the Lord overcomes temptation and makes a choice. Despite the facial expression, tragically clenched hands, mournful look, there is no doubt – God is before us.

<sup>26</sup> In this respect, the correspondence between Ivan Kramskoi and Vsevolod Garshin on February 14–16, 1876, is significant, see Garshin, V. M. *Sochineniya: Rasskazy. Ocherki. Stat'i. Pis'ma* [Works: Short Stories. Essays. Articles. Letters]. Moskva: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1984, p. 153–154, or see Garshin, V. M. *Pis'mo I. N. Kramskomu 14 fevralya 1878 g.* [Letter to I. N. Kramskoy. 14 February 1878]. URL: <http://garshin.lit-info.ru/garshin/pisma/letter-129.htm> [accessed 29/11/2018].



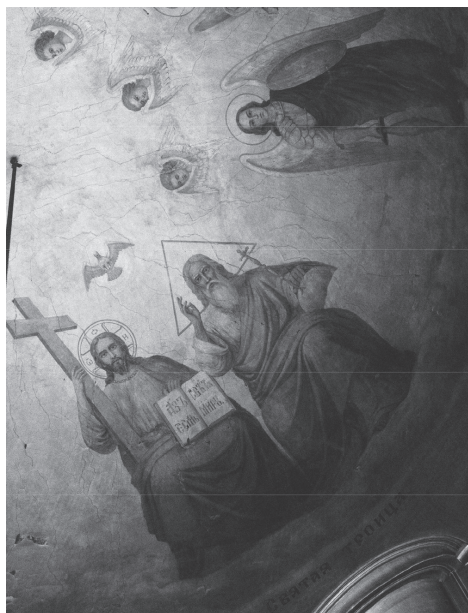
Comparing the fresco of the narthex of the Pokrovsky Sobor with its famous prototype, one should pay attention to the important difference: the Christ by Kramskoi is depicted against the background of a cold grey sky pierced by a bright strip of dawn – this is the end of the night and the beginning of a new life, then, in the lunette, the alarming and glowing colours of the sunset catch the viewer's eyes. The theme of sunset, the symbolic reference to the tragic end, is exacerbated by the drama of the historical moment. Thus, an eschatological sensation arises in the soul of the supplicant at the entrance to the church. In a letter to Kramskoi, Garshin asks at what precise moment his hero is depicted: "Is this the morning of the 41st day, when Christ has already fully decided and is ready to go to the suffering and death, or the minute when the devil has come to him?" (i.e. the full despair). The artist does not give a definite answer but assures that he portrays a person primarily facing "a terrible drama, which was played during historical crises." Was the similar drama not played out in front of the Barnaul people in 1918–1919? Only, in the Pokrovsky Sobor, the Christ in the desert is depicted not at the beginning, but at the "end of the day" – the end of an era.



**Picture 6.** *The dome (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

The description of the naos frescoes should start with the dome. Within the framework of a centuries-old church tradition, the powerful vault of the cathedral was perceived as a reference to the arch of Heaven. Therefore the domed space was symbolically read as the earthly sky. The dome of the Pokrovsky Sobor depicts the image of the New Testament Trinity: in the direction from west to east against the background of the shining light are figures of God the Father (a grey-haired old man with a triangular nimbus) and the figure of Christ equal to him. Cross is in the right hand of the Saviour and the Gospel with the inscription "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12) in the left. Both figures are seated on thrones of clouds with a symbolic image of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove between them. Along the entire boundary of the skufia dome, a line of angels is drawn up – the army of heaven, worshipping

the Triune Divine. Obviously, the painting of the dome was created following the iconography of the icon of the Fatherland, which is based on the eighth tone of the verse of the Great Vespers of Pentecost (“Come, people, worship the Tripartite Divinity, the Son in the Father with the Holy Spirit”). The supplicant’s eyes linger on the image depicted in the dome, thanks to the effects of the painted light created by the refined combination of the light projected from the windows of the dome drum with bright coloured spots (pink, blue and emerald) on the cloaks of angels in the spirit of modern painting. Vertical rays of light play on the faces of angels, enhancing not only the colour but also the plastic expressiveness of the image, making it more voluminous and mobile.



**Picture 7.** *The New Testament Trinity (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

In the drum of the dome, instead of the traditional figures of the prophets (the connection between the Old and New Testaments), the most respected by the Russian Orthodox Church the half-length images of the Russians saints (Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Alexis of Moscow, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, Stephen of Perm, etc.) as well as the general Orthodox figures (St. Cyril and Methodius, especially honoured in Russia, St. Alexios the Man of God, etc.) are placed. All of them, mostly martyrs, create not only the single body of the Church but also the “spiritual army” of Christ – an obvious analogy with the painting of the dome of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. The special significance of the theme of Glory and Power of God is revealed in the inscription at the base of the drum – the first lines of the ancient Christian hymn “Sanctus”: “Holy, holy, holy! Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of thy glory”.



**Picture 8.** *The conch of the apse of the altar (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

The most important semantic dominant of the decorative programme of the church is the painting in the conch of the apse of the altar – the image of the Lord Sabaoth, dynamically approaching towards the praying person surrounded by angels and archangels. The prototype of this fresco is the dome of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour with the authentic iconography by Ivan Kramskoi. It was thought out by the creator of the painting Pokrovsky Sobor that the person entering the Cathedral appears on the same straight line with God – the Creator, like God Sabaoth from the Sistine Chapel of Michelangelo where he embodies the “cosmic energy of the body formed by the spirit”<sup>27</sup>. However, a change in the vector of the movement of the God the Creator shifts semantic accents of the visual image. In the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the interaction with the prayerful image is built vertically: the image of Lord Sabaoth as if he descends from top to bottom, from heaven to earth, which is perceived as the Divine blessing to the parishioners with an origin of creation. In the Pokrovsky Sobor, man and God, the Creator, find themselves on the same horizontal line. It is no longer the descent down – the outpouring of grace, but the collision – connection of two principles of the “universe”: the human spirit, confused by the ongoing historical cataclysms, and the Divine – the embodiment of power and dynamics<sup>28</sup>. The image of God Sabaoth is the point of convergence of all the visual lines of the church. It is arranged on purpose that the figure of Sabaoth displaces the traditional depiction of the merciful and protecting the Virgin Mary from the conch of the altar. The image of Virgin Hodegetria as Our Lady of the Way represents one of the oldest iconographic traditions of the Orthodox Church (cf. the image of the Mother of God of the Unbreakable Wall in the altar of Hagia Sophia, St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev, etc.). The discourse of mercy and forgiveness is replaced by the discourse of divine power and reward for their deeds.

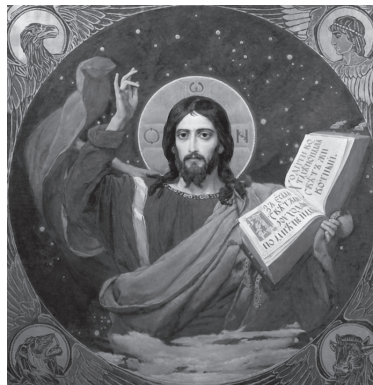
27 Sokolov, M. N. *Vechnyj Rennans. Lekcii o morfologii kul'tury Vozrozhdenija* [Eternal Renaissance: Lectures on the Morphology of the Renaissance Culture]. Moskva: Progress-Tradicija, 1999, p. 353

28 The lively fresco painting *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo: a man who seeks hope and comfort in the church, and God rushing to meet him.



**Picture 9.** *Jesus Christ Pantokrator (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

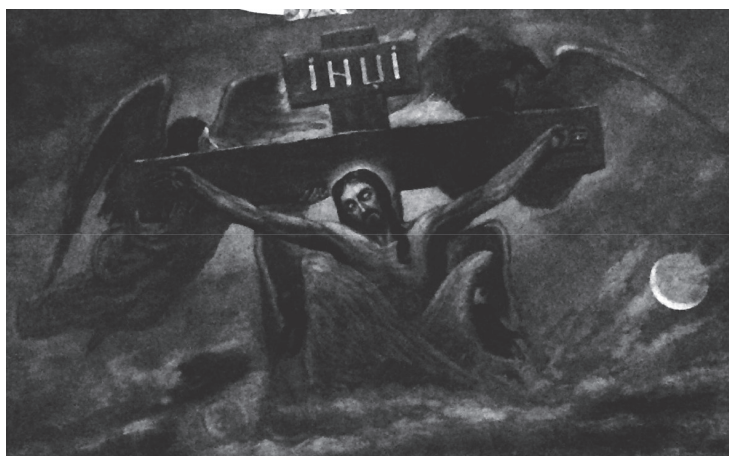
The image of the Pantokrator in the conch arch of the central nave is in the close connection with the programme of painting the dome and altar of the Pokrovsky Sobor. The image of the Christ in the arch is a copy of the dome of the St. Vladimirs Cathedral (artist Viktor Vasnetsov, 1885). Christ Pantokrator against the background of the starry sky, blessing parishioners from the heaven, incorporates eschatological meanings – it combines the idea of Gods Incarnation and the idea of the Last Judgment. Working on the image of Christ in the dome of the Vladimir Cathedral, Vasnetsov relies on “famous monuments of Byzantine, Western Europe and contemporary Russian art”<sup>29</sup>. Vasnetsov’s dream is to paint “the true image of the Global Christ.” The artist writes: “I truly believe that it is the Russian artist who is destined to find the image of the Global Christ”<sup>30</sup>.



**Picture 10.** *Jesus Christ Pantokrator in the dome of the Vladimir Cathedral (1885) by V. Vasnetsov*

- 29 Gusakova, V. O. *Viktor Vasnetsov i religiozno-natsional'noe napravlenie v russkoi zhivopisi kontsa XIX – nachala XX veka* [Viktor Vasnetsov and National Religious Movements in Russian Painting of the End of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Century]. Sankt-Petersburg: Avrora, 2008, p. 38.
- 30 Vasnecov, V. M. *Pis'ma. Dnevniki. Vospominaniya* [Letters. Diaries. Memories]. Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe Iskustvo, 1987, p. 81.

The Barnaul painter seems to simplify the complex spiritual quest of Vasnetsov, an intellectual, makes the visual symbolism of Christ Pantokrator more primitive, but also more expressive. He moves away from the Semitic features, which Vasnetsov passes on to his image of Christ, Russifies the image as much as possible, making Pantokrator, the Great Judge, who determines the history of earth with a wave of his hand, to appear more “homey” for the Pokrovsky Sobor parishioners. For Vasnetsov, the dark background behind the Saviour’s back is an indication of the darkness, in which people, who have departed from the Lord, abide (it is a pity that in Russia there were many such people). The text of the Evangel in the hands of Pantokrator in the Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev testifies the deep thoughts of the artist: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8-12). The artist avoids complex semantic structures – a symbolic opposition of light and darkness. A parishioner of the Pokrovsky Sobor will not understand the dualism of religious revelations of Viktor Vasnetsov. The inscription in the book of the Barnaulian Pantokrator is extremely simple and repeats the inscription in the dome of the cathedral: “I am the Light of the World.” That is to say that the Lord is the only source of light. This is indicated by a nimbus behind his head, not the one which is customary for Christ – a crested nimbus, but in the form of a shiny heavenly source against the dark background of the night. In the traditions of the provincial Art Nouveau, the Barnaul artist replaces the deep restrained colours of the garment of Vasnetsovs Christ. Pantokrators dark cherry chiton turns pink, and himation (coat) turns from dark blue to azure blue. Against the background of the mournful themes, the bright colours of the robes add flamboyancy and solemnity to the images.



**Picture 11.** *Crucifixion (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

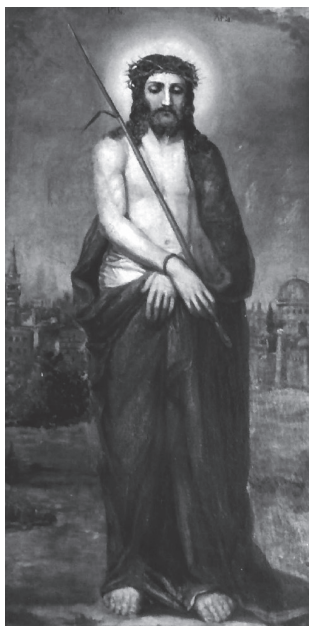
In the Pokrovsky Sobor, the compositions of three domes: Fatherhood (God the Father – the Son – the Holy Spirit), which is the main dome of the church, Christ

Pantokrator, the painting of the dome of the Vladimir Cathedral, and the racing Sabaoth, the grand fresco of the dome of the temple of Christ Saviour, were situated on the line dome – the arch of the conch – the central apse. These compositions form three “earthly skies”, thereby creator of the painting programme for the cathedral reinforces the idea of the power of the Lord and His Church. An important link in the visual movement of images – “quotations” is the composition of a crucifix in the upper part of the altar arch – Christ on the Cross is supported by angels from two sides (the prototype painting is the *Crucifixion* by artist V. M. Vasnetsov in the arch of the Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev). The unity of the concept is to show the person, who came to the church, the strength and power of God through both, the image of the Trinity of the New Testament – “the one and indivisible”, surrounded by earthly and heavenly hosts, and various incarnations of God: images of the Creator – the Lord Sabaoth, Pantokrator – the fearsome Judge, and in suffering and the death of the Son of God – the image of the crucified God, the Man in his death throes. Christ appears as the unifying leitmotif of the fourfold manifestation of Truth.



**Picture 12.** *Crucifixion* (1899) by V. Vasnetsov

A peculiar continuation of the upper registers of the fresco programme is the painting of the pillars of the central nave. On the southern pillar, there is Christ in the Passionate Robe, which is known in Western iconography as the image of Christ before the death on the Cross – *The Man of Sorrows*, or *Ecce homo*. The figure of Christ of the height of a human, dressed in purple, partly duplicated the altar image (possibly strengthened it) but also potentially reduced the suffering of the crucified God to the human level or, perhaps in opposite, it reminded the person in the grip of godless power about the sufferings of God.



**Picture 13.** *The Man of Sorrows, or Ecce homo (The Pokrovsky Sobor)*

Particular attention should be paid to the fresco depiction of the icon of *The Joy of All Who Sorrow* on the northern pillar of the altar apse. Photos of the church from the beginning of the 20th century indicate that this fresco appeared already in the 1920s, and it is not the result of the later modifications. It deserves attention, as the iconographic features of the icon *Our Lady Derzhavnaya* (“The Sovereign”, the royal crown on the head, the orb and the sceptre in the hands of the Virgin Mary) are added to the traditional iconography of the icon of *The Joy of All Who Sorrow*. The icon *Our Lady Derzhavnaya* was found in Moscow only on March 2, 1917 (on the day of the abdication of Tzar Nicholas II from the throne). The appearance of elements of iconography in the fresco indicates that the ideologies of the Barnaul painting were pro-monarchical (like almost the entire Russian Orthodox Church in Western Siberia) but, despite the distance from the centre, were aware of the latest church events.

According to tradition, the images of saints are located on the pillars of the church (the symbols of the earthly support). Pokrovsky Sobor is no exception. On the pillar facing the altar, which means in the same visual vector as the praying person (and located in the middle of all praying people), are the holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb. They are the first Russian saints, – brothers princes, sons of the Grand Prince Vladimir, who were canonised in the 11th century (1021) because they abandoned fratricidal hatred and enmity. Orthodox people, since they were children, learn about their lives

and understand their depiction as a symbolic call for renunciation of hatred, enmity and revenge. The holy brothers-princes in the iconography of Mikhail Nesterov<sup>31</sup> are represented not only as the spiritual models but also like partners of the congregational prayer. Moreover, this time as well, the Barnaul artist does not blindly copy but in his personal way rethinks and processes the images. St. Boris, also like Nesterov's prototype, is immersed in the prayer; he prefers the cross to the sword and fratricidal hatred, however, Saint Gleb is not a naive boy – “a child in princely clothes”<sup>32</sup> but a young man consciously making his choice. The landscape surrounding both figures is a sign of integration into the natural environment, not a copy from the Nesterov's painting but a Siberian one, clearly recognisable by parishioners. This spatial resonance is intended to emphasise the unity of saints and people in the church.

As mentioned above, the Pokrovsky Sobor was originally built as a church for the inhabitants of the poorest and, therefore, uneducated part of the city, so the social status of its parishioners affected the prejudices common among visitors to the church. Thus, great importance was attached to the gender hierarchy: the dominant of the male principle<sup>33</sup>, the division of the church into the “male” (northern) and “female” (southern) halves. The archaism of the gender division was reflected in the structure of the fresco complex of the cathedral. Along the side aisles of the pillars are the images of the first Christian martyrs. On the northern column (“male”) are images of Hagia Sophia and her children – Faith, Hope, and Love<sup>34</sup>, but all the holy martyrs are best visible from the “female” side. On the southern side, the “female” column depicts the holy martyrs Gury, Samon and Aviv<sup>35</sup>, who were known among Orthodox Christians not only as protectors of matrimony but also for their care for the unity of the nation and the state. In prayer for these saints such words sound: “Oh, the holy martyrs and believers in Christ: Gury, Samon and Aviv! <...> Shine on us with peace, love and fear of God <...>. And give our country peace and prosperity <...>”.

Male and female groups are associated with each other through compositional angles and gestures, and therefore with the worshipers in the church. The examples of the fact that history repeats itself are laid out before the eyes of parishioners; the persecutions of the first centuries of Christianity are comparable to repressions against Christians in the 20th century. The choice of images of the first martyrs is obvious – specific historical characters acquire the didactic allegory. The naturalisation of allegories occurs at the simplest level for the parishioners: Sophia, the Wisdom, sacrifices not only

31 Images were painted by M. N. Nesterov, at the request of V. M. Vasnetsov for the Vladimirsky Cathedral in Kiev in 1893.

32 Durylin, S.N. *Nesterov* [Nesterov]. Moskva: Molodaja Gvardija, 1976. URL: <http://art-nesterov.ru/durilin.php> [accessed 29/11/2018]

33 This archaism has been preserved until now in the order of communion in the church: first babies are brought to the Chalise, then men walk, and only children and women follow them.

34 St. Sophia and her daughters Pistis, Elpis and Agape, which stands for three Christian virtues – Faith, Hope and Love, suffered under the emperor Hadrian in Rome in 137 AD, refusing to worship and give offerings to goddess Diana. Testing the mother, St. Sophia, the emperor martyred her daughters. After the death and the burial of her children of St. Sophia dies at their grave.

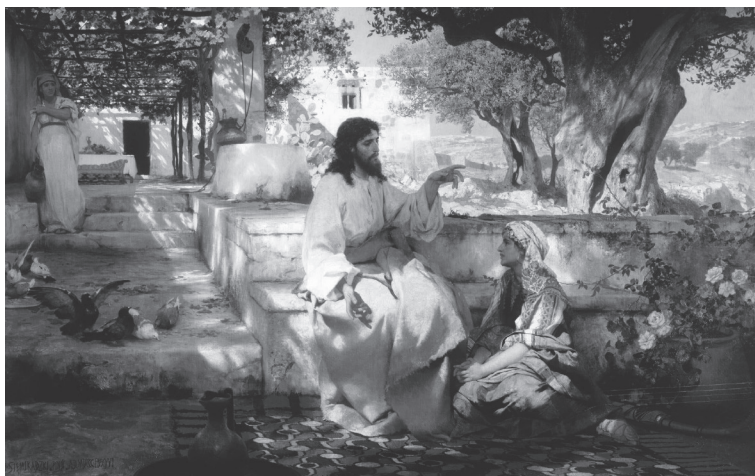
35 They were the ordinary people and priests of Edessa who lived at different times. Gury and Samon were martyred for Christ in 293 AD under the rule of the emperor Diocletian. The deacon Aviv, who refused the rituals of the pagan sacrifices, was burned alive in 322 AD under the emperor Lycinus.



her daughters but the good aspirations of the soul – Faith, Hope and Love, so necessary during times of unrest and repression. It was important for the creators of the cathedral's painting programme to emphasise the illusory tangibility of these allegorical figures, showing that the good intentions of the soul not only exist but are also united with the praying people. Undoubtedly, the perception of the figures of saints was complicated by the element of stress, which arose when the prayer turned its gaze from the frescoes to what was happening outside the walls of the church. Relying on the familiar images from parishioners' childhood, the world of the cathedral murals preached powerfully and authoritatively, supporting the supplicant and not allowing to retreat from faith, encouraging him boldly follow the chosen path.

Two side transepts (Parecclesions – chapels) of the church: the northern one in honour of the Holy Blessed Prince Alexander Nevsky and the southern one in honour of the Holy Great Martyr Panteleimon the Healer, create a conditional cruciform “traverse” in the architectural plan of the cathedral. The northern (“male”) chapel is dedicated to the theme of death and trials, and the southern (“female”) transept is devoted to the theme of the Resurrection of Christ and miracles of healing performed by the Saviour.

On the arches of the northern chapel, the subjects of the Prayer of the Chalice (prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane), the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion and the Death of the Cross (Vasnetsovs iconography) are depicted. In the conch of the apse of the altar of the northern transept, there is the only image in the church of Our Lady of the Veil. The church was consecrated in honour of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin, so the image of the Intercession – the protection of Our Lady should be the main one and located in the central apse, however, in this case, it is transferred to the periphery of the cathedral. However, the choice of place for the main frescoes is not accidental. Following the plan of the creators of the programme, the image of the Mother of God, merciful and protecting, appears where the presence is the most difficult – alongside with the images of the execution and death of her Divine Son. The iconography of the Intercession is unusual since the forthcoming angels are portrayed near the Virgin Mary at the top of the composition, and the saints surrounding Our Lady are at the bottom, what distinctly steps beyond the limits of traditional iconography. John the Baptist, John the Theologian, the Apostles Peter and Andrew can be discerned among the saints. On the walls of the northern chapel, there are scenes of testing the faith and manhood of the apostles: Christ extends his hand to the drowning apostle Peter. The painting *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* by Henryk Siemiradzki (1886) is set out in the lunette of the western wall. Obviously, the Barnaul artist was familiar with the original, so in high professional craftsmanship, he copies the images of the most distinguished Russian artist of the last quarter of the 19th century. However, here also the Barnaul master Russifies the faces of the sisters from Bethany, painting them more passionate, prepared not only to serve the Lord but also to die for him.



**Picture 14.** *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary (1886) by H. Siemiradzki*

The altar in the right side chapel reveals the theme of the Resurrection. On the vaults, there are images of the meeting of Christ with the myrrh-bearing women, Mary Magdalene (in the iconography of *Noli me tangere*<sup>36</sup>) and the appearance of the Lord to the disciples on their way to Emmaus. The theme of the Resurrection is reflected in the paintings of the apse of the southern chapel – in the conch where the image of the risen Christ in white robes is drawn. The iconography repeats western patterns. The walls are filled with imagery of a sermon on the lake of Galilee, healing of sinners and conversations with a Samaritan woman (in the lunette of the western wall). In the paintings of the vaults, a departure from the academic manner in favour of the expressive painting of modernity can be observed, which allows the artist to convey the tragic events of the New Testament history more emotionally. A special visual rhyme emerges: death – resurrection, trials – healing, Intercession and Rising from the dead. Analysis of the paintings of both chapels of the church shows that the deep thoughtfulness of the design to support the person, who enters the church, strengthening his/her faith, is felt in the choice of themes and subjects of the frescoes and the manner of their realisation.

Summarising the analysis of the programme of the fresco painting of the Pokrovsky Sobor in Barnaul, it is necessary to point out the following aspects. Despite the departure from the traditional canon, the painting programme of the Pokrovsky Sobor is notable for its logic and unity of concept. According to the archival documents, its authors Archpriest Nikolai Dobroserdov and artist I. Kuznetsov seemed to have a premonition about the upcoming hardships of the church and the whole country. The main idea of the cathedral painting programme, combining two themes: the strength and power of the Lord and his Church in Glory and the inevitability of suffering and martyrdom for

<sup>36</sup> *Noli me tangere* (lat.) – Don't touch me. The traditional name of the iconography of the Gospel story, describing the meeting of Christ with Mary Magdalene after the resurrection.

the faith, responded to the historical context of the era – the Civil War, persecution of the Orthodox Church, secret reports, denunciations and repressions. A person entering the church, repeatedly facing the image of Christ on the narthex – altar line, realises the special role of the Son of God as the spiritual core of the universe. The images of Christ (from the one who doubts and therefore is crucified to the Last Judgement in Glory) correspond to the trials, which an Orthodox person has to go through in the first years of the formation of Soviet power. Following the images of Christ, the parishioner makes a spiritual path from doubts and trials to the establishment of truth and (spiritual) light in the darkness of arrests, secret reports and executions.

The paintings of the Cathedral, representing not the highest of artistic skills, thanks to a clever built visual programme, speak with energy and power. The frescoes of the Pokrovsky Sobor do not blindly copy a figurative alignment designed by famous Russian or closely related with Russia artists (Kramsky, Siemiradzki, Vasnetsov, Nesterov, etc.), but they reconsider it in accordance with the local and historical context. The address to the iconography of famous masters creates complex combinations of traditional religious stories and images of Russian Art Nouveau artists. The frescoes engage with parishioners not only in the hieratic space of sacred events and images but also in the complex crossroads of trials of a new era.

The complex of frescoes of the Barnaul church creates a resonating environment, which reacts to the events of history and the state of the minds and souls of people coming to the church. Lively scenes and figures with recognisable emotions and passionate facial expressions reminded the supplicants what challenges they face ahead and what path they should choose. In the themes of the complex of the fresco paintings of the Pokrovsky Sobor, the principal doctrines of Orthodoxy were approved at the level accessible to the ordinary parishioner. The emotional and sensual principle inherent to the images supported the believers when almost all clerics of the church were arrested or executed, and even in this situation, the Pokrovsky Sobor remained the only active church in the city<sup>37</sup>.

Finally, it is an honour to provide the list of the priests of the church, who died during the years of repressions: Fr. Nikolay Dobroserdov, disappeared (probably was killed) in May 1923; Fr. Alexey Belousov, executed by the firing squad on June 12, 1930; Fr. Mikhail Vysotsky, executed by the firing squad on April 7, 1938; Fr. Alexander Zaborovsky, executed by the firing squad on September 24, 1937; Fr. Vladimir Zlatomrerezhnev, executed by the firing squad on September 24, 1937; Fr. Alexey Mertsalov, executed by the firing squad on September 2, 1937; Fr. Ioann Pulchrov, executed by the firing squad on September 2, 1937; Fr. Fedor Toporkov, executed by the firing squad on May 20, 1927; Fr. Mikhail Usikov, executed by the firing squad on September 16, 1937; Fr. Georgiy Chulkov, executed by the firing squad on September 2, 1937; Mikhail Yazykov, executed by the firing squad on March 11, 1938.

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37 Mass repressions of Orthodox priests and ordinary citizens took place both in the 1920s and 1930s.



**Picture 15.** *The cross being thrown off the building of the Pokrovsky Sobor*

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## APIE BARNAULO POKROVO CERKVĖS (ŠVENTOSIOS MERGELĖS UŽTARĖJOS SOBORO) FRESKŲ KŪRYBOS IR TAPYBOS ISTORIJA

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**Santrauka.** *Sovietų režimo įsigalėjimas Barnaule siejamas su ortodoksų bažnyčių ištikusiais tarsiškais įvykiais: cerkvių uždarymu, bausmėmis šventikams, kurie nepripažino “bedievės valdžios”, bažnytinio turto konfiskavimu, religinio lavinimo vaikams draudimu ir ortodoksų tikėjimo skelbimu*<sup>38</sup>. *Šių istorinių įvykių kontekste Pokrovo katedros freskų tapyba suteikia progą susimąstyti apie vizualiuoju freskų naratyvo bei į jas įtapytas prasmes: ar šios freskos tėra standartinis plačiai išplitusių pavyzdžių aptinkamų sostinėje ir rekomenduojamų Šventojo Sinodo kopijų rinkinys, parinktų cerkvės vyresniojo šventiko ir Sibiro menininkų mechaniškai transformuotų ant provincijos cerkvės sienų. O gal jos atskleidžia originalią freskų dėlionės programą nors ir sietiną su nusistovėjusiu ikonografiniu kanonu ir jo atvaizdais, bet atkurtų siekiant tam tikro tikslo, kuris koduotu naratyvu, suprantamu tik tikinčiajam iš “atpažįstamų” pavyzdžių ir pasakojamųjų epizodų atskleidžia nepakartojamą vientisą dvasinę erdvę, “sąmonės atspindį”, jautriai parodydamas vidinį individo pasaulį (žmogaus abejones, baimes, viltis), aktualizuojant jį per Dieviškosios galios ženklus - per žmogaus kančių*

38 Kozik, E. A. *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov' i organy gosudarstvennoji vlasti v period stanovleniya Sovetskoi vlasti na Altae (1917–1927 gg.)* [The Russian Orthodox Church and the Public Authorities during the Period of Establishment of the Soviet Government in Altai (1917–1927)]. *Makar'evskie chteniya: materialy Shestoi mezhdunar. konf. (21–23 noyabrya 2007 g.)* [Makarii Readings: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference (21–23 November 2007)]. Gorno-Altajsk: GAGU, 2007, p. 153–158.

*analogiją su Dievo Sūnaus kančia. Šio tyrimo tikslas iširti freskų prasmių turinį ir freskų prasminių sąsajų sistemą– jų ryšį su architektūrine cirkvės erdve. Tačiau tyrimas, visų pirma, nukreiptas į tapybos projekto prasmes. Menininkų tapybos kritikuoti neketinama, nes po daugybės atnaujinimo ir restauravimo darbų sunku atsekti autentišką tekstūrą.*

*Reikšminiai žodžiai: freskų tapyba, ikonografija, ikona, XX a. bažnytinių freskų puošyba, rusiška bažnytinė tapyba, Art Nouveau, regioninės freskos, regioninė architektūra, Sibiro cirkvės, Sibiro menas, Barnaulo Pokrovo katedra (Šventosios mergelės užtarėjos soboras)*

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