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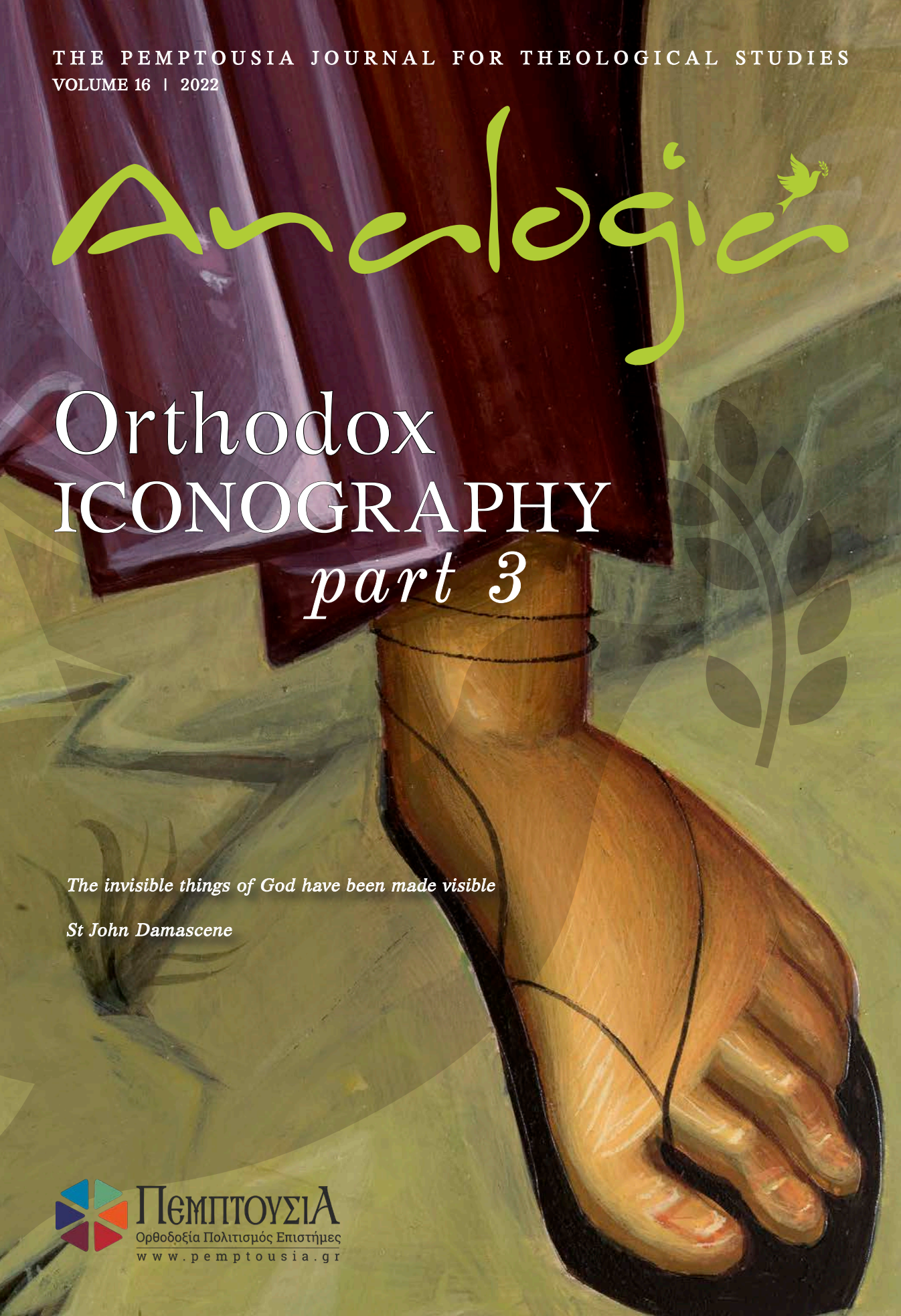
Orthodox ICONOGRAPHY *part 3*

The invisible things of God have been made visible

St John Damascene



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EDITORIAL

This is the third and final part of the three-part series dedicated to Orthodox Iconography.

This volume begins with Steven Bigham's article entitled 'Why Were St Gregory Palamas and the Palamites Accused of Iconoclasm?', where the author offers a learned examination of the anti-icon accusations associated with Palamism. Igumen Siluan Justiniano's article, under the title 'Iconological Paragraphs', offers a beautiful theoretical exploration of the icon from the painter's perspective. As he states, he treats the icon as a creative act, in light of its aesthetic implications, contemporary challenges, possibilities, and ambiguities. Archimandrite Jack Khalil offers us a careful Biblical and linguistic approach of John Damascus' 'Treatise of Icons'. As the author explains, the aim of this study is to try to examine some aspects of the exegetical approach that St John Damascus applied to the biblical data, which enabled him to develop the theological defense of honoring divine icons. Finally, Prof. Iliana Zarra, in her long and informed paper, studies a group of 19th century portable icons, from the point of view of a Historian of Modern Greek Art.

I would like to express my deepest thanks to all those who contributed to this volume, as well as, once more, to all who contributed, in many ways, to the creation of the Orthodox Iconography series.

– ***Fr Nikolaos Loudovikos,*** Senior Editor

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Why Were St Gregory Palamas and the Palamites Accused of Iconoclasm?

STEVEN BIGHAM
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St. Gregory Palamas's adversaries, rather astonishingly, accused him of being against icons and even of having desecrated one. Iconoclasm is not the first accusation associated with the controversy over Palamism, and yet, St. Gregory and his followers were accused of being anti-icon. Was such an attack just a manifestation of 'all's fair in love and war,' of 'throw everything at your enemy and see what sticks' or did St. Gregory and his supporters, by their statements, opinions, and acts, lend credexce to the allegation of iconomachy? The present article deals with this question and attempts to answer it.

1. Introduction

During the controversy between St Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria, icons had no place in the arguments on the essence and energies of God. And yet, Fr John Meyendorff said in one of his works on the subject, and only in passing, that the opponents of hesychasm accused St Gregory and the Palamites of Iconoclasm. These laconic references[1] have always intrigued me and inspire me now to investigate the theological basis of the charge. This is the objective of the present study.

I have a second motivation for conducting this research. A long time ago, I started a series of historical studies on the documents and controversies concerning Christian images. Starting with the paleo-Christian period and up to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, I sought out the documents and controversies that were related to Christian art. Since the Reformation and its relationship to images

[1] John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (Aylesbury, UK: The Faith Press, 1964), 89 and 95.

have already been thoroughly studied and do not directly relate to Orthodoxy, I decided to limit my work to 1517 in the West.[2] This limitation is valid except for Russia, which even after the Reformation experienced controversies centered on icons.[3] Having at the back of my mind Fr John Meyendorff's references to the accusation of Iconoclasm made against the Palamites, I decided that the time had come for me to begin the work of this study.

In reviewing the documents of the time, I think I have found that the anti-Palamite charge of Iconoclasm rests on two bases: the first, gestures, acts, misdeeds; the second, ideas. In the end, 'to be an Iconoclast' means that someone or a group has in fact broken, burned, profaned, or damaged a Christian image, called an icon. Without a physical gesture, we can only talk of iconophobia, i.e., an attitude expressed in words. The two—acts and ideas—are part of this study.

2. The Theoretical Framework

Around 1347 appeared the first written document against the Palamites, making reference to Iconoclastic acts. It comes from either Nicephoros Gregoras in the *Antirrhetika I* or from the *Tome* of the dissident council in 1347. The charge of Messalianism launched by Barlaam against St Gregory established an association, in the minds of the anti-Palamites, between St Gregory's doctrine and the ancient heresy of Messalianism or Bogomilism. Barlaam, although he had linked Palamism and Messalianism in his work *Against the Messalians* (1339–1340), did not make the charge of Iconoclasm, but he created a suggestive, mental link between the two—Messalianism/Bogomilism and Palamism—which allowed others to say that if St Gregory reflected

[2] S. Bigham, *Early Christian Attitudes Toward Images* (Rollinsford NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004) and 'Eusebius of Caesarea and Christian Images', 185-216; *Les images chrétiennes: Textes historiques sur les images chrétiennes de Constantin le Grand jusqu'à la periode posticonoclaste (313–900)*, (Montreal: Médiapaul, 2010); *L'art roman et l'icône: Le dernier art occidental à caractère iconique,* (Montréal: Médiapaul, 2012) *(Romanesque Art and the Icon*, an ebook available on the ebook platform Smashwords); *Epiphanius of Salamis, Doctor of the Iconoclasm?: Deconstruction of a Myth*, (Rollinsford, NH, USA: Orthodox Research Institute, 2008), an ebook available on the ebook platform Smashwords; 'Histoire de Léon de Chalcédoine: D'un lion féroce à un doux minou ou "Beaucoup de bruit pour rien"', *Études sur le mot* image, an ebook available on the ebook platform Smashwords, 2017, 1-121.

[3] S. Bigham, *L'art, l'icône et la Russie : Documents russes sur l'art et l'icône du XVI^e siècle au XVIII^e siècle,* Ariadna Epshteyn, tr., (Sherbrooke, PQ, Canada: G.G.C. Productions Ltée, 2000), available on the ebook platform Smashwords.

Bogomil doctrines X, Y, and Z, he was "without a doubt" also tinted with Iconoclasm, in deeds and in theory, as were the Bogomils.

It may be that, before the publication of the *Antirrhetika I* of Nicephoros Gregoras in 1346–1347, a charge of Iconoclasm against the Palamites had already been floating in the air of the controversy because some twenty anti-Palamite bishops in the dissident council of 1347 made such charges against St Gregory. Let us say, therefore, that Gregoras may not have been the first to conceive or make the reproach of Iconoclasm, but he was the one who made it known to the public at large.

Some time before writing the *Antirrhetika I*—or perhaps during the time he was writing it—Nicephoros Gregoras discovered the work of St Nicephoros of Constantinople, *Against Eusebius*, written to combat the doctrine of Eusebius of Caesarea (260–340). Since there is a certain resemblance of vocabulary between Eusebius and St Gregory—'Christ transfigured into light'—Gregoras took the arguments of St Nicephoros and applied them to Palamite doctrine, believing that he was thereby able to prove that the rumors circulating about the active Iconoclasm of St Gregory were totally justified.

Having established his thesis—to his own satisfaction—Gregoras or some of his disciples sought to substantiate their ideas. They took advantage of the fact that St Gregory, in his youth, had been on Mount Athos and in Thessaloniki at the same time as certain Bogomil monks, insinuating that the latter had persuaded him to adopt their doctrines and to participate in their profanation of icons.

Gregoras and company also took advantage of a similarity between some Bogomil practices and attitudes and those of hesychasts to strengthen their innuendo.

- **Bogomils**: only one prayer, the Lord's Prayer, was valid and any others were the invention of the Devil;
- **Hesychasts**: the prayer of Jesus, or the prayer of the heart, was favored without denigrating other prayers.

- **Bogomils**: Christian images were idolatrous and must be destroyed;
- **Hesychasts**: pure prayer, that is to say prayer during which all mental images were driven out of the mind so as to open

the *nous*—the intelligence, the spirit, the heart, the body of thoughts, sensations—to prayer beyond spoken words and thought.

- **Bogomils**: the Perfect Ones could see God in his essence with their bodily eyes;
- **Hesychasts**: Christians, purified by the prayer of the heart, could, if God so willed but not automatically, see the divine light.

- **Bogomils**: disdain for the sacraments and liturgical offices;
- **Hesychasts**: preference, without disdain for liturgical offices, given to the prayer of the heart in solitude during the week and the Eucharist on Sunday with the other monks.

- **Bogomils**: rejection of the wealth of this world, material poverty being the ideal;
- **Hesychasts**: detachment from all material things, poverty to facilitate pure prayer.[4]

These similarities enabled anti-Palamites to claim that the relations between the two groups were substantial and not superficial.

It is our task to rebuild the anti-Palamite thinking that allowed St Gregory's adversaries to present seemingly convincing arguments—at least convincing for them. Our thesis, however, seeks to place the charge of Iconoclasm in the category of 'accuse your enemy of anything and everything' or 'give a dog a bad name and hang him'. The Palamites were 'guilty' of Iconoclasm due to a superficial association with the Bogomils, a poor understanding of Palamite doctrine, and, perhaps, intellectual dishonesty. Our objective here is not to prove that St Gregory and his disciples were not Iconoclasts; this goes without saying. We want to know how his opponents thought on the question.

[4] Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 253–254; see also Jean-Claude Larchet, 'Messalianisme', *Dictionnaire de miracles et de l'extroadinaire chrétiens, Patrick Sbalchiero*, ed., (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 524–527.

3. Bogomil Influence in the Fourteenth Century

To understand how the anti-Palamites could accuse the Palamites of destroying or desecrating icons, we must look at the climate on Mt Athos at the beginning of the fourteenth century because it was there and at that time that the young monks of St Gregory's generation, and he also, received their monastic training.[5] One of the problems that has plagued Christian tradition for centuries is dualism. Depending on the time and the country, this heresy has been called Manichaeism, Paulicianism, Gnosticism, Bogomilism, etc. The distinctions among these, and there some, for our purposes are not very important, but at the time that concerns us, the fourteenth century, the name Bogomilism is the one that refers to the main beliefs that opposed those of the Orthodox Church. We can classify Bogomil doctrine in the following categories:[6]

- **Cosmology**: dualistic, a bad god: the God of the Jews, created the material world, and the good God: the Father of Jesus Christ, saves us from it;
- **Trinity**: Unitarianism, a Father, the good God;
- **Material**: bad, cannot be sanctified;
- Churches: buildings of the devil, material creations of men;
- **Icons**: idols;
- **Relics, the cross and their veneration**: dead matter and worthy of ridicule, idolatry;
- **Ecclesiastical hierarchy, bishops, and priests**: rejected, drunks, lazy, immoral, thieves;
- **Manual work**: undignified for a man to do manual work;
- **Poverty**: exalted, valued;
- **Civil disobedience**: moral duty;
- **Social equality**: evangelical requirement;
- **Marriage**: sin, impure;
- **Baptism**: rejection as a vehicle of grace, too material; the Bogomils spat on baptized children;
- **St John the Baptist**: precursor of the Antichrist;
- **Sacramental mysteries**: rejected because they are material, the material is unable to transmit grace;

[5] Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople, *In Praise of Palamas,* PG 151, 551–666.
[6] *The Bogomils*, 127–140 ff.

- **Eschatology**: liberation from the material world that is the domain of the bad god, the Devil; rejection of the Second Coming, the General Resurrection, and the Last Judgment: too material;
- **The Eucharist**: allegorical interpretation of a symbolic ceremony;
- **The Virgin Mary**: refusal to venerate her;
- **Prayer**: the Our Father is the only effective prayer; all others are babble;
- **The Old Testament**: dismissed as the revelation of Satanael—a fallen angel—the Devil and creator of the material world;
- **The New Testament**: only the Gospels and Acts accepted;
- **Women**: Equality between men and women in worship.

The Bogomils of the fourteenth century had a rather large influence on the Orthodox population, clerics, and laity. Some documents of the time reflect this influence:

3.1 *The Synodikon of Orthodoxy* provides us with information on the doctrines and practices of the Bogomils. Although the two texts given here date from two or three centuries before the fourteenth, they accurately reflect the Bogomil outlook. See Annex II.

3.2 *The Hagioritique Tome or Tome Eggraphon*.

This text, written in 1344, vividly describes the conduct of Bogomil monks for which they were expelled from Mount Athos. The Athonite monks gathered in a synod to deal with the scandal that the Bogomils had caused.

Because of all these things, the General Assembly has been convened and all are gathered in the venerable Lavra of Kayes:[7]

- the very holy Metropolitan of Hierissos and of the Holy Mountain,
- the all-holy higumen of the Holy Monastery of the Lavra,

[7] It seems that these first words (*dia tauta panta loipon*) make reference to a previous section that is not in our text. Antonio Rigo suggests the same thing: 'Our text, however, is a copy (partial?), as stated in the title of *Tomos Eggraphos* sent to the synod of Constantinople, where it was examined by Nicephoros Gregoras'. Antonio Rigo, 'The Assemblea generale athonita del 1344 su a gruppo di monaci Bogomili', *Cristianismo nella storia, Instituto per le Scienze religiose di Bologna*, 1984, 475–506, 488.

- the very holy higumen of Iveron,
- the very holy higumen of Vatopedia,
- [the very holy higumen] of Esphigmenou, and other honorable men from these same venerable monasteries and [honorable men] from other consecrated monasteries and hermitages [*hésychasteriôn*] as well as
- others, and
- a large number of pious elders [*gerontôn*] of the venerable Lavra of Karyes.
- and with the members of the assembly was the very holy Prôtos and
- the very holy Lord Kallistos among the hieromonks,
- Lord Meletios, spiritual father,
- and many others seated in a circle.

And then.
Many other fathers—pious and faithful—rose to testify that they had seen shameful and atheistic things. The Bogomil monks

- break and burn the holy icons,
- dishonor the relics of the saints,
- eat without distinction meat and cheese even during the days of the holy fast,
- give themselves furiously to sodomite practices, including their disciples who have talked about them several times,
- go together, all naked, into the sea doing and undergoing very obscene things,
- consider the urine of their masters to be like holy water, pour it on themselves, sprinkle their food with it, as well as those around them,
- and refuse, all of them, to repent and to adopt a godly life.

In a word, their life is nothing other than drunkenness, lust, perversity, insanity, immorality, depravity, impiety and atheism.

And then.
[First anathema]
[To the following]

- Joseph of Crete,

- George,
- Cyril and Dionysios,
- Moses and Methodios,
- Malachi,
- Theophilos and Chariton,
- Theodoret,
- Nicander, and
- those with them,

[to those] who willingly, fraudulently and maliciously give themselves over to the terrible and unclean heresy of the Bogomils;
[to those] who, much more, do and teach the most terrible and ungodly things;
[to those] who say that the divine icons are only wood and mud, spit on them, dishonor, burn, defile and destroy them in any way;
to the leaders who teach that holy baptism and the all-holy communion of the all holy and life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, his forbearance—O Christ the King [have mercy on us]—are vain and useless;
[to those] who reject the divine and salutary economy of the incarnation of the One who loves men and his manifestation;
[to those] who say that the resurrection was neither angelic nor from the dead;
[to those] who with great attention perform any impure and iniquitous acts as if such were a great virtue;
[to those] who teach other very terrible things, full of obscenity, impiety, sacrilege, and atheism, which things it is not tolerable for devout Christians to think about, either in writing or by word;
[to those] who infect many other people with these things by their colorful, enticing and fraudulent words and who use ruses, pretending to live godly lives and to be zealous.
And so, let them go, in numbers as great as possible, to their father, the Devil, and let those who are with them go into the abyss of total destruction. To all these, anathema.

[Second anathema]

To all those who receive the Bogomils and, in full knowledge, have communion with them and love their abominable doctrines, anathema.

[The members of the synod] added this:

- if a Bogomil is found among the Orthodox who are on the mountain or even
- if, in the future, someone gives hospitality to a Bogomil in front of the guard posts of the mountain or
- if someone helps a Bogomil to return to the Holy Mountain or
- if someone sees a Bogomil anywhere,

may this person not help the Bogomil so that he may understand, knash his teeth and be driven away; and may the person who helps the Bogomil share the heretic's sentence and receive a great corporal punishment in order that he may suffer.

And after that, the synod adjourned, and the very holy higumen of the Great Lavra returned home. Then, he called the very holy Metropolitan to him for a certain problem, and he, together with the Metropolitan, issued this message to save the monks in the Lavra: the godless George has recently taken refuge among the hermitages around the Lavra. The higumen and the Metropolitan have therefore sent men to arrest him. They demanded that George confess his impiety and denounce his supporters and fellow Bogomils, but George resisted greatly and for a long time, but when the soldiers tortured him, he quickly gave in. He said that when he was received into the Holy Lavra, he was tonsured and became a disciple of someone who seemed to be zealous—this son of perdition from Crete—who taught him not to believe that, according to the truth of the Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Virgin and Theotokos, but this Joseph of Crete explained to him that Jesus had been begotten in thought and that the whole Gospel was to be understood in thought. George also confessed the names of some who believed as he did:

- Joseph of Crete,
- Nicander,
- Dionysios,

- Mpastan [the bašta],[8]
- Theodoret,
- Another calling himself Kapnon,
- Moses the artist and Nicolas of the Holy Mountain,
- Cyril of Bosota
- Theophilos, the brother of Mpastan,
- Chariton and Neophytes Parakeporon of the Great Lavra,
- Malachi the ecclesiarque of Iveron,
- Raptes in the hermitage of Magoula,
- Joseph and Dometios, Serbs of Chiliandar,[9]
- Nikodemos,
- Theodosios of Atzumen,
- Maurantzan,
- and in Thessaloniki Porine Irene,
- Ioannicios Kekratemenon,
- Macarios Koubaran,
- Herman,
- Triakontaphylos,
- Bartholomeos,
- and the woman Agatha.

And concerning these things, it is obvious and has been proven that these people believe as George does. Others have been counted, but without proof, among the aforementioned heretics, as well as a large number among the absent.[10]

3.3 *The Antirrhetika I* of Nicephoros Gregoras[11]

Nicephoros Gregoras, 1295–1360, was an author, polemist and historian in the Eastern Roman Empire and objected to St Gregory Palamas's doctrine in his *Antirrhetika I*, an anti-Palamite treatise,

[8] Perhaps the spiritual father of the Chilandar Monastery. 'The Assemblea', note 40, 483, but the Greek word for *bašta*, given by Rigo, *Mpastan*, begins with a capital letter, which should designate a proper noun. Therefore, there is a certain degree of ambiguity. We will follow the rule according to which a capital letter in Greek indicates a proper noun.

[9] The Serbs Giuseppe and Domecio, as well as Basta and his brother, came almost certainly from the Monastery of Chilandari, the "Serbian Monastery" par excellence. In addition to the obscure expression 'of the sacred mountain,' we have a fairly complete picture of the places of origin of the Bogomil monks: these monasteries or hermitages (Magula) are all located on the north-east side of the Athonite peninsula'. *Ibid*., 485.

[10] *Ibid*., 504–506.

[11] Rodolphe Guilland, *Essai sur Nicéphore Grégoras. L'homme et son œuvre*, (Paris: Geuthner, 1926).

written around 1346. The Bogomils at the beginning of the fourteenth century had an influence not only among simple and educated laypeople but also among the monks. They loved monasticism and were known for their asceticism. It is therefore not surprising to hear the documents of the time talk about their presence and influence in the monastic centers, even on Mt Athos. Since the Bogomil monks and laypeople behaved like the Orthodox so as not to arouse suspicions, they could enter the monasteries and remain hidden there. Nicephoros Gregoras gives us a description of some of the Bogomils on Mount Athos:

> I will speak rather of more recent events: (1) the disciples of Joseph of Crete and George of Larissa who celebrated a Bacchanale [orgy] around their defiled table [altar]; (2) teachers who have taught their students so many abominable doctrines; (3) Moses the painter, David, Job and Isaac who have perfectly impure tongues, attitudes and hands, and who worked hard to keep secret their [sick] minds and the wickedness of their souls by giving themselves the names of excellent men known for their virtue. They look like the tombs, which inside give off a great stench, but outside are decorated with marble and gold. They also take for themselves the appearance and names of remarkable men, very distinguished by virtue. They imitate the actors in the theater playing the role of Orestes, Pylades, Theseus and Pelops; they behave in this way to hide the poison of their wickedness that they vomit up on the simple people.
>
> The God-carrying men on Mount Athos wrote a book [*The Hagioritique Tome*[12]] on the wickedness of the Bogomils and brought it to the Holy Synod of the Byzantines. This text speaks of, among other things, the abominable and impure doctrines of Bogomils. There are so many [repulsive] things in it that modest

[12] According to the description of [manuscript] Vat. 604, the *Hagioreitikon gramma* is roughly divided into five parts: a) convening the General Assembly at the protaton in Karyes; b) hearing some witnesses; (c) proclaiming two anathemas; (d) making a list of penalties and sanctions for the heretics who will try in the future to return to the sacred mountain and for anyone who helps them [. . .] and describing the circumstances which have led to the confession of George of Larissa. [*The Tome*] lists the names of those who are in agreement with him [George of Larissa]'. Antonio *Rigo, Monaco Esicasti E Monaci* Bogomili, (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1989), 145–146. The English translation is by the author.

men cannot bear even to listen to them. In secret, the Bogomils grind up and burn the divine icons; they honor their teacher's urine and sprinkle their food with it; and they totally reject the divine plan of the incarnation. There are many, many other things in the book, but it is better not to talk about them. What good is it to enumerate more of them and pollute pious ears? Whoever wants to know more about this book, which discusses the whole affair and expressly condemns the wickedness of the Bogomils, can search for it among the documents in the patriarchal archives.[13]

3.4 *The Letter* of Gregory Akindynos[14]

This heresy, indeed, together with Iconoclasm and other more shameful deeds, has appeared now on the Holy Mountain and here and in Thessaloniki. And the primary cause of this delusion as well as infamy is the notorious George, who resided with Isidore in Thessaloniki for a considerable time. When he was at that time found out there speaking blasphemy against God, he incited against himself the people of Thessaloniki and barely escaped from their hands fleeing the very house that he shared with Isidore. Soon afterwards, because he was again detected both believing and doing things that are inconceivable even to speak of, he was branded crosswise on the face with an iron and banished from the Holy Mountain, as 'the abomination of desolation', and together with him many wanton men and monks. Their leader and goddess, as it were, was found to be Porine, a minister

[13] Nicephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetika I*, 1, 2, 1-2, Hans-Veit Beyer, translation into German, (Vienna: Verlan der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976), 130; the English translation is by the author.

[14] Gregory Akindynos, *Letters of Gregory Akindynos*, 'Introduction: I The Life of Akindynos', Angela Constantinides Hero, tr., (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1983), IX–XXXIII. Akindynos was a friend and collaborator of St Gregory Palamas, but became an opponent later in his life. See Alice-Mary Talbot and Angela Constantinides Hero, 'Akindynos, Gregory', *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 45–45, as well as articles by a present day antiPalamite and admirer of Akindynos: Juan Nadal Canellas, 'Le rôle de Grégoire Akindynos dans la controverse hésychaste du XIVe siècle à Byzance', *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala éd., First Gorgias Press, Piscataway, N. J., 2007, and *La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment Volume II, Commentaire historique*, Peeters, Louvain, 2006, and *Un grand hésychaste du XIVe siècle byzantin, Grégoire Akindynos*, (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicia, 1998).

to them of all infamy and abomination. Isidore visited her more than anyone else and spent his time watching her, as if she were a divine rule, while she was saying and doing everything possible and nodding and dancing and drinking and being constantly intoxicated, and he praised her as a prophetess together with the sly Palamas. And now they are very attached to her, just as to the "lower divinity," or rather just as the pious to the 'all-transcendent' divinity.[15]

3.5 *The Life of St. Theodosios of Trnovo*[16]

A certain nun in Thessaloniki, named Irene [Porine], was committing wicked deeds. Residing in Thessaloniki, she passed herself off as if living in purity, but furtively and secretly she was a perpetrator of all kinds of impurity and vileness. When the monks discovered what kind of woman she was, many of them began to meet together where she was living. She, being totally unclean, had mastered the entire Messalian heresy, which she taught in secret to all those who visited her for the sake of impiety. Because the heresy became widespread, many monks were affected by the error, and when they went, in separate groups, to the holy mountain of Athos, they offended the monasteries there with poverty and begging. If it happened anywhere that they were left without sufficient bread or drink, they used to cut down the olive trees which were outside the monasteries, and often also the vineyards and the like, and committed everything that was injurious. This heresy spread for three years, or even longer. The fathers at this holy mountain could no longer tolerate this impious heresy or the many very pernicious and shameless actions, so they convened a council and exposed the error and insidiousness of the heretics. They expelled them altogether and consigned them to eternal damnation. From these heretics, two went to Trnovo. The first of these was named Lazarus, the other Cyril, also known as Bosota [the barefooted]. After they had spent a short time there, they could not conceal their error for

[15] *Ibid*., 223–225.

[16] 'Theodosios of Turnovo', *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium 3*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 2052–2053. St. Theodosios, 1300–1363, monk and fervent hesychast, founded around 1350 a monastery near Trnovo, the capital of the second Bulgarian Empire (1187–1396).

> long. Lazarus began to behave like a madman; bare naked, he went about all over the town, wearing a gourd on his private parts to conceal them—a weird and hideous sight for all those who saw him, and offensive for the genital parts given to people by God to generate children. And Cyril (the aforementioned Bosota) began gradually to reveal his heresy. On some occasions he reviled the holy icons, and at other times he vilified the holy and life giving cross…[17]

After having studied these five texts of the first half of the fourteenth century, we can definitely conclude that the ideas and practices of Bogomilism were part of the atmosphere of Byzantine and Bulgarian societies, of monastic life in general, and of Mount Athos in particular.

4. St Gregory and the Bogomils

And it was in this atmosphere scented with Bogomilism that the young monk Gregory Palamas received his monastic training and, as we will see later, his opponents founded a part of their accusations of Iconoclasm and heresy against him precisely on the fact that he was living in this environment and breathed in, a little too deeply, according to them, the air contaminated with Bogomilism.

4.1 *In Praise of Palamas*[18]

A first piece of evidence comes from the biography of St Gregory Palamas, written by Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos. Due to a storm at sea during their journey to Athos, St Gregory and his brothers spent the winter of 1316–1317 on Mt Papikion. In the text, the patriarch speaks of St Gregory's meeting, when he was a young monk, with the Bogomils who lived in the region of Mt Papikion, a large monastic center:

> [After the death of his father, Gregory Palamas, together with his brothers, left Constantinople to join the monks of Mt Athos. They spent the winter of 1316/17 on Mount Papikion, 'between Thrace and Macedonia'.] The inhabitants of the nearby mountains, who

[17] 'Zitie i zizn' prepodobnogo OTCA nasego Feodosija', W. N. Zlatarski, ed., *Sbornik na Narodni umotuorenija, Nauka i Kniznina* 20, 1904, 1-41; a part of an English translation is found in *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650-C. 1450*, Janet Hamilton, Bernard Hamilton, Yuri Stoyanov, trs. and eds., (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 283–284. The English translation of Yuri Stoyanov was made from the edition in old Bulgarian published by v. I. Zlatarski, 452–5, 458.

[18] PG 151, 562 B-565 D and *Christian Dualist Heresies*, 278–282.

had inherited the disease of Marcianism or Messalianism from their ancestors, became a noble trophy for Gregory's wondrous tongue. When they learned that he was on the mountain among the monks' dwellings, they went to him, first in twos and threes, to meet him and test him, but when they realized they could not argue against him even from a distance, they withdrew to their own place again, saying that they themselves were not strong in arguing about and discussing salvation, but that their leaders were skillful and powerful in the things of God and correct in matters of dogma. They said, 'You will not be able to confront them and argue with them even for a little'. But Gregory, filled with the Holy Spirit, enthusiastically put together a counter argument about God. He did not reply to what they had said, but taking one of the brethren with him he went to them in haste. How many arguments did he use in discussion with the leaders and teachers of the heresy? What sort were they? How easily, in union with the Holy Spirit, did he brush aside their problems and defenses like so many cobwebs? How effortlessly did he turn their positions around revealing that nothing they said was at all sound and that they were babbling lies which they had invented against the Church to no effect? To write about all this in detail is not appropriate at the present time or relevant to our argument, since it would require a longer narrative. Nevertheless, one part deserves recording to show, as the proverb has it, the whole from the part.

The leaders and teachers of these Messalians thought that the only prayer appropriate to Christians was that which Christ long ago taught to his disciples, and they said that all other prayers and hymns which we have composed are useless, containing nothing supernatural or pertaining to the law of God. They have imposed this on the flock which obeys them and rejected all other prayers. This, then, they set before Gregory (and others of the Church beside) as something serious and central, and said that to act otherwise was completely transgressing the law and revelation, which should not be touched unnecessarily. Gregory responded like a friend and champion of holy prayer, saying, 'Even if, as you say in your attack, we despise what concerns that holy prayer of

the Lord, what about those holy disciples of the Lord who were the first to be told about it, and that by Christ Himself? Do you say that they transgressed His teaching and instruction? What do you say about them?'

They replied at once in unison, 'The first disciples and apostles were the guardians and fulfillers of the commandments of Christ. They preserved the prayer themselves and transmitted it to their successors through the Gospel. You despise the tradition and introduce inventions of your own'. Gregory, the inspired, said, 'Then why, after Christ's ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them in a visible form, when they were being hounded by the God-slaying Jews in Jerusalem on account of the Gospel and the preaching, did they lift up their voices with one accord to God, in their own words, as Luke the inspired says in his Acts? They did not pray using the words of the Lord's prayer, but other words more appropriate to the occasion and their need. That is why their prayers and requests were successful, as God immediately showed from on high by an earthquake which shook the place where they were praying, and by the presence of the Holy Spirit to confirm their prayer. Why did the tax collector, in Christ's account, go home more justified than the Pharisee, although he did not pray that same prayer, but used different words? So anyone who has sense should reason and conclude from Christ's teaching that He did not include the whole of prayer in these words, but rather gave the faithful a model of prayer in it. He gave them this spiritual instruction that they should pray and sing, make requests and always have His praises on their lips, as David the inspired says, and everywhere remember the intention and purpose of these inspired words, and never deviate from that. Examine the teaching closely. He did not say, as He taught the apostles the prayer, "Pray in these words, and in these words only"—but what did He say? He said, "You should pray in this way, that is, with this intention and model which I am now showing you." He made a rule and a pattern of how one should approach God in prayer, which is what they had asked Him for: "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." [Lk 11:1] That is why the first disciples and apostles of Christ, who

learned these things from Christ himself, have served as the best model of prayer, according to the word of the Lord. We are their disciples; they taught us what they themselves learned very well. We too follow them and act as they did in private and together, referring everything we say in prayer or hymns to the model, this original prayer. In this way, we always pray and sing hymns in obedience to His word and teaching, for He said, "Pray like this"'.

Next he discussed with these enemies of the cross what concerns the cross of Christ and our salvation and redemption through it. He said that the image of the cross was at work earlier in the fathers [of the Old Testament] and the prophets, and that by these very facts the mystery of the divine plan was revealed later. Even now we can hear that wise and theological voice most clearly and loftily in what St. Gregory said of those who had written about the venerable cross. With these words and ones like them, he greatly astounded the heretics and, as it were, sewed up their mouths, putting an end to their verbosity. So he departed from them like the best of victors and generals. The leader of the heresy took Gregory's words to heart. He realized their truth and inspiration immediately, and soon afterwards he himself with many of his followers went to Constantinople, approached the Great Church of the faithful, abjured their ancestral error and became part of our holy assembly. And that was the beginning and the first combat of his holy life as an anchorite and hesychast, thus announcing his great struggle for piety and final victory. When Gregory returned [from his meeting with the heretics], he caused no little astonishment to the monks who lived on the mountain because he had successfully escaped from the hands and plots of those wild beasts, who were so numerous and dangerous. Not merely had he single handedly withstood their arguments and nonsense, but, empowered by the grace of Christ, he had clearly defeated and overturned the Bogomils who had often attacked those who argued against them, both secretly and in the open. Indeed, they secretly attacked him and his brother while they were still among the barbarians, and Gregory was arguing as I have already described, after the discussion finished they went to

their house. Then those blood-stained heretics decided to send some food to Gregory's party for their meal. Gregory realized that death was hidden in what they offered, but he accepted it. He ordered his companions to touch nothing of it. All turned out as he expected. One of those present threw that bread to the dogs outside the door, as a test. One of the puppies ate it and died instantly. Immediately all the rest recognized Gregory's discernment, and that he had been right to forbid the them to share the food full of deadly poison which the murderers had given them.

4.2 The Letter to the Metropolitan of Monemvasia, Gregory Akindynos

You know, moreover, that Messalianism is part of Palamas's whole heresy. For when the Palamites say that they see with bodily eyes the natural form and divinity of God and that they receive by means of the senses the Holy and eternal Spirit, this is manifest Messalianism as well as polytheism. This heresy, indeed together with Iconoclasm and other more shameful deeds, has appeared now on the Holy Mountain and here and in Thessaloniki. And the primary cause of this delusion as well as infamy is the notorious George, who resided with Isidore in Thessaloniki for a considerable time. When, at that time, he was found out there speaking blasphemy against God, he incited against himself the people of Thessaloniki and barely escaped their hands fleeing from the very house that he shared with Isidore. Soon afterwards, because he was again detected both believing and doing things that are inconceivable even to speak of, he was branded crosswise on the face with an iron and banished from the Holy Mountain, as 'the abomination of desolation', [Mt 24:15] and together with him many wanton men and monks. Their leader and goddess, as it were, was found to be Porine, a minister to them of all infamy and abomination. Isidore visited her more than anyone else and spent his time watching her, as if she were a divine rule, while she was saying and doing everything possible, nodding, dancing and drinking and being constantly intoxicated. He praised her as a prophetess together with the sly Palamas. And now they are very

attached to her, just as to the 'lower divinity', or rather, just as the pious to the 'all transcendent' divinity.[19]

We can take for granted then that in his youth St Gregory was acquainted with the Bogomil milieu and was associated with it. Fr John Meyendorff admits as much: 'The hesychasts were not afraid to keep in contact with those very circles in which Bogomilism was spreading and the incidents at Thessaloniki, echoed in our sources, prove that such contacts actually existed'.[20]

5. Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory and His Disciples

We believe we have found the texts which, directly or indirectly, clearly or vaguely, launch accusations of misdeeds. As the reader will note, however, there is only one single text, 5.1, which attributes to St. Gregory himself a supposedly Iconoclastic misdeed. The other three texts accuse either him of vague vandalism, 5.2 and 5.3, or his disciples of Iconoclastic acts, 4.

5.1 An Iconoclastic Misdeed Attributed to St Gregory

The Emperor Andronicus III died in 1341 leaving as his successor a young son, John V, and this situation necessitated a regency until the child-Emperor attained maturity. Two factions competed for power in the child's name: on the one hand, John Cantacuzenos, the Grand Domestic and a friend of St Gregory, and, on the other, Patriarch John Calecas, an opponent of Cantacuzenos and St Gregory. The civil war between the supporters of these two groups raged on for six years, 1341–1347. At the end of the hostilities, John Cantacuzenos came out the winner. Patriarch John Calecas was deposed and Isidore, a Palamite and friend of St Gregory, was elected Patriarch at a synod in May 1347. A number of anti-Palamite bishops did not accept the election of Isidore and held a dissident synod, rather a pseudo-synod, in July, to condemn the election of Isidore, St Gregory, and all the Palamites. The following text is part of the dissident bishops' *Tome*.

The AntiPalamite Tome of the Pseudo-Synod of Constantinople[21]

[19] *The Letters of Gregory Akindynos* 52, 223–225.
[20] Meyendorff, 37.
[21] *The AntiPalamite Tome,* PG 150, 882 AB and 884 AB.

> The very pernicious author of this evil is Palamas, and those who reflect on the subject must purify their souls and minds of him. Such a heinous man was consecrated archpriest [archbishop] of the first city of the Thessalonians but was recently deposed for the following reasons: he plundered a church, in the Monastery of Peribleptos, stripping the icons of their coverings, leaving them open to the air. He also broke oil lamps . . . in order to, like Judas, get money, and the thrice miserable fellow did not respect the day of the Lord's Passion, taking a bath to pamper his body and eating, up to the end of the canon. He shocked and outraged the monks and also those who listened and watched him in the Holy Monastery of the Resurrection of Christ.
>
> And yet, with him [Patriarch Isidore], Palamas, the author of evil doctrine, has composed many writings in which he brought together the evil and vain flowering buds of his own thought which he has imposed on the Church of God inventing superior and inferior deities, visible and invisible gods and deities. He holds for nothing the holy creed of Christian faith, sealed by the Holy Fathers at Nicaea, as well as by the other ecumenical synods. This creed directs us to believe in one God and Divinity. He and those who think like him set forth new theological doctrines and attack holy icons and sacred vases. He has violated good Christian order by daring to celebrate the liturgy even after being deposed. This rascal Palamas and anyone else taking part in his evil, anyone who is currently hiding or disguising himself as an archpriest, we remove them all from the priesthood without delay, and we depose them by a full and definitive dismissal. We consider them to be worthy of fire and iron, like unruly children and a perverse and twisted generation, deserving the wrath of God for such things.

5.2 Non-Iconoclastic Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory

Nicephoros Gregoras had been, for a time, St Gregory's friend, but in 1346 the regent Anne of Savoy forced him to choose his camp, Palamite or anti-Palamite. Gregoras chose to oppose the Palamites, became one of the three principal adversaries of St Gregory, and wrote *Antirrhetika I* to express his opposition to St Gregory's theological doctrines. Here we have a relevant excerpt.

Nicephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhetika I*[22]

> The cunning Palamas is attached neither to the dignity of the noble behavior of man nor to the sobriety of the soul, but he always smells like yesterday's drunkard. He maintains, however, his doctrine of the visions of God. 'Even painters', he said, 'when they see icons from afar are more likely to perceive the exactitude of the art, than when they are close'. Thus, the accursed [Palamas] slowly calmed the fears of a great number and covered over a strange and wild way of living, in which he mixed in everything. He imitated here a barbaric custom that was adopted from a foreign country.

5.3 Unspecified Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory

The next letter, written in May June 1345, testifies to Akindynos's hostility toward St Gregory. We have already studied this letter, see 4.2, but for a different purpose.

5.4 Iconoclastic Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory's Disciples

Gregoras began his great work, *Roman History*, around 1347 and finished it near the end of his life, 1360. He devoted the last chapters to the Palamite controversy.

Nicephoros Gregoras, *Roman History* 19, 5[23]

> Therefore, I believe that those who want to can see that Palamas is condemned, as well as this accursed Eusebius [of Caesarea], the two having written and proclaimed the same things because Palamas's disciples threw the divine icons of the saints into the fire. This is well known to those who have seen it, who have revealed the secret, and who have, by oath, authenticated the deed to many, but when the criminals were caught in *flagrante delicto* and were afraid of the wrath of the crowd, they feared even more that another cloud of recrimination might fall on them. And, therefore, they now claim to venerate the images and visit

[22] Nicephoros Gregoras *Antirrhetika I*, 2, 2, 7, H.-V. Beyer, ed., (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976), 246–248.

[23] Nicephoros Gregoras, *Nicephoros Gregoras Historia Rhomaïke, Rhomäische Geschichte* IV (CHS. XVIII- XXIV, 2), Jan-Louis van Dieteng, trad., (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann Stuttgart, 1994), 107.

> the churches of God. They have therefore been able to silence the uproar. We must also keep quiet for the moment.

In examining these texts and their accusations of Iconoclastic misdeeds supposedly carried out by St Gregory and his disciples, we find that in fact there is very little substance in them, only two charges against St Gregory himself, in all the anti-Palamite literature. We will now see that the imputation of Iconoclasm to St Gregory is 'better' grounded on theology than on alleged misdeeds.

6. The Charge of Iconoclasm: The Theological Basis

Any controversy between Palamites and anti-Palamites—either Greeks or Latins, either of the fourteenth century or in modern times—can be reduced to two words: essence and energies, and consequently to the relationship between them. Is it possible for God to truly act, manifest himself, make himself known, be participated in. etc. beyond his essence; can he get outside of himself—outside of his essence—and touch the created world; is it possible for the created world to really participate in the Uncreated, in the divine life, in God himself? How do we interpret 2 P 1:4: 'Through this might and splendor he has given us his promises, great beyond all price, and through them you may escape the corruption with which lust has infected the world, and come to share in the very being of God.'? It is universally understood that it is not possible to participate in the 'essence' of God, that is to say what God is by his very nature and being, as the Son and the Holy Spirit participate in the divine essence of the Father and are thus fully divine, uncreated, co-eternal—*homoousios*—with the Father. We can never become the fourth, the tenth, the fifty-thousandth Divine Person on the same throne with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. How then do we 'share in the very being of God'; how then do we participate in God's nature? There are two answers to the question: (1) The first one was expressed in the Palamite controversy by Barlaam of Calabria, who represented the position based on the philosophy of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic and later the Protestant position, and (2) the second was expressed by St Gregory, based—according to the

Palamites—on the Patristic tradition and the spiritual experience of the eastern monasticism, the Orthodox position.

According to Barlaam, God cannot manifest himself beyond or outside of his nature or essence. He cannot go outside of what he is, his essence, and actually touch what he is not, the Created, without 'what he is not' becoming 'what he is' and sharing in his essence. In his essence, God remains 'immaculate, spotless, without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, inscrutable, unchanging, unsurpassable, immeasurable…'[24] The only way for him to manifest himself and make himself known is through creatures, images, entities, created symbols, including grace. 2 P 1:4 is therefore interpreted in a symbolic sense. We will not really share in the divine nature, but we share in created grace, which sanctifies us. This first answer is allergic to the word *deification* taken in a literal sense. If it is necessary to use this word, it is done with reluctance and according to a symbolic definition. *Sanctification* is clearly preferred to the word *deification*. See the illustration in Annex III.1.

The second answer agrees with everything that the first answer says concerning the essence of God, but it does not stop there. According to the spiritual experience of eastern saints, we can have real and direct communion with God, as St Peter said, 'share in the very being of God'. When Barlaam, as a supporter of the first answer, said that the monks' stories of this experience were nonsense, St Gregory felt obliged to seek the least inadequate words[25] to express and defend the reality and the mystery of the saints' spiritual experience. He took the words *energy/energies* and applied them to all the divine theophanies in the Old Testament, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and the visions of light in the holy Tradition of the Church. The glory of God in the Temple, the light of Tabor and the manifestations of a light, attested to by the Fathers of the Church, are put into the category of God's energies, not of his essence, but his energies are outside of his essence.

[24] The first knelling prayer of Pentecost Vespers, *The Vespers of Pentecost*, (New York, Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America, 1974), 26.

[25] All human language and thinking are INADEQUATE for talking about God. Some words and concepts, however, are better—at least not as bad—than others for the task: they are not quite as INADEQUATE as others. There is a scale of more or less INADEQUATE, human language. So St Gregory, like all the Fathers before and after him, sought out those expressions that were the least INADEQUATE for answering Barlaam and defending Scripture, correct doctrine, tradition, and spiritual experience.

God's light and glory are not created, but really divine. They are the real manifestation of God outside of his essence. His energies are at work in the creation maintaining it in existence and leading all human beings to the ultimate goal of their vocation, deification, i.e., becoming by the grace what is God by essence. St Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202), and many others after him, expressed the idea for the first time:

The Lord speaks to unbelievers.

> I say, 'You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men and fall like any prince'. [Ps 82:6-7] He speaks undoubtedly to those… who despise the incarnation of the pure generation of the Word of God, defraud human nature of promotion into God… For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God.[26]

We can therefore understand St Peter in a strong sense, literally meaning that we actually participate in the divine nature through God's uncreated energies without participating in his essence. See Annex III.2.

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand how the different ideas on the essence of God could cause opposite reactions among the adherents of the two theologies. The same words used by the two camps had very different definitions: *created* and *uncreated Grace*, *deification* and *sanctification*, *transfiguration*, etc. meant one thing in the context of the first theory and another in the second. The interpretations of one group shocked the sensibilities of the other. The reactions were so strong that the word *heresy* slid easily into the polemical works of the disputants.

It is in the confrontation of these two theological positions that we must place the accusations of Iconoclasm launched by the anti-Palamites against the Palamites. When Barlaam wrote *Against the Messalians*, he accused St Gregory of sharing the Messalian doctrines of antiquity and, more recently, those of the Bogomils expelled from Mt Athos. Once Barlaam had attached the label *Messalian/Bogomil* to St Gregory and his doctrine, the other anti-Palamites benefited from a new line of

[26] St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, 3, 19, 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. I, Ann Arbor, (MI: Wm. B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1979), 448.

arguments to support their complaints. If St Gregory was a Bogomil in one area, he was, 'without a doubt', a Bogomil in other areas, including icons. Everyone knew that Iconoclasm and iconophobia were part of the Bogomil attacks against the Great Church. Then, by a 'happy' coincidence, Nicephoros Gregoras discovered a manuscript written by the iconophile patriarch, Nicephoros of Constantinople, during the period of classical Iconoclasm (730–843). This document is called *Against Eusebius*. Gregoras incorrectly thought that the text had been written by St Theodore Grapto[27] (775–844), another iconodule Father, but Gregoras still used the arguments that he found there against the Palamites and, according to Featherstone,[28] Gregoras was the first to use the anti-Iconoclastic arguments found in the work of Nicephoros of Constantinople.

In the *Contra Eusebium*,[29] Gregoras found a rebuttal of Eusebius's position as expressed in a letter written to the Empress Constantia, the half-sister of the Emperor Constantine. Constantia had written a letter to Eusebius in which she asked him to send her an image of Jesus. Eusebius's answer[30] expresses the doctrines that Nicephoros believed erroneous. Eusebius seems to accept a Christological doctrine that reduces the reality of Christ's humanity, and, using this reduced humanity as a reason for refusing to send the image, he even declares the impossibility of painting such a picture. It is not difficult to understand that the Iconoclasts took Eusebius, 'his' letter, and his alleged iconophobia as an expression of their position four centuries before their time. It is also easy to see why Nicephoros fought the doctrine of Christ's deficient humanity and affirmed the possibility of painting

[27] 'Theodore Graptos', *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Vol. 3, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 2042.

[28] Jeffrey Featherstone, 'An Iconoclastic Episode in the Heyschast Controversy', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 33, (Vienna, 1983), 179–198, 180, note 2.

[29] Nicephoros of Constantinople, Contra Eusebium, J. B. Pitra (ed.) *Specilegium solesmense Comp.* Pitra (ed.), *Spicilegium solesmense complectens sanctorum Patrum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum anecdota hactenus Opera*, (Paris, 1852), vol. 1, 371–503.

[30] Bigham, 'Eusebius of Caesarea and Christian Images', *Early Christian Attitudes Toward Images*, (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute), 185–216; The English translation quoted here is found in Cyril Mango, 'Letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to Constantia', *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453*, (Toronto, Canada, 1986), 16–18. In this article, I argue that the *Letter to Constantia* is not authentic thus rejecting the iconophobia attributed to Eusebius, but this question is not important for the present discussion. Here, the eighth- to ninth-century Iconoclasts, St Nicephoros, and the anti-Palamites all accepted the letter's authenticity and based their arguments on its content. The validity of the arguments is based on the ideas expressed in it and not on the identity of the author.

a picture of the Christ. Let us now look at the *Letter to Constantia* attributed to Eusebius of Caesarea.

6.1 Eusebius of Caesarea's Alleged *Letter to Constantia*[31]

(The underlining is by the author.)

You also wrote me concerning some supposed image of Christ, which image you wished me to send you. Now what kind of thing is this that you call the image of Christ? I do not know what impelled you to request that an image of Our Savior should be delineated. What sort of image of Christ are you seeking? Is it the true and unalterable one which bears His essential characteristics, or the one which He took up for our sake when He assumed the form of a servant?

Granted, He has two forms, even though I do not think that your request has to do with His divine form. Surely then, you are seeking His image as a servant, that of the flesh which He put on for our sake. *But that, too, we have been taught [Rm 8:5], was mingled with the glory of His divinity, so that the mortal part was swallowed up by life.* Indeed, it is not surprising that after His ascent to heaven He should have appeared as such, when, while He—the God, Logos—was yet living among men, *He changed the form of the servant,* and indicating in advance to a chosen band of His disciples the aspect of His Kingdom, He showed on the mount that nature which surpasses the human one—when His face shone like the sun and His garments like light. Who, then, would be able to represent by means of dead colors and inanimate delineations the glistening, flashing radiance of such dignity and glory, when even His superhuman disciples could not bear to behold Him in this guise and fell on their faces, thus admitting that they could not withstand the sight? If, therefore, His incarnate form possessed such power at the time, altered as it was by the divinity dwelling within Him, what need I say of the time when He put off mortality and washed off corruption, *when He changed the form of the servant into the glory of the Lord God*? How can one paint an image of so wondrous and unattainable a form—if the term *form* is at all applicable to the

[31] *Ibid.*, 212–214.

divine and spiritual essence—unless, like the unbelieving pagans, one is to represent things that bear no possible resemblance to anything? For they, too, make such idols when they wish to mold the likeness of what they consider to be a god or, as they might say, one of the heroes or anything else of the kind, yet are unable even to approach a resemblance, and so delineate and represent some strange human shapes. Surely, even you will agree that such practices are not lawful for us.

But if you mean to ask of me the image, not of *His form transformed into that of God*, but that of the mortal flesh before its transformation, can it be that you have forgotten that passage in which God lays down the law that no likeness should be made either of what is in heaven or what is in the earth beneath? Have you ever heard anything of the kind either yourself in church or from another person? Are not such things banished and excluded from churches all over the world, and is it not common knowledge that such practices are not permitted to us alone?

Once—I do not know how—a woman brought me in her hands a picture of two men in the guise of philosophers and let fall the statement that they were Paul and the Savior—I have no means of saying where she had had this from or learned such a thing. With the view that neither she nor others might be given offense, I took it away from her and kept it in my house, as I thought it improper that such things ever be exhibited to others, lest we appear, like idol worshippers, to carry our god around in an image. I note that Paul instructs all of us not to cling any more to things of the flesh; for, he says, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.

It is said that Simon the sorcerer is worshipped by godless heretics painted in lifeless material. I have also seen myself the man who bears the name of madness [Mani, the founder of Manicheanism] painted on an image and escorted by Manatees. To us, however, such things are forbidden. For in confessing the Lord God, Our Savior, we make ready to see Him as God, and we ourselves cleanse our hearts that we may see Him after we have been cleansed.

See the illustration in Annex III.3.

6.2 Contra Eusebium by St Nicephoros of Constantinople[32]

St Nicephoros (758–828) immediately recognized that the *Letter to Constantia* based its rejection of Christ's representation in a painted image on a faulty Christology, almost Monophysite of the Eutychian type: because of Christ's humanity, his form as a servant was transfigured into 'an ineffable and indescribable light well suited to God the Word', his icon was impossible. Byzantine Iconoclasts, having seen in this letter a great support for their ideas, coming supposedly from a distinguished individual 400 years before them, did not, however, pay attention to the questionable, theoretical basis of the letter. It was a Trojan Horse, and St Nicephoros did not miss the opportunity to exploit this weakness in his rebuttal of Iconoclastic theology. Appealing to the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, where Christ was defined as fully man and fully God, as one hypostasis/person in two natures—and this from the beginning of the Incarnation and for eternity—Nicephoros managed to tie the rejection of Christ's image to a Christological heresy by using the letter's idea of transfiguration, therefore a change or absorption of the form of a servant.

See the illustration in Annex III.4.

6.3 Nicephoros Gregoras

We now come to the time of our study, the first half of the fourteenth century. When Nicephoros Gregoras discovered St Nicephoros's *Contra Eusebium*, forgotten during several centuries, he thought he had found the weapon of mass destruction that he could use against Palamite doctrines. Let us not forget that Gregoras, like other anti-Palamites, shared the doctrine about God that says that there is nothing truly divine and uncreated outside of God's essence. So, when Gregoras heard St Gregory speak of Christ transfigured by the divine light, as well as of his humanity being deified, he could not help but recall that, thanks to St Nicephoros's rebuttal, the vocabulary of transfiguration, transformation, divine light, etc. had been associated with Iconoclasm, first through Eusebius and then through the Byzantine Iconoclasts.

[32] 'La vie de notre père parmi les saints, Nicéphore, archevêque de Constantinole et de Nouvelle Rome, composée par Ignace, diacre et garde du trésor de la très sainte et grande Église de Sainte-Sophie (son disciple)', *Cinq documents originaux pour accompagner* le livre Épiphane de Salamine, docteur de l'iconoclasme ?, S. Bigham, ed., 149–203, (platform of electronic publishing Smashwords, 2017).

Since St Gregory used this vocabulary—but in another theological framework—Gregoras naturally jumped to the conclusion, a little hastily, that Palamism was also Iconoclastic. Gregoras's greatest fears were confirmed when he heard that not only had Christ's humanity been deified, but that any Christian—body, soul, spirit—could also be deified. He was convinced that he was confronting a new form of the old Iconoclastic heresy.

Gregoras's reaction to St Gregory's speeches and writings was 'understandable' in view of his rejection of the distinction between God's essence and energies. 'To divinize someone or something, really and not symbolically', meant for Gregoras to share the divine essence with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When he heard that the Palamites said that the divine energies were not the essence of God, yet fully divine and uncreated, Gregoras naturally concluded that St Gregory preached ditheism: two Gods, one of the essence and one of the energies. But worse still, for Gregoras, St Gregory preached polytheism because he said that every Christian's vocation was to be divinized.

6.3.1 *Antirrhetika I*, 2, 5[33]

> As the Scriptures say, Christ's own flesh was transformed on Mount Tabor dwelling in an 'unapproachable light'. [1 Tm 6:16] As for him, Palamas teaches 'another energy', different from the divine essence, and an unhypostasized divinity [not having its own existence rooted in itself], and yet it is visible. And as evidence for his point of view, he [St. Gregory] refers to the vision that Christ's disciples had and, at the same time, to the vision he himself had and to the visions that those who, according to him, are purified can have, as he said. And [this Light] is between God and the angels; it is superior to the angels as much as it is subordinate to the divine nature. Similarly, on this subject, we have already spoken a few times in the past with Palamas, in passing, but now we wish to present here a more substantial rebuttal, for I want to be an important ally on the side of the Scriptures' divine clarity and to manifestly prove that Palamas is a true Iconoclast, no less than the ones in former times, but even worse

[33] *Antirrhetika I,* 308–310.

than they were. Here he goes further than they and said that he and others, those who follow him, can be uncreated because he has taken the Iconoclasts' blasphemies as a pretext, applying them to the light on Mount Tabor which shone from the Lord's flesh. Indeed, although the villainous Palamas, having suffered from Iconoclasm for a long time, for which he has often been criticized, he remained silent before the Emperor but continues without fear to spread the disease in his writings.

6.3.2 *Antirrhetika I*, 2, 5[34]

I would like to shine a strong light on one of those who in the past fought against the Iconoclastic theologians. To be brief, I will deal with Theodore Graptos who was the first in his time to challenge a text of Eusebius, the first of the Iconoclasts. Theodore was the first to quote Eusebius's statement: 'The Body of Christ [. . .] was transformed and immortalized' and 'the form of a servant at that time was completely transformed into an ineffable and indescribable light, which is quite suitable for the Word of God'.[35] Then, Theodore refutes Eusebius by saying this: 'But Eusebius cleverly said that the Lord's flesh was transformed into an unspeakable and indescribable light, which is quite suitable for the Word of God. And we must necessarily seek to determine what kind of light it would be. […] Is this light any old enhypostasized essence [having its own existence rooted in itself] which exists in itself and which does not need anything else for its existence? Or is it an intangible quality and devoid of essence which has its being rooted in another and not in itself? But if such an essence exists, is it an angelic essence since an angel is light as well as a reflection of the brightness and brilliance of the highest light?'

6.3.3 *Historia Rhomaïke* 19, 3[36]

The man [Palamas] has long suffered from the disease of Iconoclasm, and witnesses have often testified to this, but their

[34] *Ibid*., 311–312.

[35] Note that St. Nicephoros's text is not exactly what is in the *Letter* as we have presented it. We have no way of knowing where his text came from, and so we have to be content with his representation of *Letter's* ideas.

[36] *Historia Rhomaïke*, 105.

voices were silenced because the Emperor did not allow them to be heard. Nonetheless, Palamas continues to disperse this disease, as by puzzles, in his writings, so to say. In effect, the Iconoclasts claimed that the Lord's flesh became an eternal light and an uncreated Divinity at the time of the Transfiguration. This is clear to God-filled theologians who fought this heresy at the time. I will show this briefly, and to be concise, I will present only one example, namely Theodore Graptos, who wrote against Eusebius, the first scholar of the time (and Iconoclast), and said the following.

6.3.4 *Historia Rhomaïke* 19, 4[37]

[Gregoras] First, he [Theodore Graptos, but in reality Nicephoros of Constantinople] introduces Eusebius who said that Christ's body took on a different form and became immortal and incorruptible and that the form of a servant was completely transformed into an ineffable and indescribable light, which was quite appropriate for the Word of God. Then Theodore answers, […] 'but we must investigate the nature of this light. […] So then, this light, what is it? Is it a being with its own substance (hypostasis), which exists in and of itself and has no need of anything else for its existence, or is it an intangible property without essence, which has its being in another being, but not in itself? But if it is a being, is it an angelic being? Even an angel is light and the dazzling reflection of the first light. […] But if it is a divine essence, why was it transformed? If it has its own person seeking to contemplate itself in itself, but being separated from another divine person and having a striking resemblance to the Word of God, but not having a common existence with the Ones we perceive spiritually in the Trinity or having been united to them, then clearly the Trinity has become a Quadrinité. And see how generous Eusebius is with regards to the divine essence. He proliferates and increases extensively the hypostases, although they can be neither increased nor decreased and they are absolutely incapable of being reduced or increased in number. If,

[37] *Ibid.*

however, he introduced into the hypostasis of the Word mixed or compounded elements and, to a certain extent, united to another essence, Eusebius would add to the hypostasis of the Word himself, with even more generosity, the characteristics of change by increasing or extension. However, the Word has the same nature and essence as the Father, and the Father and the Son are only distinguished by the distinctive characteristic of begetting and being begotten. So by wanting to enrich a nature already complete which lacks nothing, Eusebius clearly exposes his own madness to public ridicule, so that he imagined that an extremely simple essence, one even beyond all simplicity, could be subject to being made up of parts, which would necessarily lead to introducing passion or suffering into the blessed divinity without passion or suffering'.

And a little farther [Nicephoros continues]: 'But it remains to investigate what happens when Eusebius gives the name of light to an immaterial quality, without its own essence. Is it then a burst of light and a radiation from some essence in which the body of Christ is transformed? But even if this were the case, the divine body of Christ would be absurdly insulted in the extreme because it would be an outrage to the Word of God and consequently His body would be declared nonexistent. No quality can exist in itself, separated from its ground of existence even if we call it essence, even if someone calls this quality an essence. To give an example, rationality does not exist without a base to be grounded in, that is to say without living beings. There must first be living beings with senses. The same goes for mortality and immortality and other such things. Otherwise, how could a quality have existence?' And elsewhere [Nicephoros says]: 'The mystery preached by the great Apostle is that our corruption must be clothed with incorruption and mortality with immortality. But that the body becomes clothed with bodylessness, or that the created becomes uncreated, or that the circumscribable [what is limited in time and space] becomes uncircumscribable [unlimited in time and space], that has never before been heard of'.

6.3.5 *Historia Rhomaïke* 19, 6[38]

[Gregoras] But the agreement between Eusebius of Caesarea and Palamas must be shown, using both what they always say and the refutation of this great father (Nicephoros of Constantinople). For the Iconoclast Eusebius says that in the Transfiguration, the Lord's body was completely transformed into another eternal and uncreated light, but Palamas condemns those who proclaim one uncreated Divinity and imagines a ground of existence for the Taboric light. He says that this light is different from God's essence, that it is an uncreated and incorruptible Divinity existing between God and the angels. Falsifying the words of the saints, Palamas literally says, 'Anyone who affirms that the brightness of the divine nature—in which the angels who serve God participate and by which the righteous will shine like the sun—is neither a divine nor an angelic essence, this person does not say that the light exists between God and the angels, that it is neither God nor angel. For even the divine Dionysios says that the archetypes (Gr. *logoi*) of things existing in God, in which the angels and men participate, are neither a divine nor an angelic essence'. You see how he shows in his eagerness that this light is an uncreated and incorruptible Divinity, and he even defames the great Dionysios, misinterpreting his words, as I showed in more detail and more clearly in my books that refute and denounce Palamas who speaks still more clearly in his work on the light, where he says, 'This light is not God's essence, which cannot be touched, nor an angelic essence, because it carries the traits of the Lord'.

These texts confirm what we said earlier: the charges of theoretical Iconoclasm result from the fact that the Palamites and anti-Palamites put the same words and expressions into two different theoreical frameworks about the divine essence. The Palamites believed in a real distinction in God between his essence and his energies while the anti-Palamites believed that there was really nothing divine outside of his essence. For the first, these expressions, 'be deified', 'be transfigured', 'uncreated grace', 'participate in the divine life', etc., had a strong and

[38] *Ibid*., 107-108.

real sense without saying, however, that the faithful would share God's essence. For the latter, such expressions exceed the symbolic level and imply the unimaginable, that is to say that Christians can multiply the number of divine persons in the Trinity thus becoming a 'billionity'. And since human nature cannot be truly divine without ceasing to be human, images of such 'human"' persons become divine are impossible. They would be idols.

7. St Gregory Palamas on Icons

We believe it is important to let St Gregory himself speak about icons. This way we can compare what he says with the antiPalamite accusations.

7.1 *The Discussion with the Ungodly Chionai, Written Down by Doctor Taronites, Who Was Present and Heard It with His Own Ears*[39]

The conversation between St Gregory and some Turks, during his captivity at their hands, has fortunately been preserved, and we can read what he said in answer to the Turkish Muslims's questions about images.

> 15. They [the Turks] interrupted him [St. Gregory] again saying, 'Why do you place many representations in your churches and venerate them, even though God wrote and said to Moses: "Thou shalt not make a likeness of anything, whatever things are in heaven above, and whatever are in the earth beneath and whatever are in the sea"?'
>
> And the bishop said again, 'Friends are venerated by each other, but they are not made gods. It is evident to everyone that this is, indeed, what Moses learned from God, and this is what he taught the people then. However this same Moses again and at

[39] Daniel Sahas, 'Captivity and Dialogue: Gregory Palamas (1296–1360) and the Muslims', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25 (1980), 409–436, 423–424.

that time left almost nothing of which he did not make a representation. He made the area beyond the curtain to be like and represent the celestial [reality]. Also since the cherubim are in heaven, he made representations of them and placed them into the innermost sanctuary of the temple. As to the exterior of the temple, he made it to represent the earthly reality. If anyone, then, had questioned Moses "Why have you made such things, since God forbids the icons and the likeness of things in heaven and of things on earth?", he would certainly have answered, "Icons and representations are forbidden so that one may not worship them as gods. However, if one is elevated through them toward God, this is good!" The Greeks, too, praised created things, but they did so as if they were gods. We praise them too, but we elevate ourselves through them to the glory of God.'

Then the Turks said again, 'Did Moses indeed make these things then?'

Many answered, 'Yes, he did all these things'.

As we can see, St Gregory's response opens no door to the accusation of iconophobia. It is entirely predictable coming from an Orthodox iconodule.

7.2 *Decalogue of Laws Given by Christ, or, in Truth, the Laws of the New Testament*[40]

We have a homily of St Gregory, preserved in the Philokalia, which echoes his dialog with the Turks.

2. 'You shall not make an image of anything in the heavens above, or in the earth below, or in the sea' (Ex 20:4), in such a way that you worship these things and glorify them as gods. For all are the creation of the one God, created by Him in the Holy Spirit through His Son and Logos, who as Logos of God in these latter times took flesh from a virgin's womb, appeared on earth and

[40] Gregory Palamas, 'A New Testament Decalogue', Philokalia 4, Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware tr., London, Faber & Faber, 1999, 324–325.

> associated with men (Ba 3:37), and who for the salvation of men suffered, died and rose again, ascended with His body into the heavens and 'sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High' (Hb 1:3), and who will come again with His body to judge the living and the dead. Out of love for Him, you should make, therefore, an icon of Him who became man for our sakes, and through His icon you should bring Him to mind and worship Him, elevating your intellect through it to the venerable body of the Savior, that is set on the right hand of the Father in heaven.
>
> In like manner you should also make icons of the saints and venerate them, not as gods—for this is forbidden—but because of the attachment, inner affection and sense of surpassing honor that you feel for the saints when by means of their icons the intellect is raised up to them. It was in this spirit that Moses made icons of the Cherubim within the Holy of Holies (Ex 25:18). The Holy of Holies itself was an image of supracelestial things (cf. Ex 25:40; Hb 8:5), while the Holy Place was an image of the entire world. Moses called these things holy, not glorifying what is created, but through it glorifying God the Creator of the world. You must not, then, deify the icons of Christ and the saints, but through them you should venerate Him who originally created us in His own image, and who subsequently consented in His ineffable compassion to assume the human image and to be circumscribed by it.
>
> You should venerate not only the icon of Christ, but also the similitude of His cross. For the cross is Christ's great sign and trophy of victory over the devil and all his hostile hosts...

After reading the words of St Gregory themselves on the icons, it is difficult to take seriously the anti-Palamite charges of Iconoclasm.

8. Testimony of Antonio Rigo [41]

We find the presentation of Rigo crucial for the issue that we are dealing here, but not to burden the text, we have put the whole trans-

[41] Antonia Rigo, *Esicasti monaci e monaci bogomili*, Leo S. Olschki Editore, (Florence, 1989), 248–254.

lation of 'Iconoclasm' in Annex IV. We will here limit ourselves to a summary of his salient points.

- The reason for the Iconoclast misdeed attributed to St Gregory was not iconophobia, but greed; he was accused of wanting to enrich himself. As a result, the charge of active Iconoclasm based on iconophobia is weakened.
- No document or tradition links St Gregory to the Monastery of Peribleptos, where the Iconoclastic misdeed was supposed to have taken place.
- In the controversies of the past—those concerning John Italos as well as Patriarchs Athanasius I and Niphonos—the charge of Iconoclasm was part of the usual criticisms launched against opponents to harm their reputation, without regard to the truth of the attacks.
- Some of the characteristics of hesychastic spirituality lend credence to the anti-Palamite opponents, thus giving a semblance of truth to their charge, without proving that the Palamites were really iconophobes and Iconoclasts.

9. Conclusion

On the basis of what we have seen above, what can we say about 1) St Gregory Palamas's attitude of toward Christian images and 2) the anti-Palamite accusation of Iconoclasm against the Palamites?

1) Being firmly anchored in the centuries-old tradition of hesychastic spirituality, St Gregory shared the attitude that Rigo has called "'ental Iconoclasm', i.e., the elimination of all mental images, including religious ones, as a prerequisite to achieving the objective of hesychasm: pure prayer. The expression 'mental Iconoclasm' is perhaps too strong. It implies an attitude, and perhaps activity, against images. It would be better to say quite simply that the hesychasts operated on two levels, finding no contradiction between them:

- in the Church, during the liturgy, in the liturgical offices, in secular piety, and in dogma, images have an undeniable importance,
- but in the higher spheres of the ascent toward God, icons and all other forms of mental imagery must give way to purer and

> purer prayer, to the elimination of all mental imagery from prayer.

And we must recognize that images, icons, will have no place in the kingdom of God. They are a phenomenon of this earthly life. We will have no need for types when we see the prototypes face to face. Such a statement has nothing to do with real Iconoclasm. The texts show that St Gregory sincerely preached Orthodox iconodulia when the occasion required: in his discussion with the Turks and in a sermon. Nonetheless, during the time the hesychasts prayed noetically in their cells during the week, it is probable that they did not have any, but on the weekends in church, they would naturally venerate icons as is the monastic tradition.

2) As for the charge of active and theoretical Iconoclasm, everything hinges on the two conflicting visions about God's essence and energies as well as about the possibility of Christians being deified. The two conceptions used similar words and expressions: the anti-Palamites interpreting them in a symbolic way, and the Palamites in a realistic manner. The latter claimed that in God there exists 'something' outside his essence, but this 'something' is fully divine and uncreated. It is called God's energy/energies—or grace—which can transform, transfigure, sanctify, and divinize human beings who, nonetheless, do not become fourth, fifth, etc. Persons of the Trinity. The former denied that there is 'something' really divine and uncreated outside of God's essence; they said that the so-called 'divine and uncreated' energies can, if real, be nothing other than another God, therefore Ditheism, and the so-called 'divinization' in human beings, again if real, is nothing more than making more Gods, polytheism: a monstrous heresy.

The fact that Barlaam had already linked St Gregory's name to Bogomilism, without accusing him of Iconoclasm, facilitated the intellectual jump of Nicephoros Gregoras toward an open indictment of Iconoclasm. Gregoras, mainly but not exclusively, used the newly discovered text of Patriarch Nicephoros (758–828) *Against Eusebius*, that the Patriarch had written to refute the Iconoclasts of his time, to attack his Palamite adversaries. In *Against Eusebius*, Nicephoros quotes the *Letter to Constantia*, attributed to Eusebius, in which the latter declines to send an image of Jesus to the half sister of the Emperor Constantine because the 'form of a servant'—Christ's human form, his humanity—

had been transfigured, at the time of the Transfiguration on Mt Tabor, into 'an ineffable and indescribable light, which is quite appropriate for the Word of God', and from that moment on, no material image of him was possible. The Iconoclasts of the eighth and ninth centuries claimed Eusebius as a precursor of their position, and used this letter as a weapon against the Orthodox. In reading the text of Patriarch Nicephoros, Gregoras immediately thought that he had in his hands the weapon of mass destruction that he needed to destroy Palamite doctrine.

Since Eusebius wrote that Christ's humanity had been transfigured into 'an ineffable and indescribable light…' and also that it is impossible to make his image, St Gregory Palamas, according to Gregoras, was also an Iconoclast because he said too that Christ's humanity was transfigured, even deified, in the light of Tabor. Gregoras drew the obvious conclusion, at least for him, that St Gregory and the Palamites rejected the possibility of making an image of Christ. To this erroneous association was attached the reputation of the Bogomil monks on Mt Athos, who were real Iconoclasts. As for the charge of active Iconoclasm, it is not impossible that St Gregory or his disciples could have in fact taken the gold and silver off icon covers, as Rigo has noted, for monetary reasons, and they may have indeed burned some old and damaged icons, for example, but such acts were not motivated by a real iconophobia. All these elements, however, seemed to give legitimacy to the accusation of theoretical Iconoclasm against St Gregory personally and against the Palamites in general. And it is quite possible that their opponents—honestly misinterpreting supposedly Iconoclastic acts or dishonestly calling them such—may have used these incidents to support the charge of active Iconoclasm and iconophobia.

So, in fact, the Palamites were guilty neither of active Iconoclasm nor of theological iconophobia, but the circumstances were such that the anti-Palamites used rumors and conclusions based on a conception of God's essence that was not that of St Gregory. In the end, the charges of Iconoclasm were nothing more than the application of the old principle 'all's fair in love and war': any weapon can be used in war, actual or intellectual, to defeat the enemy. This conclusion is based on the following findings:

- Barlaam of Calabria, in his work *Against the Messalians*, who accuses St Gregory of Messalianism, Bogomilism, does not use the word Iconoclasm against his opponent. Had Barlaam smelled the slightest odor of Iconoclasm coming from St Gregory and his followers, he would certainly not have deprived himself of the joy of adding such a weapon to his polemic arsenal.
- St Gregory himself did not take the accusation seriously enough to respond in his defense of the hesychasm.
- The charges of active and theoretical Iconoclasm were heard in public or at least in writing rather late in the controversy. 1347 is the date that saw the appearance of the *AntiPalamite Tome* of the dissident bishops gathered in a pseudo-synod (5.1) and Gregoras's *Antirrhetika I* (5.2). Barlaam had written *Against the Messalians* in 1339–1340.
- Today's anti-Palamites[42] have not seen fit to resuscitate the charge of Iconoclasm against St Gregory.

From the beginning of our study, we have not sought to show that the accusations of Iconoclasm against the Palamites were without foundation and void. Our goal has been rather to probe the reasons and the thinking of their opponents who thought themselves justified—in their opinion—in making such accusations. We believe we have achieved our goal.

[42] Martin Jugie, "Palamite (la controverse)," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, lettre P, col. 1777-1818; http://jesusmarie.free.fr/dictionnaire_de_theologie_catholique_lettre_P.html, and "Palamas Grégoire," Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, lettre P, col. 1735-1776; http://jesusmarie.free.fr/dictionnaire_de_theologie_catholique_lettre_P.html Juan Nadal Cañellas, "Le rôle de Grégoire Akindynos dans la controverse hésychaste du XIVe siècle à Byzance," Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, ed., *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy*, Piscataway, (N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2007), 31-58. La résistance d'Akindynos à Grégoire Palamas. Enquête historique, avec traduction et commentaire de quatre traités édités récemment. I-II (Louvain 2003) [= Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et documents 50 - 51]. Un grand hésychaste du XIVe siècle byzantin, Grégoire Akindynos, (Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicia, 1998). Rowan D. Williams, "The Philosophical Structures of Palamism," Eastern Churches Review IX, 1-2, 1977, 27-44. Peter Totleben, *The Palamite Controversy: A Thomistic Analysis*, (Washington, D.C.: Dominican House of Studies, 2015). Lowell Clucas, *The Triumph of Mysticism in Byzantium in the Fourteenth Century, Byzantine Studies in honor of Milton V. Anastos*, Byzantina Kai Metabyzantina, ed: Speros Vryonis Jr, 4 vol., (Malibu 1985).

Annexes

I. Chronology of St. Gregory Palamas's Life

- 1296 Birth
- 1316 Beginning of his monastic life
- 1316–1317 Meeting with the Bogomils
- 1325 Departure from Mount Athos for Thessaloniki
- 1326 Installation at Beroea
- 1331 Return to Mount Athos at the St. Sabbas Hermitage
- 1338 Installation in Thessaloniki
- 1339–1340 Barlaam's Against the Messalians
- 1341 Arrival in Constantinople
- 1341 June 10, First council of Constantinople and the Tome
- 1341 August, Second council of Constantinople
- 1341 October, Coup d'état
- 1341–1347 Civil war
- 1341 Installation at the Monastery of St. Michael Sosthenion, comings and goings to Constantinople
- 1343 April-May, Prisoner in the palace
- 1344 November 4, Excommunication
- 1344 The Hagioritic Tome which exiled the Bogomils from Mount Athos
- 1345 Spring-Summer, Akindynos's Letter to the Metropolitan of Monemvasia
- 1346 Nicephoros Gregoras's Antirrhetika I
- 1347 February, End of the civil war
- 1347 February, Confirmation of Palamite doctrine
- 1347–1350 On Mount Athos due to the zealots' revolt in Thessaloniki
- 1347 Consecration as Metropolitan of Thessaloniki
- 1347 July, the Antipalamite Tome of the dissident council Constantinople
- 1350 January, Installation as Metropolitan of Thessaloniki
- 1351 May 28, Synodal Tome and the final confirmation of St. Gregory's Orthodoxy
- 1354 March, Capture by the Turks

- 1355 Spring, Ransom paid for his freedom
- 1359 November 14, Death
- 1368 Canonization

II. The Synodikon of Orthodoxy on the Bogomils

II.1 The first series of anathemas from the 9th century concerns a monk Nilos and his disciples, otherwise unknown.[43]

> To the monk Nilos. To all the proposals of the ungodly monk Nilos and to those who share them, anathema. [Anathemas relating to Bogomils and related sectarians] [I. Text used by an unidentified metropolis.]
>
> To those who do not confess the one nature of the Trinity, holy, inseparable, indivisible, coeternal, sharing the same honor and the same throne, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
> but who confess an angel, from outside the Trinity called Amen, calling this angel the Son
> and who confess a different and still inferior nature for the Holy Spirit [yet] equal in power to the Father and to the Son,
> anathema.
>
> To those who do not confess that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth and of all creatures, the modeler of Adam and the author of Eve
> but who say that the "adversary" is the prince and the creator of the universe and the modeler of mankind,
> anathema.
>
> To those who do not confess that the Word and Son of God, begotten of the Father without alteration before all ages, in the last time, due to his immense compassion, took flesh of the all-holy Theotokos Mary, was made man for our salvation assuming everything that is ours, except sin

[43] *Le Synodikon et l'orthodoxie : édition et commentaire : Travaux et Mémoires* 2, Jean Gouillard, trad. et éd., Éditions de Boccard, Paris, 1967 ; premier texte, 62 et commentaires 229-232; English translation by the author; another translation: https://pravoslavie.ru/101610.html.

and who do not embrace the holy and immortal mysteries with fear, as being the very Body of the Lord and his holy and precious Blood poured out for the life of the world but as being ordinary bread and a common drink,
anathema.

To those who do not venerate the Cross of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ which has become the salvation and the glory of the universe, has ruined and destroyed the ruses and weapons of the enemy, has released the creation from idols, and has made its victory shine on the world but (who consider the Cross) to be an instrument of tyranny,
anathema.

To those who do not venerate the auguste and holy image of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ as the likeness of the Word of God incarnate for us
and who do not glorify him as he is represented in his image
and who do the same for his all-pure Mother and all his Saints
but who call these images idols,
anathema.

II.2 The second series of anathemas is also called the Synodikon of Hellade and was probably composed in the reign of Alexis Comnenos (1081 to 1118) during the trial of Basil the Bogomil, burned in 1111.[44]

[II. Used by a suffragan Church of Athens]
Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, by his holy disciples and apostles, has transmitted to us in its purity the mystery of the faith, he also told us that "in after times, some will desert the faith and give their minds to subversive doctrines inspired by devils, through the specious falsehoods of men whose own conscience is branded with the devil's sign. They forbid marriage and inculcate abstinence from certain foods, though God created them to be enjoyed with thanksgiving by believers who have inward knowledge of the truth. For everything that God created is good,

[44] *Ibid*., text, 62–68 and comments, 232–237; the English translation is by the author.

> and nothing is to be rejected when it is taken with thanksgiving, since it is hallowed by God's own word and by prayer." [1 Tm 4:1-5] And again: "Keep clear of men like these. They are the sort that insinuate themselves into private houses and there get miserable women into their clutches, women burdened with a sinful past, and led on by all kinds of desires, who are always wanting to be taught, but are incapable of reaching a knowledge of the truth." [2 Tm 3:6-8] Since this has been predicted by our Savior God and preached by the Apostle, let us be on our guard, Beloved. In accordance with these prophecies, now that we have arrived at the end times, the heresy, a mixture of many false doctrines and with multiple names, Messalianism or Bogomilism, has presently invaded all the cities, the countryside and the provinces, and its missionaries do not cease to seduce the simple. They call themselves "Christians," these enemies of Christ, hiding under this name, and mix in with the Orthodox. They are not discovered because they hide wolves in sheep's clothing. They find the foundations of their hollow doctrine in our venerable Scriptures, and, in this disguise, they earn their trust of their listeners who begin to pay attention to them. Then they spread their venom having become friendly. Then they vomit up their accursed, satanic doctrines. Such people and their doctrines we anathematize as false, impure and foreign to the Catholic Church.

To Peter, leader of the Messalian heretics, also called Lykopetrians, Phoundadites, or Bogomils,

> who took the name of Christ and promised to rise from the death and who was nicknamed Lykopetros because he was indeed buried under stones for his innumerable acts of witchcraft and heinous conduct
> and who promised his wicked followers that he would rise from the dead after three days,
> but from whose nefarious remains, three days later, while his people stood around this pile of stones, a demon went out in the form of a wolf,
> anathema.

To Tychikos, Peter's fellow heretic and disciple, who altered and deformed the divine Scriptures particularly the whole Gospel of Matthew
and who applied to his spiritual father all the verses relating to God the Father and the Holy Spirit thus redirecting the glory of God toward the leader of his nefarious heresy,
anathema.

To Dadoës Sabas, Adelphios, Hermas and Pemeon, and to others who by vomiting up the venom of such a heresy lead the unsophisticated astray, both men and women
and who have pushed the simple folk into the abyss of perdition,
anathema.

To those who say that in addition to the holy and vivifying Trinity namely God the Father, the Word, incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the truly Holy Spirit, there is another Trinity or even a supreme power, enthroned in the highest of the seven heavens, in accordance with their infamous and apocryphal Vision of Isaiah,
anathema.

To those who introduce scriptures other than those which have been dictated by the Holy Spirit and have been transmitted to us by the Holy Fathers,
anathema.

To those who say that "marriage in the Lord" and eating meat according to God are an abomination to Lord
and who, for this reason, abolish the one and the other,
anathema.

To those who abolish and decry as vain chatter all the prayers and hymns that have been transmitted to us first by the divine apostles ("let the Holy Spirit fill you:" it is written, "speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and songs" [Eph 5:18-19]) and then,

after them, by the divine and blessed Fathers and Doctors of the Church
and who therefore teach as the basis of their apostasy to pray only the Our Father with prostrations, without making the sign of the Cross of the Lord on their face, under the pretext that our Lord Jesus Christ himself gave us this prayer but in reality invoking their infamous father, Satan
and who for this reason also reject the sign of the cross
and who cannot stand to hear the final ecphonetic to the glory of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, added by the divine luminaries and guides of the Church, namely, "for to you is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"
and who think and teach such things persevering until the end in this perverse obstinacy,
anathema.

To those who hate the assemblies of the Church
and who sit in their own places of worship
and who teach there under the pretext of tranquility
but who in reality act thus so that their unclean doctrine may go unnoticed and unchallenged thus secretly pouring all the venom of their heresy into the minds of those they have led astray
and to all those who persevere until the end in such an error,
anathema.

To those who describe as "works of men's hands" the churches that the tradition of the Holy Apostles has taught us to raise to the glory of God calling them dens of demons
and who continue on this path
and who, accordingly, attack the setting out of venerable, divine and sacred images as well as the honoring and veneration rendered to them
and to these entirely corrupt and gangrenous people,
anathema.

To those who strive to undermine the instructions given by Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ to His holy Apostles namely "baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," [Mt 28:19] and, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born from water and spirit" [Jn 3:5] closing their eyes to all this
and who under the influence of the satanic power which operates in them dare to foolishly say that Holy Baptism is ordinary water because they are outside our faith and that of the Church as well as permanently estranged from God,
anathema.

To those who in line with this nonsense and insanity call the precious and life giving cross a gallows and baptism ordinary water which does not bring the remission of sins nor the indwelling of the Spirit
but who themselves are quite ready to perform a baptism of the Spirit when they clothe their abominable postulants with the pseudo-monastic habit practicing on them their famous invocation
but who rather complete the shipwreck of these people's souls and bodies,
anathema.

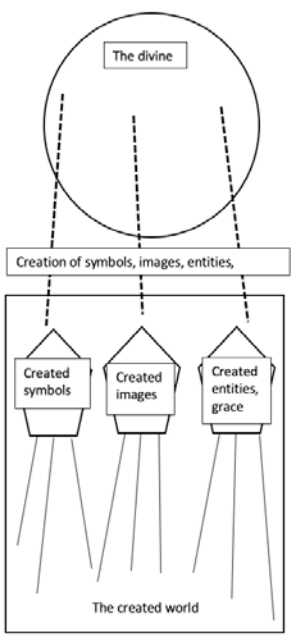
To those who say that the communion in the Body and in the Precious Blood of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is a communion in ordinary bread and wine
and who precisely for this reason advise their converted laity to approach the holy gifts without fasting and to commune by hypocrisy and therefore to go unnoticed
and who invite converted priests to celebrate the divine and terrible liturgy without fasting
and who as declared antichrists despite the name that they give themselves of "christopolites,"
anathema.

To those who to undermine all faith in God celebrate various perverted rites during their unholy initiation ceremony
and who instead of the divine and sacred breath that we have received at the time of the mystical anointing of the Holy Spirit spit on their initiated candidates—they are well worthy of being spat on—
and who thus practice on their initiates what we practice ourselves against demons
and who in addition with a sponge rub polluted water [urine?] on their initiates from head to toe in order to remove Holy Baptism and the illuminating presence of the divine Spirit,
anathema.

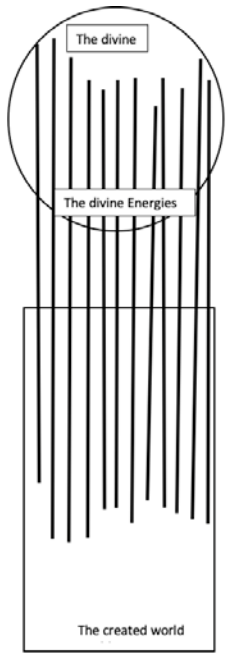
This is the sowing of the perverse impiety and the harvest of the wickedness of perverse Satan. As for us, the chosen people of Christ, let us hold on, from the bottom of the hearts, to the divine and apostolic teachings and the traditions of the Fathers, fleeing, with all our might, from the abominable doctrines of the impious, keeping ourselves far away from their disastrous superstition, giving pure worship to God recognized and loved in the Trinity of Persons, or hypostases, to whom we give glory and power now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

III. Illustrations

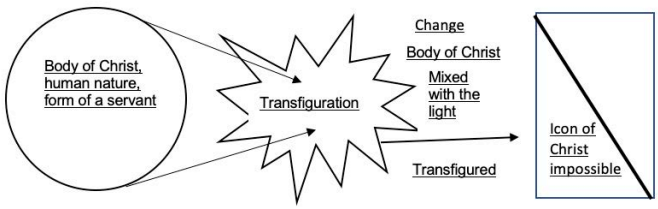
III.1 The anti-Palamites



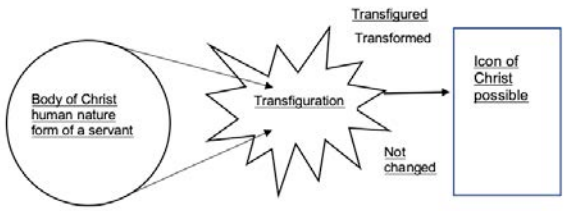
III.2 The Palamites



III.3 Eusebius of Caesarea



III.4.Nicephoros of Constantinople



IV. The Testimony of Antonio Rigo: "Iconoclasm"

The charge of Iconoclasm against the Palamites deserves some observations, because the violent rejection of the sacred images was one of the key points of the Athonite group led by Joseph of Crete. The most explicit and richest source in this regard is without any doubt the *AntiPalamite Tome* of 1347. [See 5.1] Gregoras refers only to the Palamites who burned icons of the saints [see 5.4], using an expression recalling that used for the Athonites heretics. Akindynos speaks of Iconoclasm, but only in reference to George of Larissa [see 5.3].

The *Tome* describes in detail what Palamas supposedly did in the Monastery of Péribleptos: he removed the icon covers and broke the oil lamps to get money. Therefore, this desecration would not have been carried out for religious reasons, but for profit [see section 5.1]. It is precisely this fact that leads us to beware of the truth of the story which deserves to be examined more closely.

First of all, let us start by a rather obvious observation, but not without importance. To our knowledge, [1] there is nothing to confirm that Palamas was ever at the Péribleptos Monastery. Several sources, however, suggest that [2] Gregoras's accusation against Palamas [see 5.2 and 5.4] was nothing more than a topos of a certain polemical litera-

ture. We have already seen how the opponents of Athanasios I—whose attachment to sacred images is well known[45] —accused him specifically of desecrating icons and the Cross.[46] Athanasios I himself, at least a few times, accused some of his opponents of Iconoclasm. In our opinion, the charge against Patriarch Niphonos by Athanasius I[47],[48],[49] and Nicephoros Choumnos constitutes the "model" on which were based the antiPalamite accusations of 1347. In fact, in 1314, Niphonos[50] was accused of

[45] [Athanasios invites the Emperor to participate in a procession of repentance]: "Let us promise to repent as much as we can, and, if you agree, let us go out with bare feet, especially the monks, to hold a procession in contrition with the holy icons." Athanasius I of Constantinople, "To emperors and nobles, priests and monks," "Letter 70," *The Correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople* , A.-M. Talbot, ed. and trad, (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1975), lines 13–15, 177.

[46] "And the unfortunate [a criminal hired for the misdeed] introduced among the patriarch's things the icon of the Mother of God taking in her arms our Lord Jesus Christ, and the type of the life-giving cross and two commemorative plaques of the Emperors, oh misery, putting them under the Patriarch's footstool in order that he, not knowing that they were there, trample them under his feet." *Vita of Athanasius* of Theoktistos, A. Papadopolous-Kerameus 37, in Rigo 130, note 108. Athanasius I himself in one of his letters called down divine judgment on his opponents: "And especially (take vengeance on) Jacob* and his cohorts, accursed and despised by God. They, in their hatred of the God of all, Who deemed it right for me to be called a Christian, and not being able to work their vengeance upon Him, did not shrink from attacking His holy theandric and venerable image, 'abomination of desolation' [Dn 9: 27], (that they were), (alas for my misfortunes !) And in addition (they also attacked the image of) our immaculate Lady the Mother of God, and the representation of the divine and life-giving Cross; through them I pronounce anathema from God the Almighty against all heretics and against every accuser of a Christian who does not worthily repent." "Letter 112: Resignation from the Second Patriarchate," *Correspondence*, 287–289. *The Jacob mentioned here is probably the prôtos of Mount Athos who in 1289 lost the election for the Patriarchal seat to Athanasius, but Jacob did not accept his defeat and plotted against the new patriarch. *Ibid*., Comments, line 31, 438–439.

[47] "Not too long ago one of our famous churches, to which belonged the theandric and venerable icon of the Savior and many other holy images, could be seen in a state of neglect and without a roof. And a state official was ordered to climb up in this church for the purpose of smashing this image of God-Man with an adze, so as to destroy it (Oh, how great was Thy forbearance, my good Lord and God), while the people standing below cried out against this impious fellow and cursed him. And his punishment was not long delayed, since someone pushed him to the ground where he pitiably gave up the ghost." "To the Emperor," *Correspondence* 87, 230.

[48] "I [Anastasios] will tell you one example of this man's [the Patriarch of Alexandria's so-called] love of the divine: the God-hated agent whom he sent did not hesitate to destroy the image of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, represented on an icon in order to be venerated in the monastery of the Great Field, nor did he hesitate to set up an image of the Emperor in its place in blind flattery." "Letter 69, To the Emperor," *Correspondence*, 171.

[49] "For no one who desires salvation will endure either to be in communion with, or to be friends with, those who rage against the holy icons." "Letter 95, To the Emperor," *Correspondence*, 248.

[50] "This very evil man [Niphonos] is a miserable thief, stealing things from churches. Night and day, he waited for the right moment to steal an icon that was a decorated with a great quantity of silver and gold, which people said weighed about 30 talents. He tore down the icon with its decoration, separated the metal from the icon and left with the treasure. Now, even though impious barbarians from Ionia attacked that place, the icon escaped from the hands, but those who should have preserved it were totally incapable of saving it from the polluted hands of the

having stolen the golden covering from an icon of the Theotokos and profited from the money and to have adopted a negative attitude toward sacred images.

The cliché nature of the antiPalamite charge against Palamas by no means explains either reason or even the real attitude of the hesychasts toward sacred images or if this attitude could open them to the accusation of Iconoclasm. And it is precisely at this time that image veneration was more and more permeating the Byzantine, religious world: the same Athonite monasteries became, as has been observed, real icon museums, and images were present at nearly every moment of monastic life. Anyone, wishing to use the ascetical and spiritual literature of Athonite hesychasm to clarify the real attitude of the latter toward the images, will study in vain the spiritual works of the 13th and fourteenth centuries. References to icons and the veneration which was addressed to them are virtually non-existent. The only reference to such devotion, as far as we know, is contained in the *Life of Maxime Kausokalyba* written by Theophanes. During his conversation with Gregory of Sinai on the *noera proseuché*, Maxime says he has always had a special devotion to the Theotokos and traces his first experience of prayer to the day where he was in church before the icon of the Virgin Mary. He began to feel heat in his chest and heart and to repeat internally the prayer.[51]

Patriarch. So what happened? At the darkest moment of the night, the evil man stripped the icon of its treasure and sent the image to the church of the Trinity where there were some monks. But when they lit a light, they let out a great cry when they saw the damage done to the icon, yelling that there had been a robbery and denouncing the sacrilege. So when the evil man sensed that his crime had been discovered, at the same dark moment of the night, he had the icon sent away across the sea so that any investigation would not touch him because it was clear to all observers what the conclusion of such an inquiry would be. He did not fear Christ God having neither reason nor sane thoughts. Neither did he respect Christ's mother who saved the whole world. May the wrath and punishment of God bring him down." Nicephorus Choumnos, "Elegxos kata tou kakôs ta panta patriarcheusantos Niphonos," *Anecdote graeca* 5, J. F Boissonade, ed., (Paris, 1833), 270-271; reprint by Pranava Books, India, without any other publication information.

[51] "Then, the saint told him everything about his youth: the inspired zeal, the flight, the submission, the impure and disturbing desires, the fighting, the arenas of struggle, the terrifying vision of the Theotokos, the light which enveloped him and which envelops him, the temptations and ruses of demons. The elder interrupted him: 'Tell me, O worthy man, how do you consider the spiritual and mental prayer [*noera proseuché*], o very honorable man?' Smiling, he said, 'I will not conceal the miracle that happened to me in my youth. Honorable Father, I had a lot of faith and love for our Lady and All-Holy Theotokos. I asked her with zeal and tears to obtain the grace of spiritual and mental prayer. And yes certainly, entering alone, as was my habit, into the Church of the Most Holy One, in tears I pleaded with the Theotokos once again about this subject, and I kissed her icon with great love. Then a very great heat came upon me in my chest and heart, but it did not burn me. It rather covered me with a soft and pleasant dew, bringing forth in me [Kourilas] a great compunction. And therefore, Father, my heart began to say the spiritual and mental prayer in my inner being. And my reason and my thought, both, remembered Jesus

This near-total silence on icon veneration is also accompanied by a well established doctrine in line with Evagrios on the image in the spiritual life. As well, the spiritual commentators of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries all recommended that the mind be absolutely free of forms and images. A few examples: Gregory of Sinai repeats several times: "the intellect's vision when praying is completely free from form [. . .]; for it now grows immaterial and filled with spiritual radiance,"[52]; "an intellect free from fantasy and distraction,"[53] ; " . . . keep your intellect free from colors, forms and images."[54] ; ". . . It is this prayer alone that you should aspire to realize and possess in your heart, always keeping your intellect free from images, concepts and thoughts. . ."[55] An anonymous glossator of Nicephoros has fully recognized that the nous in the heart becomes "one and naked."[56]

After paraphrasing Gregory of Sinai, Ss Kallistos and Ignatios repeated the "litany" of adjectives of the mind during the prayer.[57] It

Christ and my Theotokos. May they never be far away from me.'" Euloge Kourilas, François Halkin, *Deux Vies de S. Maxime le Kausokalybe ermite au Mont Athos (XIV^e S.), Analecta Bollandina* 54, (Société des Bollandistes, 1936), 84-85.

[52] Gregory of Sinai "116. According to theologians, noetic, pure, angelic prayer is in its power wisdom inspired by the Holy Spirit. A sign that you have attained such prayer is that the intellect's vision when praying is completely free from form and that the intellect sees neither itself nor anything else in a material way. On the contrary, it is often drawn away even from its own senses by the light acting within it; for it now grows immaterial and filled with spiritual radiance, becoming through ineffable union a single spirit with God." , "Passions and Virtues, and Also on Stillness and Prayer: One Hundred and Thirty- Seven Texts 116," *Philokalia* 4, 239. https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Philokalia.pdf

[53] *Ibid*., 118, 240: "118. Because we are now mastered by the passions and succumb to a host of temptations we cannot in our age attain those states that characterize sanctity - I mean real spiritual contemplation of the divine light, an intellect free from fantasy and distraction, the true energy of prayer ceaselessly flowing from the depths of the heart, the soul's resurrection and ascension, divine rapture, the soaring beyond the limits of this world, the mind's ecstasy in spirit above all things sensory, the ravishment of the intellect above even its own powers, the angelic flight of the soul impelled by God towards what is infinite and utterly sublime. The intellect - especially in the more superficial among us - tends to picture these states prematurely to itself, and in this way it loses even the slight stability God has given it and becomes altogether moribund. Hence we must exercise great discrimination and not try to pre-empt things that come in their own good time, or reject what we already possess and dream of something else. For by nature the intellect readily invents fantasies and illusions about the high spiritual states it has not yet attained, and thus there is no small danger that we may lose what has already been given to us and destroy our mind through repeated self-deception, becoming a daydreamer and not a hesychast."

[54] *Ibid*., "On Delusion and Other Subjects," 283: "… keep your intellect free from colors, forms and images."

[55] *Ibid*., 285.

[56] Vatop. 274, f. 214, Vind. theol. g. 104, f. 14v. A whole section of the *Methodios* is devoted to these problems (Hausherr, method, 15 ff.)

[57] "Always keep your intellect free from color, figure, form, shape, quality and quantity...," Ss. Kallistos and Ignatios, "On the Life of Stillness and the Monastic State: One Hundred Texts" 73,

is important to emphasize in this regard that, in their 100 texts, they never talk of devotion to icons, while they talk a great deal about the sacraments and other liturgical practices. In contrast, in hesychastic, spiritual literature, pictorial art and images were used to indicate a diabolical suggestion, precisely in the context of prayer. A prime example is an important work for Athonite hesychasm, more for its great popularity than for its originality, the *Letter to the Monks*[58] of a pseudo-Chrysostom. In fact, the author of the Letter writes the following:

> Each thought separates the mind from God, and even if it seems to be good, it is quite diabolical, to say nothing of the devil. In fact, all the devil's efforts are the following: separate the mind from God and the turn to worldly concerns and pleasures. He suggests to the heart instructions and good things as well as other reasonable, or even unreasonable, thoughts to which absolutely no attention should be paid. The soul's whole struggle is the following: in order not to separate the mind from God, it is necessary to never consent to impure thoughts nor unite with them, to never pay attention to what is painted in the heart by this ancient and hateful painter, the Devil: sometimes shapes, sometimes faces and forms.[59]

Peter of Damascus, 12th century, reminded himself that the Fathers had recommended not to pay attention to the images, the lights or fires. It is the devil who has painted the shapes and colors in the mind.[60]

Philokalia Vol. V, 75: https://www.academia.edu/40333710/Philokalia_vol._5_Kallistos_and_Ignatios_Method_of_Prayer_English_

[58] It has also been reproduced in the Centuries of Zantopouloi and in the Synodikos Tomos of 1341, as well as in very many "practical" manuscripts at the end of the 13th century to the beginning of the 14th century. For example, it is repeated several times in the vast florilegia collections of Mark monk of Chi. 27 (1261/1268), ff. 30, 314, 338 V, 340 V, 341, 344V. Concerning the Letter to the Monks and the hesychasm, see A. Rigo, L'epistola ai monaci (e l'epistola ad un igumeno) by Pseudo-Chrysostom, Studi e Ricerche sull'Oriente Christiano 6 (1983) 197–215.

[59] G. Nikolopoulos, *Ai eis ton Iôannén ton Chrusostomon esphalmenôs apodidomenai epistolai*, 481.

[60] "It is on account of this that the fathers, in their discrimination, wrote that one should not pay any attention to such diabolic manifestations, whether they come through images, or light, or fire, or some other deceptive form." Peter of Damascus, Book 1, "A Treasury of Divine Knowledge," *Philokalia* 3, 81. https://archive.org/stream/Philokalia-TheCompleteText/Philokalia-Complete-Text_djvu.txt , It is likely that the immediate source of Peter's text is the same pseudo-Chrysostom *Letter* for which he had written an exegesis (see Nikolopoulos, cit., 207 and following).

These lines from hesychastic, ascetical literature, as well as the earlier discovery of silence among hesychastic authors about icon veneration, must not lead to hasty conclusions. Devotion to icons certainly had very limited importance in the hesychastic monk's spiritual life, but to move from this internal Iconoclasm to active Iconoclasm seems to us to be totally exaggerated. In fact, even if icons played an almost insignificant role in the solitary, spiritual life of a monk, they were regarded as liturgical objects for the laity, for non-hesychasts, i.e., as a vehicle for dogma. An extract of the *Decalogue* of Gregory Palamas seems to us to be a witness in this sense. As John Meyendorff notes, the text "is not addressed to monks and likely date of the episcopate of Gregory."[61] See 6.2. And he continues to speak of the devotion to the cross and relics.

If we must recognize, on the one hand, the possibility that the Iconoclasm of the heretical monks of Athos was but the extreme consequences of the contemplative program characteristic of the hesychastic environment in which they lived—but did this "hyperhesychasm" ever really exist?—it should be noted, on the other hand, that the Athonite hesychasts were between two kinds of Iconoclasm: mental, spiritual Iconoclasm and active Iconoclasm. And those who felt at the outset that the devotion to icons "was sliding" toward the most popular forms, despite any theory, opted certainly for the second kind of Iconoclasm.

[61] *Introduction*, 389.

Iconological Paragraphs

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These paragraphs encompass a theoretical meditation on the icon from the painter's perspective. They treat the icon as a creative act, in light of its aesthetic implications, contemporary challenges, possibilities, and ambiguities. They aim not so much to answer questions as to explore them, in the hope of elucidating facets of the icon as a work of art that perhaps might go unexplored within a more systematic and polemical approach in current theological debate.

1. Diligently search the theological treatise, and you will be hard-pressed to find aesthetic solutions to pictorial problems. Ironically, thinking too theologically about icon painting can get in the way and stifle the creative act. Clues are to be found in the icons themselves, solutions in the act of painting itself. The task involves more than just illustrating theological propositions. The icon should be given space to speak in its own terms: aesthetically.[1] Yet it is all too common to bypass the aesthetic facts. Does the painting work or not? What is form doing? Solutions are to be arrived at through unique and unrepeatable creative acts, which bespeak of ever-renewing ecclesial life. Ready-made formulas do not suffice. No method, style, or 'school', ancient or modern, guarantees good results. As Shih-T'ao puts it, '…he who is unable to liberate himself from methods winds up inhibited by them'. The method we are after is the 'non-method' stringing together all icon painting methods. When the painting works—that is, when it acts as

[1] By the term 'aesthetic' I mean, as defined by C. A. Tsakiridou, 'that approach to things that looks at their sensuous existence, at the way in which they make themselves perceptible and present to our senses. The aesthetic object is a product of this kind of vision: a record of a thing's self-presentation registered on a panel, wall or other surface'. C. A. Tsakiridou, 'Aesthetic Nepsis and Enargeia', in *Seeing the Invisible: Proceedings of the Symposium on Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, eds Neda Cvijetić & Maxim Vasiljević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2016), 27–43; at 28.

the locus of an encounter with the living presence of the deified ones—theology has happened.

2. The icon as a likeness is more than just forensic mimesis, a photographic taxidermy—simulacra. Likeness is more than 'an imitation of nature which tries to be nature.'[2] The aim is to capture more than what meets the eye, to make the intangible tangible, to capture a *living* likeness.[3]

3. Form is stylised, description abbreviated, some features exaggerated, in order to get at the kernel, the main idea of the subject, those integral characteristics that clearly identify and define it.[4] Some describe this pictorial approach as an attempt at capturing the 'essence'.

4. What the painter figuratively calls 'essence' is not to be confused with the theologian's *ousia*, for the essence of beings is undepictable. Perhaps we can speak of the 'essence' of the subject as its mysterious heart, encountered as we commune with it in its act of existing, directly known in its activity without it being entirely known. Something is revealed that remains hidden. In other words, the painter aims to plastically express the subject's *logos* (its inner voice)[5] as manifest in its unique character and distinctiveness. Hence the painting can be seen as the pictorial equivalent of the painter's heart, as it reverberates in response to the voices of the living beings he depicts.

[2] Maurice Denis, 'Definition of Neotraditionism', in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 94–100; at 94.

[3] In speaking of living likeness, I have in mind the concept of *enargeia* as elaborated in C. A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity: Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 49–71. Similarly, in traditional Chinese painting, according to *The Six Canons* of Hsieh Ho, the painter's task is not merely to show the outward appearance (*hsing*), but rather to reveal the breath of life (*ch'i*) or capture the 'spirit resonance' of his subject through the correct use of the forms of Nature. See Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1956), 14–20. On the concept of *ch'i* in *The Six Canons* see notes 5 and 6 in Mai-mai Sze, ed. and trans., *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 19. On the parallels between 'spirit resonance' and enargeia see C. A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 300.

[4] As noted by Gloria Thomas: 'In manuscript illumination and medieval painting and sculpture, only those attributes which are necessary to the identity of each thing and its role in the story are depicted. This is the key to the simplifications of form we see in medieval art'. Gloria Thomas, *A Primer of Pictorial Devices in Medieval Painting* (New Hope, KY: St. Martin de Porres Lay Dominican Community, 2012), 3.

[5] Here I prefer to use 'inner voice' rather than 'inner principle' as to imply a living relational reality rather than a conceptual abstraction. As C. A. Tsakiridou puts it, 'Although intelligible, *logoi* should not be understood theoretically or abstractly but as the given act of a thing's existence…Logos is the living reality of a thing, not its explanation or concept'. C. A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time*, 70.

5. That which transcends sense and resides within sensible beings can be apprehended noetically through sensation (*aesthesis*). Hence that which transcends mere likeness, such as character or personality, is manifest through and therefore representable in the subject's likeness. For likeness is nothing other than the radiance of the inner person. The challenge is to capture the full person, the inner and outer man. How does the painter realise this? By entering into prayerful communion with the saint in the act of painting. By pondering on his or her unique pattern of life. By acquainting ourselves with the various interpretations of their likeness within Tradition. This process initiates a noetic encounter, leading to identification with the saint. Thereby an aesthetic synthesis gradually unfolds, and the precise form of the saint begins to takes shape, from the inside out; what is internally apprehended by the painter becomes concretised and seen in the unrepeatable actuality and vividness of the painting. For in it the noetic and sensible finally coincide and are inextricably united.

6. The capturing and conveying of character mostly remain a mystery that unfolds unconsciously in the act of painting. However, it could be said that it is mainly accessible through the rendition of the subject's unique gaze and countenance, along with its physique and posture. In the icon of St Michael (fig. 1), for instance, he looks directly at us somewhat sternly, with alert and fearless eyes, a slight frown and wrinkled forehead, in full awareness of the moment. He is youthful and slender, and assertively lifts his sword with his right hand, with a firm grasp, in perfect command of himself, as if ready to strike suddenly without hesitation. Archangel Gabriel (fig. 2), on the other hand, looks at us with a gentle gaze, with slightly raised eyebrows and a rounder face, as if full of concern and trepidation. He is less threatening in appearance, with a fuller torso, and turns more frontally towards us while gently holding his staff on the right hand and a crystal globe on his left. He seems ready to deliver a divine message but gazes at the recipient of revelation with tenderness, as if fully aware of its consequent powerful impact.

They each bear characteristics that accord to their respective service and differentiate them as unique hypostases rather than interchangeable types. Moreover, 'the graphic, etching-like hatching technique of the light on the faces produces an expressive result and combines light with

form. It makes one think of the idea that only with the approach and activity-movement (*enargeia*) of light is the true character of a thing—a body, a face, a person—revealed, and like the proverbial iron in the fire, we can't fully ascertain whether we are looking at matter or light, looking at an Archangel's face or perceiving the movement of grace in it'.[6] In other words, the handling of form in these icons does not only bring out their distinctive character, but it also actualises their presence as living beings.

Figure 1: ***Archangel Michael***, Hieromonk Silouan, 2019. Sepia and white chalk on toned paper (detail), 62.23 x 148.59 cm.

7. Before beginning to paint a saint I first research the various versions of his likeness found in the Tradition, looking for the salient features that tie them all together. I then select the samples of best quality, the most eloquent and clearly executed, those that resonate with me and that suggest the overall sentiment I would like to emphasize. A drawing is then executed in which the distinctive character of the saint is sought after by way of intuitively synthesizing the best components of the previously selected versions. The direct duplication of any one of the versions should be strictly avoided. Rather, while interpreting, personal temperament should dictate the nuances of proportion, shaping of form, quality of line, etc. In the drawing process a sense of movement or animation of line and form is sought after. The figure should be instilled with a sense of innate energy, even if it stands still.

[6] This statement was made by the iconographer Dn. Nikita Andrejev in private correspondence with the author on Oct 24, 2019.

The three-quarter view of the face is important in helping to achieve this effect. Moreover, a sense of dynamism is arrived at by positioning the figure obliquely to the picture plane. But the full-face frontal or hieratic pose, although obviously meant to establish a relationship with the viewer, rather instills the image with a sense of timeless stillness, if not monotony.

Figure 2: ***Archangel Gabriel***, Hieromonk Silouan, 2019. Sepia and white chalk on toned paper (detail), 62.23 x 148.59 cm.

In general, the work should hold together among its constituent parts with rhythmic unity and the figure should be perceived as coming forward from the picture plane towards the viewer, establishing a relationship. Once this begins to happen in the conceptualisation of the drawing, a feeling of close proximity to the saint begins to unfold—we sense that he has been made present. The drawing then has reached resolution. The sense of presence is made more and more apparent in the painting process, when colour is introduced and volume appears in the process of highlighting, further enhancing the sense of concrete corporeality of the figure depicted. This approach then achieves its culmination when the eyes are painted and we get the sense that the figure is full of consciousness, that the person looks out into our world, or that we are being looked at by the living saint.

8. The process just described must be achieved by the abbreviation of form—aimed at the clear and direct articulation of the saint's characteristics—keeping a balance between abstraction and naturalism. Too much abstraction, on the one hand, will render the model a con-

ceptual 'type', depleted of its existential uniqueness as a person. Too much naturalism, on the other hand, will bring the figure too close to a sense of our mode of corruptible and temporal existence. The balance to be sought aims at avoiding unnecessary and distracting details that hamper the sacred function of the icon while giving the viewer a sense that the saints, although entering into our space and time, nevertheless inhabit a trans-temporal existence.

9. All representation involves 'abstraction', a 'drawing out'. Nature presents a multitude of facts to the painter's eye, from which he must select according to his feeling and conception. 'Subtract the mind, and the eye is open to no purpose'.[7] In selecting there must be an interpretation that translates the three-dimensional observable facts into a synthetic order within the two dimensions of the picture plane.[8] This translation is what we call 'abstracting from' what is perceived in the act of representation. Hence all art is abstract. Representation is abstraction, abstraction is representation.[9]

10. 'Likeness' in the icon is to be achieved on a level surpassing mere empiricist 'accuracy', since the aim is to convey meaning through a mode of representation encompassing both sensible perception and truths known noetically.[10] Hence retinal and intellectual conception should be brought to a synthesis and coexist complementarily within the pictorial articulation. Sensation is conveyed by naturalism as an index of observable facts, intellection by abstraction as evincing interpretive thought.[11] This synthesis, however, is accompanied by feeling,

[7] Meister Eckhart, as quoted by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'The Philosophy of Medieval and Oriental Art', in *Traditional Art and Symbolism*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 43–70; at 43.

[8] As Maurice Denis's famous dictum reminds us: 'It is well to remember that a picture—before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order'.

[9] In other words, representation is inevitably interpretative and therefore relies on pictorial conventions meant to convey specific meanings. This leads E. H. Gombrich to point out that the simplistic demand for artists to just 'paint what they see' is self-contradictory and did not really dawn until the Renaissance. We never really completely surrender to sense impressions in our act of representation, since 'we can never neatly separate what we see from what we know'. E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York, NY: Bollingen Foundation, 1965), 393–396.

[10] Cf. Gloria Thomas, *A Primer of Pictorial Devices in Medieval Painting*, 1–2.

[11] It could be said that the system of pictorial principles of what is generally referred to as the 'traditional' or 'Byzantine style' of icon painting arose from a synthesis between late antiquity abstraction and classical naturalism. G. Kordis, *Icon as Communion*, trans. Caroline Makropoulos (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 51; On the synthesis of naturalism and abstraction, also see C.A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 208.

through which we arrive at a poetic reconfiguration of reality. Thereby pictorial form in the icon acquires the flexibility capable of suggesting not only historical facts but also eschatological realities.

11. Neither the 'Academic' nor 'Byzantine' styles guarantee anything.[12] No style has a monopoly as to the most sacred in import.[13] The weight lies in the content carried, the sentiment conveyed, the coming together of idea and feeling, by whichever stylistic manner. However, poetic or analogical pictorial conception, such as we see in medieval painting,[14] is always preferable, as it is much more flexible in expression than mere empiricist verisimilitude.[15]

12. Nuances of aesthetic form have the capacity to influence the viewer's emotive and intellectual response to the icon. They can challenge, transform, and elevate our understanding of reality and its multiple ontological levels.[16] Thus the conveying of meaning in the icon unfolds not just along a semantic level—in the 'reading' of the narrative—but also through the specific way the image has been embodied pictorially. The challenge for the painter is to find just the right mode of embodiment, wherein semantic and formal means effectively coincide and augment each other in the conveying of meaning.

13. Imagination—the mental image, the sister of memory to be kept in check by the nous—is indeed involved in solving pictorial problems, for *techne* is an imaginative act—the infusing of form (*eidos*) into matter

[12] The question is whether the one or the other are striking the right aesthetic chord and functioning as they should within the liturgical context, whether they aid or hinder prayer and convey an Orthodox *phronema*. It could be said that the Church, considering things in a hierarchy of efficacy, has acknowledged the superiority of the traditional icon, yet in its *oikonomia* it has not dogmatically rejected the naturalistic icon when imbued with an air of sobriety and piety, also bearing in mind that some of them, in spite of their style, even manifest the power of God through miracles.

[13] The question of what constitutes a 'sacred' style and whether or not the 'Byzantine style' could be considered as the only one acceptable in the ecclesial sphere is explored by Markos Kampanis, in 'Is there a sacred style?', paper delivered at *The Sacred and Secular in Life and Art: A Workshop Dedicated to the Memory of Philip Sherrard*, Oxford, July 14–17, 2016. Academia.edu, accessed April 14, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/39724501/MARKOS_KAMPANIS_Is_there_a_sacred_style

[14] Gloria Thomas, *A Primer of Pictorial Devices in Medieval Painting*, 1–4.

[15] Henri Maguire cautions that the Byzantine descriptions of images as 'lifelike' should not be confused with our contemporary ideas of illusionistic verisimilitude. According to Maguire, a portrait of a saint was spoken of as 'lifelike' when it had 'accuracy of definition' or conformity to an established typology and set of attributes. See Henri Maguire, *Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 15–16.

[16] *Orthodox Arts Journal* (website); 'Today and Tomorrow: Principles in the Training of Future Iconographers, Part 1', by Aidan Hart, posted May 19, 2016, https://www.orthodoxarts-journal.org/today-tomorrow-principles-training-future-iconographers-pt-1/

(*hyle*).[17] Stifle the imaginative act—the constant consideration of the multiple possible answers to pictorial problems—and the icon suffers; nourish it, and it flourishes. The work unfolds from imagination to the actuality of the painting and back again to the imagination, unceasingly, until the work is resolved. The icon painter is to work both from an external and internal prototype. The idea must be embodied, seen, and tested in order for it to be clarified, revised, and perfected. In the end there is no dualism. The inner and external, sensible and noetic, come back together in pictorial embodiment.

14. Unlike most icons of St Innocent of Alaska (fig. 3), this one depicts him as a young priest, rather than as an older bishop in hierarchical regalia. We see him in a dynamic frontal pose, with torso and epitrachelion running parallel to the picture plane, while his head slightly turns towards the viewer's left. A miniature landscape scene of his missionary activities in Alaska unfolds behind him. Above his right-hand shoulder we see him preaching to the local Aleut, while on the other side we find him sitting as an evangelist in his study, reminding us of his Gospel translation into the local dialect and his catechetical treatise, 'Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven'. He holds a scroll with his right hand and gently gestures towards it with his left, on which is perched an American bald eagle turning and gazing up towards him. The eagle's tail and scroll slightly extend into the framing border of the icon, suggesting that its world enters into our space and time, an idea that is also suggested by the halo which extends beyond the frame above. The halo's fiery cinnabar colour extends down to the richly ornate *epitrachelion*, giving the composition a strong vertical thrust from top to bottom, as if the radiating grace of his priesthood cascades down from head to toe. This vertical 'strip' forms a flat 'colour field' that complements and helps to accentuate the volumetric forms of the face, eagle, hands, and scroll at the bottom of the icon. Moreover, St Innocent wears a dark cassock, composed of warm *proplasmos* and cool bluish highlights that project out from the picture plane, giving the saint a sense of concrete corporeality. His cassock also stands in stark contrast to the lighter ochre, lemon yellow, green, orange, sienna, and white tonalities of the background. Hence the saint is thrust forward towards the viewer, while

[17] Hieromonk Silouan, 'Imagination, Expression, Icon: Reclaiming the Internal Prototype', *Sacred Web* 39 (2017): 61–94.

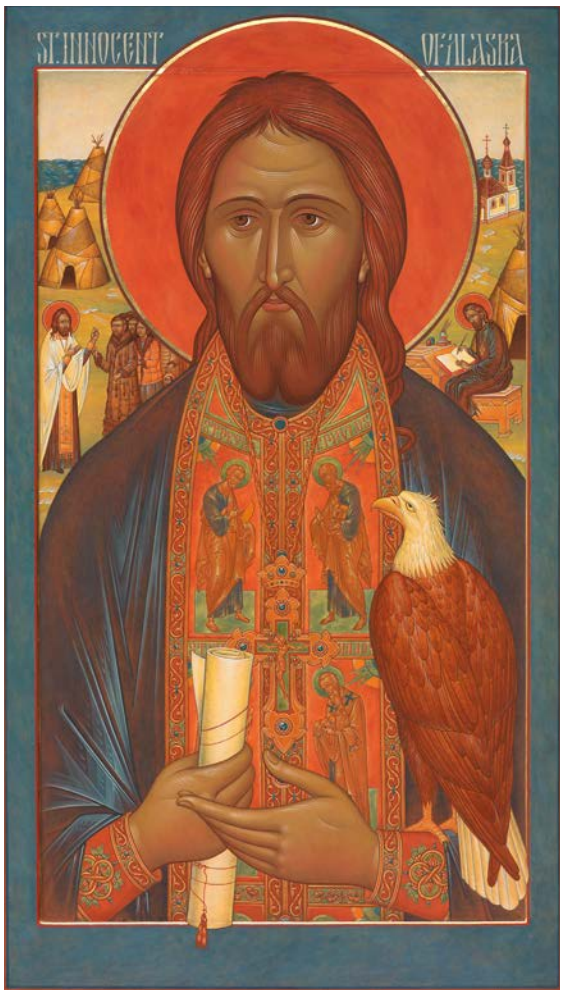

Figure 3: ***St Innocent of Alaska***, Hieromonk Silouan, 2012. Egg tempera and gold on wood panel, 45.72 x 81.28 cm.

the scenes from his life recede to the background, perceived as if drenched in their own environment of light. The border is a dark azurite blue, lighter in value than the cassock, functioning as a window-like frame through which we encounter the saint. It could be said that this framing device, the concrete plasticity of the volumetric forms, and the treatment of space in the image all imbue it with a subtle illusionism that enhances the sense of the saint's palpable presence. St Innocent's face is gentle and bright, composed of cool green earth tones in the *proplasmos* and warm ochres in the highlights, giving his countenance a subtle golden glow. The seamless transitions of tonalities in the face from cool to warm contribute to give it an air of peacefulness. The white, fine highlights, following the form and radiating out and around the most prominent features, are arranged in rhythmic order. The same principle is extended to the other highlights around the icon, instilling the work with inner energy and unity. Furthermore, the cinnabar colour of his halo can also be discerned on the periphery of the saint's face, his eyelids, and his lips, as if reflecting the radiance of the halo, if not emerging from the face itself. He is young and appears wise, full of vigor and alert, as you would expect of the brilliant and vibrant missionary that he was. He stands still, yet turns slightly and gestures, as if captured in a moment

of peaceful conversation. Although he looks to the side, his eyes do not appear vacant and unaware of us. It is as if he is reminiscing with us of his experiences as a missionary, his memories unfolding behind him as we commune with him.

15. The fact that St Innocent is depicted as a young priest rather than an older bishop and that the composition includes a bald eagle—which he nursed back to life as a missionary—makes this icon one of a kind. Another unique component is the fact that the scenes from the saint's life unfold as part of a continuous landscape background, arranged according to vertical perspective, rather than in sequences of vignettes relegated to the border, as seen in most biographical icons. Also worth noting is how the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and missionary saints Cyril and Methodios are depicted in his epitrachelion, reminding us of the saint's great status as Equal-to-the-Apostles. More could be said, but I think that the totality of the composition, with all the various pictorial elements discussed here, makes it clear that in this icon we encounter not just the duplication of a predetermined 'type', but rather the manifestation of the living saint in the distinctiveness of his unique personal characteristics, as interpreted by the painter.

16. The icon of St Onouphrios the Great (fig. 4) is also unique in conception, with no specific prototype serving as a point of departure. Its theme is drawn from the saint's hagiography, which tells us how an Angel of the Lord came every Saturday and Sunday to administer to the anchorite the Holy Eucharist. The scene unfolds in a desert having some signs of life and vegetation, including the spring and date palm tree that supplied the saint with physical nourishment in the wilderness. The background consists of a colour field of malachite green, slightly lighter at the horizon, which sets the mood of the composition, suggesting a cool, calm, and still morning twilight, almost dreamlike in quality. The Eucharistic themes of distribution and reception, and the idea of 'procession and return',[18] are conveyed by the composition's substructure, which combines diagonal and circular movements. The movement begins diagonally with the blessing hand—signifying divine power—emerging

[18] Here we have in mind 'procession and return' as reconfigured by St Maximos the Confessor. See Maximos Constas, 'Maximos the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism', Analogia: *The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies* 2, no 1 (2017): 1–12.

Figure 4: ***St. Onouphrios the Great***, Hieromonk Silouan, 2015. Egg tempera and gold on wood panel, 45.72 x 81.28 cm.

from the radiating disk on the upper left-hand corner, passes through the central depiction of the fiery Seraph, descends from St Onouphrios down to the bottom of the composition, follows the horizontal path of the spring, and returns vertically via the date palm back to the blessing hand. Thus we are led back, full circle, to where we began—the Source of every good gift. There is also a gradual progression from the geometric flatness of the disk, to the hieratic shallow form of the angel, parallel to the picture plane, and finally to a more pronounced plasticity of form in the depiction of the saint's body. In other words, we go in visual analogy from simple to composite, from the incorporeal to the corporeal. Although the centrality and chromatic intensity of the Seraph—its colour and shape implying the radiance of the Chalice—command our attention, it nevertheless lacks volume in comparison with the saint. St Onouphrios appears closest to us in the foreground, with a concrete bodily presence, as if asserting in his corporeality the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ. This effect is realised by depicting him in a dynamic three-quarter view, projecting out diagonally, breaking the flatness of the picture plane. St Onouphrios is seen as if caught in the very moment of movement, taking a step forward with his left leg towards the Eucharist. He also seems to be stepping towards us, with his foot extending beyond the bottom edge of the composition, into the space of the viewer. This stance enhances the subtle illusionism, accentuating his living presence. The saint's white

beard gently flows down to his ankles, as if suggesting the pure flow of Eucharistic grace of which the totality of his being partakes. The beard's verticality also parallels the verticality of the trunk of the date palm, on the opposite side, as if to suggest the staunch stability of dispassion the saint has attained. Moreover, the beard's flow brings our attention to the flow of the blue, crystalline spring under him, reminding us of the Lord's words: 'He that believeth in me…out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water' (John 7:38).

17. The icon of St Onouphrios pulsates with a rhythmic unity that combines stillness with vitality. The use of green throughout the composition, along with the blooming flowers under the saint's feet, imparts to the icon a feeling of refreshment and a sense of rejuvenation. With the streams of his tears he has irrigated the barren desert and now it bears life. Although set in a desert, it could be said that the scene is imbued with a paradisiacal atmosphere. The saint paradoxically inhabits both a rugged terrain and a blissful garden. He dwells simultaneously in the Kingdom of God and on earth. He has transcended the limits of corporeal, mortal existence yet in doing so has not turned into a discarnate abstraction of himself. Rather, he displays his palpable body—youthful in appearance despite his old age—as the assertion of his participation in divinity through the Eucharist. All of these layers of meaning emerge from a meditation on the icon's pictorial actuality, and not just from an imposition of *a priori* concepts.

18. Bringing into the icon *a priori* assumed meanings can inadvertently lead to a disregard for its aesthetic integrity.[19] We should bear in mind that not all distortions of form convey a transfigured state of deification. Neither does the handling of light in all instances necessarily intimate participation in the Uncreated Light. Gold, in fact, can often have a purely decorative effect and purpose. The denial of specificity of form—on which symbolic interpretation should be grounded—can lead to the tyranny of arbitrary concepts over the icon's concrete being as a work of art, hence the danger of imposing theological interpretations and descriptions that bypass, and therefore bear no conformity whatsoever, to the aesthetic actuality of a given work. There are ideas

[19] See C. A. Tsakiridou, 'Theological Fallacies', in *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 130–135.

of what the icon is 'supposed to be', but there is also what a given icon actually *does* or accomplishes in its aesthetic specificity.

19. The dogmatisation of style mainly results from the misapplication of mystagogical interpretation. It often takes the form of an overemphasis on simplistic one-to-one symbolic readings of the technique and stylistic features of icons. The mystagogical approach in and of itself is not the problem. It hardly needs demonstration that the patristic consensus takes mystagogy for granted. If mystagogical interpretations are legitimate when it comes to Nature, the Divine Liturgy, and Scripture, so it must be with the icon. The problem then lies not so much in lack of precedent for this approach as with the 'hardening' of symbolic readings.[20] In this latter tendency can be seen an attempt to thwart the alteration of any minutia of the stylistic *tropos* of traditional icons—mainly masterpieces from the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries—considering any alteration as the compromise of theological meaning and therefore the betrayal of the revealed truth of Tradition. Consequently, the practice of icon painting becomes stultified, stripped of its creative dimension and reduced to nothing other than the endless mechanical copying of older prototypes, guaranteed as containing the 'correct' symbolic stylistic code embodying irreproachable dogma.

20. In dogmatising style some have failed to make the distinction, implied by the Church Fathers, between the essential and secondary aspects of the icon.[21] The first is unalterable, consisting of the icon—the bodily image—that already exists hypostatically in the form that Christ took in becoming incarnate.[22] The second is alterable, having

[20] Symbols are multivalent. Hence the symbolic import of the icon's pictorial devices is open to multiple interpretations that are not necessarily mutually exclusive, although some might be problematic, if not completely unfounded.

[21] See George Kordis, 'Creating a Christian Image in a Postmodern World', in *Seeing the Invisible: Proceedings of the Symposium on Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, eds Neda Cvijetić & Maxim Vasiljević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2016), 52–53. On the dogmatisation of style see G. Kordis, 'The return to Byzantine painting tradition: Fotis Kontoglou and the aesthetic problem of twentieth-century orthodox iconography', in *Devotional Cultures of European Christianity, 1790–1960,* eds Henning Laugerud & Salvador Ryan, (Portland, OR: Four Court Press, 2012), 122–130.

[22] In his 'Chapters against Iconoclasts', St Theodore the Studite says that 'the shape of His body, namely the form carrying the features of his face and all the other external characteristics is the unique artistic icon of Christ, and that is why this icon has His name'. Similarly, in 'Letter 8' he says that Christ 'had already been depicted derived from the womb of His Mother Theotokos, otherwise he could not be a real and shaped man'. Both passages as quoted by G. Kordis, *The return of the Byzantine painting tradition,* 128; This aspect of St Theodore's thought is in continu-

to do with the flexibility that exists, clearly evident throughout the history of the icon, in rendering artistically the external characteristics of this already established form. In other words, the patristic theology of the icon suggests that, contrary to the current misconception, there is no crucial need of a specific technique or style for there to be a truly authentic representation of Christ, since his bodily form itself is already an icon *par excellence*. This fact even relativises the Byzantine style as the only legitimate mode of ecclesial representation.

21. However, the danger lies in going to the opposite extreme and inadvertently dismissing altogether the theological implications to be found in the pictorial principles tying together different styles within Tradition,[23] and how aesthetic nuances and qualitative differences, existing between stylistic forms, inevitably affect the viewer's response on an emotive and intellectual level.[24] Hence, pictorial principles and stylistic properties do indeed stir the viewer either towards or away from an Orthodox ecclesial ethos.

22. The living spirit of Tradition is to be sought and experienced here and now, as at once both contemporaneous and timeless.[25] Possibilities

ity with St John of Damascus, who emphasises the possibility of depicting the form of the Son, in so far as he made himself visible through the Incarnation: 'When the invisible One becomes visible to flesh, you may then draw His likeness'. St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1980) 18; The same understanding finds expression in the Seventh Ecumenical Council: 'The one, therefore, which is uncircumscribable and the one which can be circumscribed are seen in the one Christ. The icon resembles the prototype, not with regard to the essence, but only in regard to the name and to the position of the members which can be characterized'. As translated in Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 77.

[23] G. Kordis says: 'According to Patriarch Germanos of Constantinople, the Orthodox Christian church is a heaven on earth, where God resides and walks. The church building as a whole is for Germanos a representation of the Resurrection of Christ. Germanos stresses that the church needs to express the presence of God in the world and therefore to express ecclesiology—that is, the way the faithful relate to God and each other. Understandably, Orthodox Christian icon painting has the same aim…' Hence, according to Kordis, the pictorial devices forming an integral part of the Byzantine painting system, such as rhythm, absence of depth, plasticity of form, and relational perspective, have been developed in order to best accomplish the aim of expressing ecclesiology. G. Kordis, *Creating a Christian Image*, 57; Also see, G. Kordis, *Icon as Communion,* 48–51.

[24] See A. Hart, *op. cit.*

[25] In other words, for us icon painting according to Tradition presupposes creativity and 'ceaseless renewing' in modes of expression, arising from inexhaustible life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. As Lossky puts it: 'The dynamism of Tradition allows of no inertia either in the habitual forms of piety, or in the dogmatic expressions that are repeated mechanically like magic recipes of Truth, guaranteed by the authority of the Church. To preserve the "dogmatic tradition" does not mean to be attached to doctrinal formulae: to be within Tradition, is to keep the living Truth in the Light of the Holy Spirit, or rather—it is to be kept in the Truth by the vivifying

and clues to pictorial solutions, already implicitly present in the icon, may be found both in the sacred art of the world's traditional cultures and even modern art.[26] For those who have eyes to see, Tradition may be found in the most unlikely places.[27]

23. The relativity of the Byzantine style renders it possible to look into the various cultures of the world for pictorial ideas deemed to be adaptable to the icon. In Japanese screen paintings, for instance, we can find analogies between aesthetic and spiritual realities, particularly in the treatment of golden space, which can be interpreted from an Orthodox perspective. As can be seen in this screen (fig. 5), the sumptuous gold leaf functions simultaneously as positive and negative space, foreground and background, shifting throughout the composition from designating emptiness to that of corporeal form in Nature. Thereby the treatment of space suggests the Void (*Śūnyatā*) giving way to manifest existence and their transcendent union. At the top, for example, the image reads as both empty space and clouds, obscuring the view of the mountain landscape on the left-hand and the tree branches on the right-hand side of the composition. Similarly, the gold at the bottom functions in three simultaneous levels: as emptiness, clouds obscuring the rocky path, and the path itself, through which the figures tread. The emperor, dressed in white under the umbrella, and his assistants appear to float in a realm of heavenly radiance yet retain a sense of weight and gravity. They seem to stand firmly on the threshold between Heaven and earth, dream and reality, being and becoming. The figure-ground ambiguity and suggestion of expansive space thus give the composition an air of suspended animation, reminding us of the mutability and ephemerality

power of Tradition. But this power preserves by ceaseless renewing, like all that comes from the Spirit'. Vladimir Lossky, 'Tradition and Traditions', in *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1989), 18–19; For Lossky Tradition in its pure notion is best understood as supra-formal Silence. He develops this understanding based on St. Ignatius of Antioch's saying: 'He who possesses in truth the word of Jesus can hear even its silence'. *Ibid*., 15. Tsakiridou elucidates: 'Thus, tradition is the reality in which the Church encounters the mystery of its own existence. It therefore exists in what we may call a horizontal epiphany and a vertical theophany…*Hesechia* or silence (in this context) is the timeless and inexhaustible vitality and communicative plenitude of the divine word, of which the human word is only an incomplete and temporal expression'. C. A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time*, 63.

[26] As M. Kampanis notes, 'The result is totally different if we mix, for example, impressionistic details with characteristics of a Cretan icon to make something looking contemporary or if we find within traditional Byzantine painting impressionistic elements and use them as a new starting point'. M. Kampanis, *op. cit.*, 40.

[27] For the transcultural dimensions of the icon, see C. A. Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art: The Transcultural Icon* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

of manifest existence. Rather than an inert symbol, consigned to the background, here the gold is an active component of the composition, dynamically relating with both landscape and figures. It designates not

Figure 5: ***Meeting between Emperor Wen and Fisherman Lü Shang***, Attributed to Kano Takanobu, ca. 1600.
One of two six-panel folding screen; ink, colour, and gold on gilded paper. 168.8 x 379.7 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Public Domain.

so much utter 'emptiness' as living presence, active rest, and fecund potentiality. It is as if silence is given substance.

Perhaps these paradoxes, forming an integral part of the pictorial structure of this screen, can serve as clues for the icon painter, in his or her attempt to somehow aesthetically convey beings as expressions of the divine Logos. The treatment of gold and spatial ambiguity found here can then be interpreted as the uncreated radiance of the Logos, suggestive of the co-inhering of created beings with their transcendent Source in a state of deified existence. Through the incorporation of pictorial paradox, the icon would thus convey the fact that 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being'. The focus would not be so much the Void and the insubstantiality of illusory existence, as the audible silence of the Logos permeating and sustaining all things in their hypostatic integrity: the Logos in the *logoi* and the *logoi* in the Logos—our ontological grounding in divinity.

24. What makes the manner of traditional Indian and Persian miniatures less viable as a stylistic option for icon painting? They unveil to our eyes a vision of Nature imbued with Edenic splendor. The sweet

fragrance of tender flowers and lush trees, each in their unique variety, seems almost accessible. Every colour in its purity sparkles as a glimmering jewel in a heavenly crown. The figures are not overburdened with weight. Line, in its crispest clarity, defines the body with delightful grace. Even war and action are accompanied with stillness. Decorative pattern tends to prevail. Classic Persian painting seems composed of precious stones, whereas Indian painting appears as if formed from flower petals. There are indeed a variety of ways of depicting a transfigured world full of poetic charm and joy.

25. In this painting attributed to Purkhu of Kangra (fig. 6) we find a depiction of Nature in its Edenic glory. We encounter a lush grove of trees, every one of them unique in the shape and green shade of its leaves, speckled here and there with little, tender flower blossoms in a variety of colours: scarlet, white, and yellow. Birds can also be spotted perching on the branches, beneath the shady canopy. Noticing their elusive presence is just enough to conjure up the sound of their melodious chirping and singing. Rolling hills, carpeted with grass, can be seen in the distance between the trees, giving the scene an atmosphere of idyllic isolation. The use of rich greens and accents of bright orange conjure up the sensation of spring fertility and the nurturing of rainfall. The light of the scene is simultaneously soft and crisp, reminiscent of an approaching noonday brightness. At the bottom, a flowing silver river, graceful in its undulating rhythm, underlines the whole scene. What is of interest for us here is not so much the narrative theme as the pictorial articulation. The rendering of the vegetation, although imaginary, never becomes predictable in its stylisation. Upon close inspection, in addition to the subtle and refined use of line and tones, we find a rich variety of shapes and patterns in the construction of the image. Abstraction here, instead of depleting the subject, actually enriches its vividness and optical vibrancy. The space is shallow, parallel to the picture plane, without dramatic illusionism; nevertheless it breathes as a convincing environment for the figures. It all comes together as a true representation of nature, almost implying botanical precision, yet without turning into a mere scientific illustration. Everything seems to pulsate with vitality. Here we are clearly not dealing with the depiction of a mundane reality, but rather a poetic interpretation of Nature. Indeed, the general feeling captured aestheti-

Figure 6: ***Krishna Flirting with the Gopis, to Radha's Sorrow***. Attributed to Purkhu, ca. 1810-20. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. 25.1 x 32 cm. Museum Rietberg Zürich. Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.

cally is that of a vision of paradisiacal bliss. Why not take the pictorial clues suggested here and apply them to the icon? This miniature cannot be easily dismissed as completely alien and lacking in consonance with the inner spirit of the icon painting Tradition.

26. In the Persian miniature from the fifteenth century (fig. 7) we can also find pictorial clues for the Edenic depiction of Nature. Similar to Byzantine icons, the composition is developed without depth, through vertical perspective, whereby the elements are stacked up and organised parallel to the picture plane. This lack of depth, in conjunction with the large irregular areas of colour, gives the image strong spatial ambiguity. Nevertheless, the overlapping craggy hills, with areas of dark green grass nestled in between, work well as a convincing organic environment wherein the various animals of the wilderness play and rest. Stylisation is very pronounced, yet the distinctive traits of each depicted animal are clearly apparent, attesting to a keen observation of nature. The delicate rendition of trees, leaves, bushes, and flowers enhances the overall

decorative charm and engaging variety. Everything is animated with dynamic interaction, whether it be animals, birds, plants, or rocks. At the top right and left-hand side, the image even bursts out of its frame into the decorated border, adding vitality to the scene. Colour, at once assertive and gentle in its cool brightness, and line, lyrical and crisp, predominate. Here the initial impact of the image is more abstract in its general effect than in the Indian miniature, yet there is no lack of nat-

Figure 7: ***Majnun in the Desert*****,** illumination from Nizami Ganjavi's, Layla and Majnun (1543–44), by Aqa Mirak. Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.

uralism. Broad patches of colour and organic flat forms first command our attention. However, the minutely detailed execution draws us in, inviting close, intimate inspection. Thereby we become immersed in the bucolic scene wherein an ascetic engages harmoniously with the wild beasts, having regained the paradisiacal state. One might object to how the depicted elements lack in plasticity and weight. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that the use of abstraction here is not excessively reductive and therefore does not deprive the beings depicted of their substantiality. They are indeed rendered refined and subtle, unencumbered by temporal existence, but not as to make them completely vacuous and discarnate. Thereby the miniature acquires an air of the transcendent, as if we were beholding a materialised vision of a 'new heaven and a new earth'. In the end, it cannot be denied that all the formal elements come together to create a feeling of gentleness, calm, and peace. So even this kind of composition contains pictorial elements worth pondering as applicable to icon painting, in its task of conveying Nature in its Edenic glory.

27. Prototypes are open to inexhaustible possibilities of pictorial modes of articulation.[28] The task for the painter entails more than the mere replication of old pictorial interpretations and solutions. Rather, the challenge is to discover and reveal the new ones suggested by the prototype but which have remained overlooked, or poorly expressed, by previous generations. Thereby contemporary icon painting can become a witness to the inexhaustible facets of the living and ever-renewing Tradition, which have always been present but await to be uncovered and rendered brilliant in splendor.

28. I paint like myself—now—reflecting my individuality, in continuity and in oneness of mind with those that have preceded and exceeded me in pictorial wisdom. The icon should be a pictorial equivalent to the unique, internal and authentic, personal encounter of the painter with the prototype.[29] If I drown out my individuality, I drown

[28] By 'prototypes' in this context we mean the given iconographic types, subjects, or themes.

[29] As St Sophrony puts it, 'When you make an icon, do not copy it exactly. Not because you will not be able to do it as well as the original, but because it has already been done, it already exists in history—one should not repeat'. As quoted in Sister Gabriela, *Seeking Perfection in the World of Art: The Artistic Path of Father Sophrony* (Essex, UK: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 2014), 158–159.

out the icon's iconicity. If I fail to paint with mastery, I becloud the icon's aesthetic voice and translucency.[30]

29. The icon's aesthetic is one of paradoxical translucency: an image opening into an ontological reality beyond itself (the prototype) and yet not leaving the concreteness of the aesthetic object behind.[31] Disregard for the stuff of the icon's materiality undermines its sacramental and incarnational modality. The icon should work as a painting in which the nuances and complexities of its pictorial actuality are clearly apparent. This quality is crucial, especially today, surrounded as we are by an endless sea of disembodied, digitally mediated imagery. The image becomes disposable, fleeting, the icon another simulation, as ephemeral as any other in the endless proliferation of reproductions—*faux* artifice lacking in aesthetic vitality.[32] Has the icon become alien to its own body?

30. Ironically, the more image-saturated our consumer culture becomes, the more does the image become an insubstantial mirage. It is not enough, however, to consider the icon as purely an image in the abstract—nothing more than a discarnate mental concept. To do so would blunt its aesthetic being of efficacy as a witness to its incarnational basis. The icon encompasses not only the image depicted but

[30] St Sophrony tells us: 'One has to know technique, but one also needs to know art. An icon should be like a 'painting', like a prayer written with beautiful letters…Paint your icon as a poem, where every word is weighed and considered in harmony…There are many craftsmen, but few real iconographers. Make an icon, a beautiful icon, not like a worker, but like an artist'. As quoted by Sister Gabriela, *Seeking Perfection in the World of Art*, 169.

[31] The contrast made here between the capacity of an icon to point to itself in its existential concreteness and its referent meaning (prototype) relates to Kubler's concept of self-signals and adherent signals in works of art. See George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,1962), 24–26.

[32] On the problem of icon reproductions see Hieromonk Silouan Justiniano, 'The Degraded Iconicity of the Icon: The Icon's Materiality and Mechanical Reproduction', in IKON: Journal of Iconographic Studies, Vol. 9 (2016): 29–40; Although we take exception to his unwillingness to venerate reproductions, Fr Stamatis Skliris has also touched on the problem of icon prints from an ecclesiological angle. He notes that the soteriological life of the Church consists of the deifying participation in Christ of specific historical events and unique persons. Thus, the icon should not only depict unique ecclesial facts, but the act of painting itself should also bear witness to a unique expression of personal creativity, ascetic effort and participation within ecclesial life. According to Fr Stamatis, 'This…explains the authentic Byzantine practice whereby not only did an icon-painter never copy an older icon, he also never duplicated his own icons if he happened to paint the same theme several times over. He believed apparently, that each new icon is also a new, unique act of communion between the Church and the depicted saint'. He also adds, 'This is the most fundamental reason why we should not have and venerate icons in churches that are mechanically printed reproductions of other icons. It is equally wrong, however, to paint icons by copying older models, without the painter taking the trouble to participate in the ecclesial event with his own labor and ascetic effort'. Fr Stamatis Skliris, 'From Portrait to Icon', in *Synaxis, Vol. II: Icon and Person* (Montréal, CA: Alexander Press, 2006), 89–91.

also the materiality of the medium of representation. The materiality of the medium imparts its own energy to the image. The latter, if considered in isolation, is adaptable to various modes of embodiment: some viscerally direct, others filtering and distancing in effect. Image and material embodiment augment each other and come together as the totality of the aesthetic experience, encompassing both feeling and meaning, sense and intellect. The manipulation of materials serves as an index of the painter's human hand and activity, enabling us to retrace the creative act and process of manufacture. In the manipulation of raw materials, through theanthropic synergy, unfolds the transfiguration of matter. Matter thus becomes a vehicle of divine grace. Nuances derived from the manipulation of materials—the sheen of gold leaf, pigment texture, viscosity, translucency and opacity of the paint, etc.—cannot be underestimated in imparting to each icon its unique physical presence, whether this be perceived consciously or unconsciously. Viewing an icon through a photograph or a computer screen does not have the same impact as encountering it in its palpable and immediate actuality. The former mediums lack, in their cold and distant mechanical anonymity, the felt presence of matter manipulated by human touch and its corresponding affective results. The process of bringing the image to its physical substantiality and potency can be called the actualising of the incarnational modality of the icon's aesthetic being.

31. In the late nineteenth-century the experiments of modernist painting and the invention of photography inaugurated the reassessment of the classical mimetic standards of representation as handed down by the Renaissance and codified by the European academies of art. The avant-garde then began to value non-European, so-called Primitive, forms of artistic expression as more authentic, if not more sophisticated, than the ossified classical canon. This reassessment, moreover, fueled the revaluation of the artistic merit of folk and medieval forms of art, such as the icon.[33] What had been at one time considered products of the crude and backward Dark Ages were now hailed for their unique artistic sensibility and genius. Medieval art became a form of proto-modernism. This paradigm shift, of course, had its problems. But it

[33] See Meyer Schapiro, 'Style', in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York, NY: George Braziller, Inc., 1994), 51–101; at 57–59.

is ironic and impossible to deny how modern art has played a role in development of the twentieth-century revival of the traditional icon.

32. It cannot be denied that to the modern eye the icon appears non-naturalistic. But, when speaking of the traditional icon as 'abstract' in style, are we not projecting onto it our own aesthetic misconceptions?[34] Did not the Byzantines consider their exemplary icons as 'lifelike' and *living* images?[35] Has the icon, then, been co-opted and 'reinvented' along the lines of modernist aesthetics? To a large extent the twentieth century avant-garde experimentation with the icon can be characterised along these lines. Perhaps it could also be said that, because the necessity did not present itself within the historical limits and conceptual framework of Byzantine culture, what was pictorially implicit went undiscussed in the past: the icon's challenge to limited conceptions of *mimesis*. Now, however, the advantage of hindsight and the advent of modern art's aesthetic discourse have made this fact more explicit. The icon reminds us, in other words, that there is much more to a living image than conformity to post-Renaissance standards of naturalistic representation. Indeed, an icon can be considered as a realistic, living image and yet employ abstraction in the actualisation of this very fact.[36] Therefore, if it is problematic to impose on the icon modernist readings of abstraction, so likewise we should be cautious not to misinterpret the Byzantine ekphraseis of living icons to mean images displaying our own standards of photographic 'accuracy'.[37]

[34] On the problem of modernist readings of the icon's style and the 'invention' of tradition, see Evan Freeman, 'Rethinking the Role of Style in Orthodox Iconography: The Invention of Tradition in the Writings of Florensky, Ouspensky, and Kontoglou', in *Church Music and Icons: Windows to Heaven, Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Orthodox Church Music*, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland, June 3–9, 2013 (Joensuu, FI: The International Society of Orthodox Church Music, 2015), 350–369.

[35] See C. A. Tsakiridou, 'The Living Image in Byzantine Experience', in *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 11–223; Also see Evan Freeman, 'Flesh and Spirit: Divergent Orthodox Readings of the Iconic Body in Byzantium and the Twentieth Century', in *Personhood in the Byzantine Christian Tradition*, eds Alexis Torrance & Symeon Paschalidis (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), 142–151.

[36] Speaking of the conventional standards through which the Byzantines viewed their images, Tsakiridou notes: '…to see art through conventions is not necessarily an unreasonable and uncritical act. What appears abstract from a naturalistic standpoint is realistic by the standards of an iconography that seeks a particular kind of transcendent simplicity in form and composition'. Ibid., 208.

[37] According to Grigg, 'Byzantines may, in some sense, have been mistaken in regarding their art as lifelike and natural, but the point at issue is their perception'. He cautions that what we have to bear in mind is their 'psychological receptiveness' to their images as 'exact likenesses', treated as sentient beings. Robert Grigg, 'Relativism and Pictorial Realism', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 42. No. 4 (Summer, 1908): 397–408; Similarly, Maguire notes:

33. The contemporary icon painter unavoidably finds himself in a tension—not always antagonistically—between Tradition and modernity, working in the middle of two opposing conceptions of art: one pre-Kantian, the other post-Kantian. We look through our 'period eye', or rather, more precisely our 'period *eyes*'.[38] Hence, we slip from interested to disinterested aesthetic contemplation of the image. We value, on the one hand, the liturgical function, acknowledging the manifest presence of the saint here and now in the icon; on the other hand, the aesthetic formal properties for their own sake, independent of the subject depicted. We look for both a tasteful, aesthetically satisfying icon, and yet know that our encounter in prayer is not relegated to mere taste. We vacillate between functionalist and formalist readings.

34. But why should the aesthetic be seen as merely a matter of 'taste', whereas the icon as something much more lofty and 'spiritual', and therefore beyond the category of art? To disparage the aesthetic is to disparage the 'body' of the icon, that through which 'spirituality' is manifested in the configuration of form. Hence, as C.A. Tsakiridou puts it: 'If something is art and is also "spiritual", it is spiritual *as art* or *to the extent* that it is an art object (i.e., not the actual physical object made of wood, gold, tempera, etc. but what is painted and shown on its surface, the aesthetic object at hand). A painting that expresses spirituality does so by putting forth a certain kind of form. In the absence of that form, nothing (spiritual) is expressed'.[39]

35. The interpretations and standards of style currently taken for granted as 'canonical' and 'traditional' in fact go no further back than the twentieth-century 'theology of the icon', as articulated by the pioneers of the icon revival. Among these interpretations we find ideas concerning the Uncreated Light of icons, the transfigured body, reverse

'The difference between the present-day and the Byzantine viewer is not that of sophistication as opposed to naiveté, for no people have been more sophisticated in their approaches to images than the Byzantines. Rather, the difference is one of expectation. When a modern viewer speaks of an image being "lifelike", the expectation is that it will be illusionistic, with realistic effects of lighting and perspective, like a photograph. The Byzantines, however, did not seek optical illusionism in their portraits, but rather accuracy of definition. Their expectation was that the image should be sufficiently well defined to enable them to identify the holy figure represented, from a range of signs that included clothing, the attributes, the portrait type, and the inscription. For the Byzantines, these features together made up a lifelike portrait'. H. Maguire, *op. cit.*, 49.

[38] On the concept of the 'period eye' see Michael Baxandall, 'The Period Eye', in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style,* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988), 29–108.

[39] C. A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity*, 11.

perspective, the absence of shadows, the depiction of eschatological existence in icons, etc. Although these and other interpretations—some admittedly more tenable than others—have only been articulated recently, that does not make them by default unrepresentative of the ecclesial mind concerning icons. Yet given the lack of evidence, it is very unlikely that ancient iconographers consciously thought of style and systematically sought to realise, in the same theological terms, the ideas these interpretations expound. Nevertheless, some of these ideas have by now become to many, for better or for worse, somewhat definitive perimeters for icon painting. This hardening of thought has led to much misunderstanding and confusion. It should be kept in mind, however, that although some of these interpretations imply the possibility of intimating aesthetically spiritual realities and states of deified existence, not every single icon actualises such a lofty goal in every case. Unfortunately, much theological discussion and speculation about icons fail to make this distinction, taking for granted that *all* icons accomplish this great feat. Furthermore, the theological ideas listed above are in fact open to pictorial realisation in a variety of stylistic methods. They need not be restricted by the standards of style as dogmatised by the pioneers of the icon revival. Herein lies the creative challenge for the contemporary iconographer: the development of a painting method true to himself and his time, yet imbued with the ecclesial mind. For the theologian, on the other hand, the challenge lies in respecting, acknowledging, and speaking from a clear perception of the aesthetic actuality of each individual icon, not just a speculative ideal.

36. Not all icons actualise their aesthetic potential in manifesting the prototype to the same degree. Some stand out as exemplary, full of *enargeia*.[40] The exemplary icon closes the gap, so to speak, between the image and prototype. It embodies and manifests vividly, in a living way, with utmost clarity and eloquence, the subject re-presented, within the framework of its aesthetic actuality. It is no longer simulacra we are dealing with—an image of an image, degraded in the process of reproduction—a stereotypically approached icon. It instead becomes a site in which 'image and reality converge'.[41]

[40] See C. A. Tsakiridou, 'The Exemplary Work of Art', in *Icons in Time*, 27–48.
[41] Ibid., 41.

37. After photography, film, the digital image, and virtual reality, we find ourselves within quite a different relationship to *mimesis*. And in hindsight, reflecting on all the art historical developments that have preceded us, we have more to choose from as possibilities of representation. We are not confined within the walls of Byzantium, medieval workshop conventions, the archives and collections of an emperor's court, or the exigencies of Greco-Roman visual culture. The boundaries have become more porous in our information age, the images more eclectic and omnipresent, immediately accessible, easily alterable, even disposable and fugitive, in what has been called our 'global village' and 'society of the spectacle'.[42]

38. The contemporary icon painter, surrounded as he is by a plethora of modes of representation in a fragmented hyper-visual culture, must inevitably confront the arduous task of his pictorial choices. Why choose one style over another? Which pictorial mode can be said to embody most eloquently an ecclesial conscience? Which one is to function liturgically most efficiently? What is the painter communicating through his stylistic choices? How is he hoping to transform our perception of reality? There are neither easy answers nor ready-made formulas guaranteeing good results for the creative act. The temptation is to retreat from cultural fragmentation into a stubbornly insular and purist practice of icon painting, based on a romantically conceived, unblemished uniformity of the past.[43] It is indeed crucial to avail ourselves of the time-tested pictorial principles of the icon painting tradition. These principles should serve as the foundation for further creative development and constant renewal. But an approach which seeks to freeze, dogmatise and endlessly replicate a generic 'Byzantine style', as the only legitimate 'sacred style', is not the solution.[44] We should be careful not to mistake 'Byzantinism' for Tradition.[45] Thereby the creative act is only

[42] On the 'global village' phenomenon see Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, (Toronto, CAD: University of Toronto Press, 1962). On the 'society of the spectacle' see Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit, US: Black and Red, 1970).

[43] On the problem of insularity in icon painting, see C. A. Tsakiridou, 'The Greek Icon', in *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art,* 166–180.

[44] M. Kampanis, *op. cit*.

[45] Speaking of the need to approach icon painting creatively, beyond of the sterile duplication of older models, and proposing some strategies to do so, Fr Stamatis points out: 'As far as the faithful are concerned, the benefit lies in that it is more able to reveal to them – even psychologically – a living presence rather than a stylized, lifeless design. An icon like this, despite its originality, is closer to the Orthodox tradition than an icon which conforms technically to a

smothered and the icon dies, ceasing to bear witness to the ever-renewing life of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Instead, how about we begin to look at the unprecedented access we now have, within our post-modernity, to an endless supply of images and pictorial traditions of other cultures, as an asset rather than a threat? Why not take the challenge of wisely discerning and implementing pictorially what can be integrated harmoniously with the icon? In the end, the painter himself, creatively guided according to an ecclesial conscience, becomes the mediating centre through which the disarray of our hyper-visual culture can be brought into a transformative and harmonising contact with the charismatic life of the Church. Icon painting thus becomes authentically contemporary, bearing witness to our current experience of genuine and living faith, rather than the sterile duplication of what has been experienced by others in the past. But how this unfolds remains a mystery of the creative act. It can never be artificially codified, mechanically systematised, or depersonalised.

39. The iconodule Fathers of the eighth and nineteenth centuries did not say all that needs, or will ever need, to be said about the icon. They dealt with the problem of images as it came articulated by the iconoclasts. It was necessary to refute them within the given perimeters of the arguments presented at the time, mainly focusing on the theory of the image as it pertained to the Incarnation, not on the nuances of the icon's aesthetic dimension. Hence, they made neither proscriptive nor prescriptive statements about style *per se*. We, on the other hand, have to grapple with the formal implications of the icon, given that we now find ourselves within an unprecedented multitude of images, incongruent stylistic options, and the privilege, if not burden, of a broader art historical hindsight not limited to Greco-Roman precedents.

40. These paragraphs neither define, prescribe, nor proscribe, but rather describe, without exhausting, some aspects of icon painting. Some icons conform and live up to these theoretical considerations, while others will come short of the envisioned ideal standards, yet they

traditional model, but is not in fact part of the Orthodox tradition because it does not express either the iconographer or the ecclesiastic community'. He also adds, 'In this manner, iconography can rediscover the ancient tradition without needing to "Byzantinize." It can freely introduce aspects from every era, aspects that are of course transfigured by the light of the Orthodox icon and incorporated into the tradition of the Church. Any Orthodox icon-painter, American or African, can be part of this scheme of things, without needing to become Byzantine (by copying them) before he can become Orthodox'. Fr S. Skliris, *op. cit*., 98.

will still, nevertheless, remain icons. We should, however, pay close attention to all of them and listen to what they have to say in their own terms, according to their unique aesthetic voices.

A Study of St John Damascus' 'Treatise of Icons': Biblical and Linguistic Approach

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The Holy Scripture has always been the main source of the Christian doctrine and teaching. It is the essential canon resorted to by the Church Fathers to appraise the correctness of Faith. The patristic approach to the Bible was anything but superficial; they were drawing on it rather with deep, extensive, and objective study to understand the sense of its verses.

St John of Damascus (c. 676, died between 780–784 AD) was a prominent scholar, faithful to the Holy Tradition. He followed the method of the earlier Church Fathers in dealing with Scriptures, mixing his sermons and homilies with the biblical fragrance to such an extent that it became difficult for researchers to tell the biblical material apart from his contributions. The language and style of the Bible became genuinely intermingled with those of the saint.

The aim of this study is not merely to summarize the teaching St John on icons, nor to give the biblical citations used by him, but rather to try to examine some aspects of the exegetical approach he applied to the biblical data, which enabled him to develop the theological defense of honoring divine icons.

Moreover, this study will try to illuminate different issues of great interest. First of all, this study, as its title shows, deals with the most discussed problem in Christianity at the dawn of Islam, which is honoring the divine icons. Another issue is the question of whether Christians at this time regarded not only the context and the content of the Holy Bible as sacred, as it contains the Divine Revelation given to human beings, but also the letter of the Bible, showing awe and respect

to its literal wording. In addition, this study will cast light on the status of the Greek language in that era, especially among scholars like St John. Furthermore, the examination of biblical passages used by St John will provide insights into the transmission of the New Testament text in Syria at that time, and inform about the manuscripts of the Bible that were known there.

I would like to point out, at the outset, that the biblical passages that will be cited constitute as faithful as possible a translation of the Greek text as quoted by St John. And some of those passages will be considered in light of textual analysis to reveal his way of quoting the Bible.

The Old Testament (OT) verses forbidding images and statues (mainly Deuteronomy 5:8) provided an essential argument to iconoclasts at the beginning of their campaign against icons. Hence St John turned to the Bible, and especially to the New Testament (NT), to refute the iconoclasts' position. But the interdict of icons by the OT was not the real motivating force for the iconoclasts. That movement was born in the East, and was characterized with its Semitic mentality, which discloses a magic understanding of icons on the one hand, with a strong influence of the Hellenistic mentality on the other, as Fr G. Florovsky proved. Furthermore, with regard to the separation between matter and spirit, the same movement is an extension of the Origenic principles, condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 AD. It was problematic to that rationale to comprehend the fullness of the Christian revelation; namely, the reality of the incarnation of the Son of God. The same difficulty lies behind many heresies that defied the Church.

It was within this setting that St John's arguments against iconoclasts took place. As their main argument, iconoclasts quoted what God said through

Moses the Lawgiver:[1]

> You shall not make for yourself any likeness of anything that is in heaven, or that is in the earth. (Ex. 20:4, Deut 5:8)

> All worshipers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols. (Ps 96:7 LXX)[2]

[1] *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, ([NJRSV), 1989.
[2] Cf. John of Damascus, *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 2:7/3:4.

These and many similar quotations from Scripture and the Church Fathers were used with this same intention.[3] St John argues that the iconoclasts do not understand the rationale of Scripture. He advises them with Christ's words: *ἐρευνᾶτε*[4] *τὰς γραφάς* ('seach the Scriptures', John 5:39). Then, he stresses the fact that the one God of the OT and the NT, as a skillful doctor, does not prescribe the same for all alike but gives the necessary remedy to each according to his need:

> In the same way the most excellent physician of souls prescribed correctly for those who were still children and susceptible to the sickness of idolatry, holding idols to be gods, and worshipping them as such, abandoning the worship of God… He commanded them not to do this.[5] (*Orationes de imaginibus tres* 2:7/3:4)

St John found in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews a precious support for his premise:

> God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His only Son' (Hebrews 1:1- 2).
>
> Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων ἐν τῷ μονογενεῖ αὐτοῦ υἱῷ᾽

By citing that verse, he aimed to show that the ways that God used throughout history to communicate with human beings vary according to the circumstances. So, what was valid before because of specific circumstances at some point may cease to be so, due to a certain important historical event, namely the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Regarding the Greek text of that quoted verse, we notice the following: while the genitive plural reading *ἐσχάτων* (instead of the genitive singular *ἐσχάτου*) is supported by a few manuscripts (Ψ 629

[3] *Ibidem*.
[4] St John freely uses the classical form *ἐρευνάω* instead of the NT form *ἐραυνάω*.
[5] Translation by David Anderson, in St John of Damascus, On the Divine Images. *Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980).

1505 pc ab d t), the word *χρόνων* (instead of *ἡμερῶν τούτων*) is not supported by any witness. This can be regarded as a reminiscence of a similar combination in l Peter 1:20 (*ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων*), in which one single manuscript (69 pc) reads *ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν* as in Hebrews.

St John also explains the reason for forbidding icons in the OT through a multi-sided argumentation, of which the main part pivots explicitly around Deuteronomy 4:12–19. In the OT the Divine Theophany was through voice and words; God had not revealed himself in a visible way, but remained invisible (*Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 1:5–7/ 2:9/3:7–8). Then, St John advises the iconoclasts to read the reason for forbidding, as given by Moses himself in Deuteronomy 4:12.15: 'You heard the sound of words, but saw no form (*ὁμοίωμα*); there was only a voice'.

As another reason for forbidding icons in the OT, St John points to the worship of the calf by the people as depicted in Exodus 32:1ff, which happened while Moses was receiving the Law on Mount Sinai (*Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 2:8/3:5). In this context, St John assures that 'they were worshipping idols, adored creatures instead of the Creator'. He recalls then relevant accusations mentioned by St Paul: 'And they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image (*ἐν ὁμοιώματι*) of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles…and served the creature rather than the Creator' (Romans 1:23.25, cf. Ps 105:20 LXX). It is remarkable here that St John omits the word εἰκών in Rom 1:23, found in all extant textual witnesses. This can be explained as avoiding the existing Pleonasm (*ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος*)[6] in the sentence, but maybe also as bypassing an unfavorable use of the key word *εἰκών* in that verse.

His own way of reading biblical passages is not always intentional or a result of scholarly bias. There are many examples of variant readings resulting from goodwill. Again, in refuting the argument from the OT forbidding icons, St John comments on its thrust, namely *οὐ γὰρ εἶδος*

[6] A similar Pleonasm *εἰς μορφῆς εἶδος* can be found in Maximus of Tyr, *Λόγοι Τεσσαράκοντα καὶ εἷς*, 27:3c, ed. by *Νεόφυτος Δούκας*, publ. *Γεωργίου Βενδώτου* (Vienna, 1810). For an English translation see: Maximus of Tyr, *The Philosophical Orations,* trans. Michael Trapp, (Oxford,1997).

αὐτοῦ ἑωράκατε[7] ('you haven't seen his form'). He underlines the view of St Paul that 'the Law was our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith'[8] and that 'we were held in bondage under the elemental things, while we were children',[9] 'but now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor'[10] (Orationes de imaginibus tres, 3:8). Accordingly, he draws the conclusion that 'you haven't seen his form' and similar commandments:

> were given to the Jews because of their proneness to idolatry. But to us it is given, as Gregory the Theologian says[11] to avoid superstitious error and to come to the one God in the knowledge of the truth; to adore God alone, to enjoy the fullness of divine knowledge, to attain mature manhood, that we may no longer be in childhood. We are no longer under tutor, but we know, after receiving from God the ability to discern; what can be drawn in icon and what can't be circumscribed in icon.[12]

Obviously, Gal 3:24 and 4:3 constituted the double pillars of the last argument. Let us now study the text of these two verses from Galatians as cited by St John, to discover what textual tradition was available to him. The letter D will stand for the text as stated by St John, while N.A. will represent the NT text as appears in Nestle - Aland 28th Critical Edition of the NT.

Gal 3:24:

> N.A.: ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν·

[7] This phrase shows itself to be very different from the LXX text of Deut. 4:12.15 (*καὶ ὁμοίωμα οὐκ εἴδετε*). The wording of St John is influenced by a similar phrase in John 5:37 (*οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἑωράκατε*). But when he quotes the whole paragraph forbidding icons in Deuteronomy (*Orat. Tres*, l:5), he quotes the wording of Deut. 4:12 with a slight difference (using *ὅτι* instead of *καὶ*).

[8] Galatians 3:24.

[9] Galatians 4:3.

[10] Galatians 3:25.

[11] This statement is formulated on the basis of Gregory the Theologian, *In sancta lumina* (*Oration* 39), ed. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 36, 341.

[12] *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 1:8. I took this quotation from the English translation of David Anderson and corrected it myself on the basis of the original Greek text.

D: ὁ μὲν γὰρ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν
εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν·

Gal 4:3:

N.A.: …ὅτε ἦμεν νήπιοι, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα[13]
δεδουλωμένοι·
D: ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα ἦμεν[14] δεδουλωμένοι, ὅτε ἦμεν νήπιοι.

A textual study of Gal 3:24 and Gal 4:3 cited by St John in his *Three Apologies against Those Who Attack the Divine Images* shows no support either for his variant reading in Gal 3:24 nor for the syntax, together with the omission of *τοῦ κόσμου* ('of the world') in 4:3; however, several important manuscripts read the form ἦμεν of the first person plural imperfect of the verb *εἰμί* instead of its alternative form *ἤμεθα*. It is noteworthy that in his commentary on Galatians, St John cites both verses according to the reading in the manuscripts adopted by the Nestle Aland Critical Edition with the exception of *ἦμεν* instead of *ἤμεθα* in Gal. 4:3. In view of that, we can deduce that in his *Three Apologies* St John was writing these biblical citations by heart, without having any manuscript at hand, whereas in his Commentary on Galatians he was consulting a manuscript from a widely witnessed textual tradition.

As the commandment of the Law forbidding icons, which functioned as tutors before Christ, became invalid after the Divine Incarnation, 'we are not mistaken', states St John, 'if we make the image of the incarnate God, who was seen on earth in the flesh'.[15] This is neither an attempt to portray the invisible God, nor a production of images of humans that we believe to be gods. This is making an image of human nature that the incarnate God assumed, with the thickness, form, and color of flesh.[16] St John claims the right to share with the apostles their blessedness μακαρισμός as expressed by Christ:

[13] The reading *ἤμεθα* is found in the following manuscripts: P46א D* F G 0278 33 365 1175.
[14] The reading *ἦμεν* is found in the following manuscripts: A B C D1 K L P Ψ 81 104 630 1241 1505 1739 1881 Majority text; Cl.
[15] *Divine Images* 2:5 (English translation of David Anderson).
[16] See *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 2:5.

> But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Mat 13:16-17)
>
> (*ὑμῶν δὲ μακάριοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ὅτι βλέπουσιν καὶ τὰ ὦτα ὑμῶν ὅτι ἀκούουσιν. ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ δίκαιοι ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν ἃ βλέπετε καὶ οὐκ εἶδον, καὶ ἀκοῦσαι ἃ ἀκούετε καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν.*)

St John found another biblical support for his claim that all can share the blessedness of the apostles, when, inspired by the reasoning of St Paul in Romans 4:12 (notice that the word 'blessedness' appears in Romans 4:9) and Galatians 6:16, says that the Lord blessed with the disciples 'all those who walk according to their rule, following their steps'.[17] Directly after that statement, St John adds an interesting point to his argumentation by saying:

> For we yearn to see his form, as the divine apostle says, 'For now we see in a mirror, in a riddle'.[18] Now the icon is also a mirror and a riddle which is suitable to the thickness of our physical nature.[19]

As regards the text of the above biblical passages used by St John, citing Matthew 13:16–17, he states word for word the text of the Byzantine text form, which differs in this passage only by using the Attic verb form *εἶδον* instead of the Hellenistic *εἶδαν*. As is well known, the Byzantine text form, especially in the Psalms and NT books, was widely popular in Syria at that time, where it was first prepared by Lucian (c. 250-c. 312 AD.), the great master of the Antiochian Theological School, and was later spread everywhere by the prominent Antiochian scholars. That St John cited the exact wording of Matt. 13:16–17 constitutes an exception in the *Three Apologies*. What accounts for this exception is his familiarity with these two verses, because he frequently referred to them in one of his most important arguments.

[17] *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 2:20. See Galatians 6:16, Romans 4:12.
[18] 1 Corinthians 13:12.
[19] *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 2:5.

In contrast, the text of 1 Corinthians 13:12, as written by St John, has no witness in any of the textual traditions. Whereas in his Commentary on the First Corinthians[20] he mentions the verse as it appears in the manuscript 33,[21] in his *Three Apologies* he omits the adverb *ἄρτι*, which appears in all extant manuscripts, and adds the two conjunctions *ὡς* and *καὶ*, the first witnessed by few manuscripts,[22] and the other by a few of these.[23] This may have been a citing from memory of that verse without him consulting any manuscript. However, his very unique use of the preposition *ἐν* (in) in the phrase *ἐν εσόπτρῳ*, instead of *διά* (through) for the phrase *δι'ἐσόπτρου* remains intriguing.

In my opinion, this is to be accounted for from the direct context of St John's statement, where he asserts, '*βλέπομεν γὰρ ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι*', and adds immediately, '*καὶ ἐν τῇ εἰκόνῃ καὶ μακαριζόμεθα*' (and in the icon, so we become blessed). This suggests that he preferred the preposition ἐν because he found it more suitable to give the meaning of seeing Christ in the icon, not through the icon. In that way, he applies St Paul's mirror metaphor to the icon ('the icon is... a mirror and a riddle which is suitable to the thickness of our physical nature'), yet, he favors seeing in the icon to seeing through it, as in 'thorugh a mirror' of 1 Cor 13:12. By saying this, he remains absolutely consistent with his teaching at the beginning of the First Apology: 'An icon is an image producing the form of its prototype, with which it has a certain difference. The icon does not resemble the archetype in every way. The Son alone is the living, essential, and immutable "Icon of the invisible God"'.[24]

After what has been said, there remains no doubt that the Incarnation of the Son of God constitutes the theological premise of honoring icons. It is around this historical reality that the argumentation in the Apologies pivots, highlighting the impossibility in former times of depicting the unseen, of drawing what is limitless and infinite, or of forming the One who is without form, appearance, or body. However,

[20] See St. John of Damascus, In epistulam i ad Corinthios", in: *Commentarii in epistulas Pauli*, Patrologia Graeca, 95, 680.

[21] This is the most important manuscript among the minuscules; it represents the Alexandrian type of texts influenced by the Byzantine type.

[22] The reading *ὡς δι'ἐσόπτρου* is found in the following textual witnesses: D 0243 81 630 1175 1739 l881 2464 *al* sy$^{P,h^{**}}$; Cl^{pt} (*δι'ἐσόπτρου ὡς* 33).

[23] The reading *δι'ἐσόπτρου και* is witnessed by the following textual witnesses: L P *pc* a; (Ir^{lat}) Or.

[24] *Orationes de imaginibus tres* 1:9. See Colossians 1:15.

> when you see the bodiless became man (*γενόμενος ἀνθρωπος*)[25] for your sake, then you can shape his human form (*μορφή*)[26] on wood. When the invisible One becomes visible in flesh, you may then draw the icon of the likeness (*ὁμοίωμα*)[27] of He who was seen. When He who is bodiless and without form, also immeasurable and with indefinite height in the superiority of His own nature, the One who, 'being in the form of God ... took upon him the form of a servant'[28] and is found similar to it in quantity and stature and character of the body, then you may draw Him on a board and lift it up so that people can see Him who accepted to be seen.[29]

Philippians 2:6–7 can be characterized as the point of that argumentation for two important reasons. First, it summarizes the theology of the Divine Incarnation, since it recalls the Divine nature of Christ as well as his adopted human one: for both natures together justify the invalidity of the tutor law forbidding icons. In addition, we find in these two verses three of the most important terms that would provide St John with a linguistic biblical support to render Christologically what the icon of Christ represents,[30] and these are respectively *μορφή*, *ὁμοίωμα*, and *σχῆμα* (elsewhere he also uses *εἶδος*). These terms are often used interchangeably by St John to point out the 'form or outward appearance' that an icon depicts.[31] And sometimes they are used in literary parallelism with 'icon'.[32] But while that meaning is universally accepted for both terms *ὁμοίωμα* and *σχῆμα* in Philippians 2:6–7, scholarly opinions diverge considerably concerning the meaning of μορφή in this passage.

More precisely, there is a conflict between a mere linguistic approach and a theological approach in interpreting μορφή in Philippians 2:6–7. Some scholars interpret it generally against the background of its usage

[25] Philippians 2:7.
[26] Philippians 2:7.
[27] Philippians 2:7.
[28] Philippians 2:6–7.
[29] *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, l:8; see also 1:51=2:47.
[30] See e.g. *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 1:8; see also 1:51=2:47 for *ὁμοίωμα* and 3:l 14 for *μορφή*.
[31] See *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 1:33=2:29=3:45.
[32] See St. John of Damascus, 'In epistulam ad Galatas', in: *Commentarii in epistulas Pauli*, Patrologia Graeca, 95, 805, "*ἐφθείρατε, φησί, τὴν εἰκόνα, ἀπολέσατε τὴν μορφὴν...* ".

in Greek literature, and specifically in religion. Others still refuse to do so because that might lead to dogmatic and contextual errors.

In fact, the variety of meanings of the Greek term μορφή is very wide, stemming from a long history.[33] The term has been used since Homer, with the meaning of 'form, outward form or appearance', etc. Pindar also used it with that meaning to talk of humans.[34] It also appears in Aeschylus, Plato, and other philosophers regarding any material form of men, animals, or plants. This term was used later in the Septuagint with the meaning 'form' (for example Job 4:16; Judges 8:18), 'likeness' (Isaiah 44:13), 'image, expression' (Daniel 3:19). There, the term always refers to the external appearance, to what may be seen in a human being. This is also the case with Wisdom 18:1; 4 Maccabees 15:4.[35] These meanings of that term survived with Jewish writers in the first and second centuries AD, such as Philo, Josephus, and writers of apocryphal literature, as well as with Church Fathers such as Justin, Tatian, and Athenagoras.[36]

The position of J. Behm, who applied to Philippians 2:6 the meaning of *μορφή* in the Septuagint, although by identifying *μορφή Θεοῦ* with *δόξα Θεοῦ* to give it a meaning like 'dressed with the garment of the Divine Nature's Glory',[37] faced serious objections from E. Käsemann.[38] Käsemann underlined the change in meaning of that term from Hellenistic times to indicate the essence of something, not merely the external appearance of the described object.[39] Later, Otfried Hofius rejected the classical meaning of *μορφή*, but also made strong criticism of Käsemann's interpretation of Philippians 2:6–7 because it would affirm a change in the Substance after the Incarnation.[40] He asserts that

[33] About the history of the term see: J. Behm, Art. "μορφή", in: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapid, 1993), vol. IV, 742–750.

[34] See e.g. Pindar, *Isthmia* 4:53, in: *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, part 1, post Brunonem Snell edidit and Hervicus Maehler, (Leipzig, 19715).

[35] J. Behm, '*μορφή*', in: ThDNT IV, 750–751.

[36] Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literature*, 6: Völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage, hrsg. von Kurt Aland und Barbara Aland, (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1988), 1069.

[37] J. Behm, '*μορφή*', in: ThDNT IV, 752.

[38] E. Käsemann, 'Kritische Analyse von Phil 2,5–11', in: *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen I,* (Göttingen , 1960), 65-68.

[39] Kasemann, 'Kritische Analyse von Phil 2, 5–11', 67. See below the opinion of St. John Chrysostom.

[40] O. *Hofius, Der Chrisiushymnus Philipper 2,6–11. Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms*, WUNT 17, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991[2]), 57 n.4.

the meaning of *μορφή Θεοῦ* and *μορφή δούλου* in Philippians 2:6–7 cannot be defined in general explanations against the background of the exceedingly varied historical and religious usage of the term *μορφή*, but is to be deduced rather from the declarations of the passage.[41] After a detailed analysis of the development of thought and objective of the hymn, Hofius claims that there is a total agreement in the two Christological statements in Philippians 2:6, namely that Christ existed in '*μορφή Θεοῦ*', and that 'He is equal to God';[42] both express the same truth that he had the Divine Power and Divine Glory.[43] And by saying that he assumed a 'form of slave', it is meant that he became man, weak as a slave.[44]

But to evaluate the interpretation of St. John of Damascus' understanding of μορφή, let us survey some important positions among writers and Church Fathers before him, especially those who had a great influence on his writings.

Origen uses '*μορφή Θεοῦ*' in both the classical[45] and later Hellenistic sense.[46] St John Chrysostom, undoubtedly influential to St John of Damascus' commentaries, explains plainly that *μορφή*, in both expressions '*μορφή Θεοῦ*' and '*μορφή δούλου*', means the *ουσία* (essence).[47] Thus, he sees that '*μορφή Θεοῦ*' connotes the Divine Nature.[48] Theodoritus[49]

[41] Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11. Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms*, 58.

[42] Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11. Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms*, 56.

[43] Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6–11. Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms*, 59.

[44] Hofius, *Der Chrislushymnus Philipper 2,6–11. Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms*, 61–63.

[45] See Origène, Contre Celse, vol. 4, ed. and translated by Marcel Borret, Sources Chrétiennes 150, (Paris, 1969), VII, 66, 21, p. 168.

[46] See Origène, Contre Celse,vol. 2, ed. by Marcel Borret, Sources Chrétiennes 136, (Paris, 1968), IV, 15-16.18, pp. 218-226 ; vol. 3, ed. by Marcel Borret, Sources Chrétiennes 147, (Paris, 1969),VI, 68.23, pp. 348-350; Here I disagree with the opinion given in: Bauer-Aland, WBNT, 1988, I069, where μορφή is thought to have in these passages the meaning of 'form'. The writers were misled by the phrase ''καὶ τὴν λαμπρότητα τῶν ἐνδυμάτων Αὐτοῦ' in VI, 68.23, ignoring the whole context speaking about the 'μεταμόρφωσις' of Christ, when he showed 'His Glory'.

[47] See St John Chrysostom, *In epistolam ad Philippenses (hamiliae 1–15)*, Patrologia Graeca 62, 223.

[48] John Chrysostom, *In epistalam ad Philippenses (hamiliae 1–15)*, Patrologia Graeca 62, 219; 62 ,220–221; Cf. 62, 229.

[49] See Theodoretus, *lnterpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli*, ed. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 82, 352.

understands *μορφή* in a similar way to that of St John Chrysostom. However, in one passage he uses that term in both its senses.[50]

These examples show that *μορφή* was widely used among Church Fathers and Christian writers with the meaning of 'essence, nature', according to its Hellenistic usage. Nonetheless, St John of Damascus obviously preferred its ancient classical meaning that we also meet in the Septuagint.[51] He deliberately makes use of Philippians 2:6–7 by interpreting *μορφή* with that meaning, to sustain the possibility after the Incarnation to draw the icon of Christ God.[52] How great his influence was on later usage of that term is clear from the wording of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787 AD), where *εἰκών*, *ομοίωμα*, *σχῆμα*, and *μορφή* all appear as parallel terms.[53]

Conclusion

Throughout this study we have noticed how St John of Damascus learned the Greek text of the Bible by heart. His wide knowledge of the Greek language and the history of its words and meanings was so extensive (most probably Greek was his mother tongue), that it allowed him at times to recall biblical passages easily, without having any manuscript at hand.

It is noteworthy how he was not worried about changing the wording of these passages, even in written theological treaties. Although we know that this was the case in earlier centuries, when Scribes used to correct the Greek language of some NT books, for instance, by replacing an unfamiliar word or expression with a more familiar synonym, or by adding pronouns, conjunctions, etc., to make a smoother text,[54] it is, however, interesting to know that this practice was still unquestionable about a century after the Muslim presence in Syria. Until that time, the wording itself was not considered sacred.

[50] See Theodoretus , *Interpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli*, ed. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 82, 569.

[51] *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, 1:43=2:39; 3:1I4; I:5=2 :46.

[52] *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, l :5=2:46.

[53] Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, vol. 13, Hubert Welter (Paris, 1902), 117.

[54] See B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament*, (Stuttgart, 19942), 13*.

The Christian Icon of the Nineteenth Century from the Point of View of the Art Historian

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The subject of this work is the study of a group of portable icons from the nineteenth century from the point of view of a Historian of Modern Greek Art. The paper argues that historians of art who do not approach the particular aesthetic properties of the icon as a means of giving an existential form to divinity or sanctity refuse to open a dialogue with theologians. And even though the international discourse around the history of art insists on expressing the 'complaint' that the reading of religious sentiment is now satisfied by the prolific production of objects of veneration without any special artistic merit,[1] perhaps we should ask ourselves whether the *artistic deficiency* in question is because we are overlooking the fact that the relationship between the believer/viewer and the icon is not limited to passive observation. On the contrary, it is something that derives from participation in the experience of worship as a whole. As a result, the icon will not allow us to see it in its fullness if we do not respect its integrity.

Introduction

The subject of this work is the study of a group of portable icons from the nineteenth century from the point of view of a historian of modern Greek art. With this in mind, it might be pertinent to present, very briefly, a number of elements relevant to the content and the periodization of the discipline of the history of art in general and, more particularly, the history of modern Greek art.

If we accept the starting point of this academic field as being the time of the proclamation of Christianity as the official religion by

[1] Martin Warnke in Hans Belting – Wolfgang Kemp et al. *Kunstgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, 45.

Constantine the Great, then it would include art from the Middle Ages until today[2]. On the other hand, the history of modern Greek art represents a very small contribution to the broad academic field. In particular, both as an academic field and as artistic creation, it constitutes a sui generis chapter in Greek culture. The successive conquests of lands of the Byzantine Empire by the Turks, as well as the subjugation of the island domains to Western overlords, contributed to the formation of a distinct and fragmented historical, social, and cultural situation within the Greek realm, which, in turn, shaped an artistic reality that differed according to region.[3] This is why definition of the limits and content of the branch of modern Greek art history by Greek historians has met with a variety of approaches. By and large, the older Greek scholars took as their basic criterion for its genesis the introduction of morphological elements from Western art (the use of oil painting, rendition of perspective). Thereafter, they looked at the widening of subject matter, linking it to contemporary political, spiritual, and social developments, such as the formation of an urban class,[4] the Modern Greek Enlightenment and, in the end, the creation of the Modern Greek State. The terminus a quo of this field of knowledge was thus set in the first half of the sixteenth century, an age when Cretan iconography was influenced in a variety of ways by the art of the West. The terminus ad quem was placed in the third decade of the nineteenth century with the foundation of the School of Fine Arts (1836) and the near rejection of the Byzantine style.[5]This terminus a quo was linked to the 'process of decay

[2] So that the concept of art in reality flows from the heart of the Christian icon. See Hans Belting, 'Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions', *Material Religion The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief,* (2012) vol. 12, 236. For the temporal boundaries of the History of Art see more in Heinrich Dilly and Martin Warnke in *Kunstgeschichte, Eine Einführung* ed. Hans Belting, Wolfgang Kemp et al. Berlin 1993.

[3] Iliana Zarra, 'The synthesis of a new iconography under the stimulus of emerging Greek liberation', *Series Byzantinna* X (2012), 67–68.

[4] Angelos Prokopiou, *Νεοελληνική τέχνη. Βιβλίο πρώτο: Εφτανησιώτικος νατουραλισμός*, Αθήνα 1936, 57–61. Zarra, 'The synthesis of a new iconography under the stimulus of emerging Greek liberation', 68

[5] Stelios Lydakis, *Η ιστορία της νεοελληνικής ζωγραφικής (16ος-20ός αι.), Οι Έλληνες Ζωγράφοι,* vol. 3, Athens 1976, 14. Manolis Hatzidakis, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1450-1830)*, vol. 1, *Αβέρκιος-Ιωσήφ* (Modern Greek Research Centre/ National Research Institute, Athens 1987), 99. See also Marinos Kalligas, «Ζωγραφική-Γλυπτική-Χαρακτική», in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol. XIII (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1977), 534. Tonis Spiteris, *3 αιώνες νεοελληνικής τέχνης, 1600–1967*, vol. 3 (Papyros Publications, Athens 1979). Chrysanthos Christou, *Η ελληνική ζωγραφική 1832–1922* (National Bank of Greece, Athens 1981), 14; idem, *Η Εθνική Πινακοθήκη. Ελληνική Ζωγραφική 19ος–20ός αιώνας* (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1992), 12–13; idem, «Προβλήματα περιοδολόγησης στην ιστορία της νεοελληνικής τέχνης»,

of post-Byzantine art' and the adoption of the principles of Renaissance painting in the production of art, though without yet assuming the character of 'artistic' painting in today's sense.[6] It therefore appears that the critical criterion for defining the starting-point and, concomitantly, the object of modern Greek art, can be attributed to its profound Westernization, that is the adoption of stylistic principles such as perspective and chiaroscuro, as well as compositional patterns and techniques from the art of the West.

In turn, this criterion was read in two diametrically opposed ways, depending on the theoretical foundation of the scholars. For the historians of modern Greek art, the absorption, and domination as far as possible, of artistic elements gleaned from Western painting, essentially marked the beginning of a new Greek form of expression in the plastic arts. For the Byzantinists, on the other hand, as post-Byzantine[7] art distanced itself from the Byzantine tradition and aligned itself with Western morphology, or assumed a folk character, it was evaluated respectively as either an art of decline or degenerate art. Hence the prevalence within the Greek milieu of aesthetic systems of value, which assessed artistic production on the basis of the degree to which it applied the 'canon' of European naturalism, founded the conviction that in the realm of traditional art, from the eighteenth century onwards, there was a dearth of works of high artistic quality, whether secular or religious, the result being that they were disparaged by scholars and researchers.[8]

in Η Ιστορία της Τέχνης στην Ελλάδα, Evyenios D. Matthiopoulos and Nikos Hatzinikolaou eds. (University Publications Crete, Irakleio 2003), 21–22. Nikos Hatzinikolaou, *Εθνική τέχνη και πρωτοπορία*, Athens 1982, 32. Waldemar Deluga, 'Between Candia and Venice. The role of European engravings in the iconographic transformations of post-Byzantine painting in Greece', *Series Byzantinna* XII (2014), 75–109.

[6] Miltiadis Papanikolaou, «Ο ευρωπαϊκός κλασικισμός και η νεοελληνική τέχνη (1800–1850)», in «Το μπλε άλογο», *Θέματα ιστορίας και κριτικής της τέχνης* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1994), 13· idem, *Ιστορία της τέχνης στην Ελλάδα, 18ος και 19ος αιώνας*, vol. 2 (Adam Publications: Athens 2002), 14, 15. Andreas Xydis, «Μερικές σκέψεις γύρω από τη γένεση της νεοελληνικής τέχνης», *1ο Συμπόσιο για την Τέχνη*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki-Tellogleio Institute (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1984), 59.

[7] On the definition of the term, see Chatzidakis, entry Post-byzantine art, in *The Dictionary of Art*, [Post-Byzantine art] v. 25 (New York 1996), 336.

[8] For a representative sample, see: Andreas Xyngopoulos, *Σχεδίασμα ιστορίας της θρησκευτικής ζωγραφικής μετά την άλωσιν* (Library of the Archaeological Society in Athens, no. 40, Athens 1957), 332, 350-352, 353, 356, 359, 363-364. Georgios Sotiriou, *Χριστιανική και Βυζαντινή αρχαιολογία*, vol. I, *Χριστιανικά Κοιμητήρια, Εκκλησιαστική Αρχιτεκτονική* (Athens 1942), 3–4, 16–17, 34. Charles Delvoye, *Arta Bizantina*. Panos A. Zamvakellis, *Εισαγωγή στη βυζαντινή ζωγραφική* (Athens, 1985), 99. Demetrios D. Triantaphyllopoulos, '"Byzance après Byzance" Post-Byzantine Art (1453–1830) in the Greek Orthodox World', in *Post-Byzantium: The Greek renaissance, 15th -18th Century Treasures from the Byzantine & Christian Museum*

A more recent view, within the context of which the criterion for the beginning of this period is taken to be socio-political developments, as well as the formation of a national consciousness, sees the starting-point of modern Greek art as being the eighteenth century, placing within its field of study the art of the Venetian-held Ionian islands, as well as folk and late religious painting.[9]

So it is that the religious painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has become attractive to younger researchers only in the last two decades. Again, however, in the estimation of the historians of modern Greek art, what is missing from recent studies is that thoughtful and incisive investigation of the subject in question[10] that would restore the organic link between the outstanding morphological features of the image and the transcendent event that is given concrete form by it.[11] Indeed, the prevailing trend in the bibliography of the history of Greek art is characterized by a persistent concentration on the iconographic analysis of the themes depicted and their stylistic realization.[12]

This is due to the fact that historical/artistic discourse about icons does not take into account their dogmatic character and their close connection with the religious practice of the faithful. This is a capacity that distinguishes the icon from a conventional image.[13] As regards the latter, from the point of view of a philosopher, this is defined as the restitution of external reality with which he or she is in a discrete position and at a distance. From the same viewpoint, Adi Efal, inspired by the definition of St John the Damascene concerning the Christian icon, decodes it as

Athens (Onassis Cultural Center: Athens 2003), 15. Evyenios D. Matthiopoulos, «Η τέχνη στα όρια του Έθνους», in *Η Ιστορία της Τέχνης στην Ελλάδα*, Evyenios D. Matthiopoulos and Nikos Hatzinikolaou eds. (Heraklion: University Publications Crete, 2003) 450, 466.

[9] Papanikolaou, Πρόλογος, in Belting –Kemp et al. (eds), Kunstgeschichte, Eine Einführung, 6. Idem, *Πρόλογος*, in *Από τη Μεταβυζαντινή τέχνη στη σύγχρονη, 18ος-20ός αιώνας*, Conference Proceedings, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki (University Studio Press:Θεσσαλονίκη, 1998), 7. Iliana Zarra, *Η θρησκευτική ζωγραφική στην Θεσσαλονίκη κατά τον 19ο αιώνα. Ζωγράφοι – Εργαστήρια – Καλλιτεχνικές τάσεις* (Thessaloniki, Kyriakidis Publishing House, 2006), 31–35.

[10] Efthymia Georgiadou-Kountoura, «Η κοσμική τέχνη στην ηπειρωτική Ελλάδα κατά την τουρκοκρατία. Θέματα ορολογίας και μεθόδου», στο *Η Ιστορία της Τέχνης στην Ελλάδα*, Evyenios D. Matthiopoulos and Nikos Hatzinikolaou eds. (Heraklion: University Publications of Crete, 2003), 27.

[11] Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 5, 117.

[12] A similar observation is expressed in Saša Brajović - Jelena Erdeljan, 'Praying with the senses. Examples of icon devotion and the sensory experience in medieval and early modern Balkans', *Zograf* 39 (2015), 57.

[13] Belting, 'Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions', 236.

that type that precedes the type: in other words, the prototype[14]. From the point of view of the historian or theorist of art, the most recent and updated definition of the conventional image comes from Belting, who describes the 'iconic presence' as a picture that involves a representation that creates an impression of presence.[15] In the Christian icon, on the other hand, the participation of both the image depicted and the icon[16] itself in the actions of its prototype allows it, instead of the *impression of a presence*, to contain the divinity[17] or sanctity of the depicted form, making it a locus of theophany and therefore a place of the manifestation of a 'spiritual reality'.[18] Thereafter, since an icon is venerated during a religious service and is a more general expression of the reverence of the faithful,[19] it equally includes an optical and tactile experience: what is depicted does not reconstruct nor duplicate its model, but refers to an event that takes place within the temporal and spatial limits of the work of art.[20]

The lack of attention to these particular qualities of the icon, combined with the largely erroneous understanding of the concept of tradition[21] in the life of the Church resulted in the icon being identified principally with a dogmatically predefined iconography and then being placed, initially by Byzantinists and later by historians of art, in the margins of historical developments. Yet decades earlier, the theologian Léonid Ouspensky, with remarkable clarity, had explained that the icon does not simply express the dogmatic and spiritual life of the

[14] Adi Efal, "Iconology and Iconicity. Towards an Iconic History of Figures, Between Erwin Panofsky and Jean-Luc Marion", *Naharaim - Zeitschrift für deutsch-jüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte*, (2009) 2(1), 91[Retrieved 13 Feb. 2020, from doi:10.1515/naha.2008.007]

[15] Belting, "Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions", 235.

[16] Regarding this we might compare the characteristic formulation of Saint John Chrysostom: '«Εγώ και την κηρόχυτον ηγάπησα γραφήν, ευσεβείας ένεκεν πεπληρωμένη», quoted in Saint Theodore the Studite, *Έργα*, 3, *Επιστολαί* (Thessaloniki: Orthodoxos Kypseli, 1993), 240.

[17] 'Είτα και προσκυνούμεν αυτού την αγίαν εικόνα, ως εν αυτή προσκυνούντες τον εξεικονιζόμενον Χριστόν'. Ibid.

[18] In this sense, an observation by Saint John the Damascan (676-749) to Leo III, who sided with the iconoclasts, becomes clear. Saint John points out that a struggle against the icons is, in essence, a contest against the saints themselves. See Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 4, 20, 29, 99, 100, 106.

[19] 'Ουχ ως θεούς τας εικόνας προσκυνούμεν οι πιστοί, μη γένοιτο, ώσπερ οι Έλληνες. Αλλά την σχέσιν μόνον και τον πόθον της ημών αγάπης προς τον χαρακτήρα του προσώπου της εικόνας εμφανίζοντες.' Athanasios the Great, *Προς Αντίοχον Άρχοντα*, ερωτ. Λθ΄, *ΒΕΠΕΣ* 35, 111. 10. Saint Theodore the Studite, op. cit., whence also the older bibliography.

[20] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 18-20, 29, 53, 70.

[21] Léonide Ouspensky – Vladimir Lossky, *Le sens des icônes* (Paris: Cerf , ^{4}2003), 1, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 26, 27.

Church but also reflects the culture that surrounds it.[22] This is therefore an art that is 'bound to this world, to those who shape it', echoing the 'personal life of the artist, the 'life of the people at the time' and 'the environment in which it arises'.[23]

Therefore, we shall attempt in this present work to look at the material under examination by applying the methodology of the history of art on the one hand, and, on the other, by taking into consideration the particular ontological composition of the icon, which is due to its long-standing relationship with its original.[24] In the first place, the basic duty of the historian of art is to verify the details of the object being studied. This includes material verification of the work of art, verification of its age, its provenance, and paternity.[25] The procedure in question also entails investigation of any interventions that might have occurred to the work over time, any changes as regards relationships of authority over it, or deliberate anthropogenic actions aimed at restoring the material to its original form.[26] In essence, this involves a complicated investigation aimed at establishing the authenticity of the work.[27] If and when the art historian is able to guarantee the absolute or partial authenticity of a work, they may legitimately proceed to a description, an iconographical analysis, relating the diachrony of the models under investigation to their topicality and values, while also seeking morphological changes in the execution of the subject, as well as its induction into a broader grouping.[28] Only then will a sound interpretive analysis of the content of the work be possible.

As such, the particularities of the material with which we shall be dealing make it an exemplary application of the stages of an art history investigation. On the basis of this, the present study is structured into sub-units that treat of the location of the provenance of the material, the description and iconographical analysis of the themes, their stylistic

[22] Léonide Ouspensky, *L'Icone, Vision du Monde Spirituel.*
[23] Ibid.
[24] Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness. On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 111.
[25] See Heinrich Dilly, 'Einführung', Ulrich Schliessl, Willibald Sauerländer, in *Kunstgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, Hans Belting – Wolfgang Kemp et al., pubd. by Dietrich Riemer, 2008.
[26] Ibid. Dilly and Schliessl.
[27] Ibid. Ulrich Schliessl.
[28] Ibid, Heinrich Dilly, Einführung.

treatment, the positioning of the themes within their historical context, and the interpretation of them therein.

Tracing the Material

The material under investigation consists of a group of icons of Christ that today are on the iconostasis of the church of the Holy Twelve Apostles in Drama and can be dated to the nineteenth century. Initially these icons were in the Greek church of the same name in Adrianople (Edirne),[29] which was already in existence in 1834 in the suburb of Keris-Hane.[30] The icons came to Drama with the settlement of the refugees after the Asia Minor Disaster (1922) and the consequent evacuation of the greater part of the Greek population in Eastern Thrace.

Icons and Painters

On the basis of their signatures and stylistic characteristics, the painters of the icons are Moskhos Adrianoupolitis, Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, and Ioannis N. For reasons of economy, of all the icons of the feasts of the Lord, those which have been commented on are the ones which, in the first place, were judged to be representative because of the frequent reproduction of their subject matter. Secondly,

[29] This is according to the oral testimony of Fr Manolis, the priest of the church in 2002, to whom I express my gratitude. Many thanks are also due to the archeologist Magdalini Parkharidou-Anagnostou, who was kind enough to draw my attention to the material in question, as well as to His Eminence Dionysios (1923-2005), the then Metropolitan of Drama who gave permission for the first photographs of the material. A brief account of the subject was given within the context of the proceedings of the Fourth Scientific Encounter, held under the aegis of the Municipal Initiative for Socio/Cultural and Tourist Development of Drama on 16–19 May, 2002. See Iliana Zarra, 'Οι εικόνες των Δώδεκα Αποστόλων της Δράμας και ο απόηχος του κοινωνικοπολιτικού κλίματος του 19ου αιώνα», in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός*, Δ΄ Επιστημονική Συνάντηση, Drama, 16–19 May 2002, *Περιλήψεις ανακοινώσεων* (Drama: ΔΕΚΠΟΤΑ, 2002), 47–49. The composition of the present work arose after a second visit to the church, in November 2019 and the new photographic documentation of the icons. I would like to express my warm thanks to His Eminence Pavlos, Metropolitan of Drama, who readily agreed to my request to photograph and publish the icons for scientific purposes, as well as to Fr. Anastasios Konstantinidis for his sensitivity in facilitating my task. Finally, thanks are due to the staff of the church, as well as to Mr. Stavros Goles who gave me invaluable assistance in the process of photographing the icons.

[30] Konstantinos Vakalopoulos *Ιστορία του βορείου ελληνισμού. Θράκη* (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis Publishers, 1990), 439, 440. Older historians describe it thus: «Εις το προάστειον Κερίς-Χανέ η πλειονότης των κατοίκων ήσαν Έλληνες, με εκκλησίαν των Αγίων Αποστόλων και δημοτικόν σχολείον, ολίγοι Τούρκοι επίσης και Κοινότης Βουλγαρική με ανεγνωρισμένην εκκλησίαν…». See Konstantinos G. Kourtidis, «Η Αδριανούπολις», *Θρακικά* 25 (1956), 166.

the choice was based on their artistic style and the historical data that have been 'introduced' onto the surface of the icons. Regarding the first criterion, the artistic realization of the themes makes the icons under examination representative samples of the prevalent aesthetics of the nineteenth century. These were common to the south-eastern Balkan region and display the inter-cultural nature of the Christian icon, as also the manner in which the painters worked on them. Secondly, the icons bear unmistakable signs of human interference, which altered their original dedicatory inscriptions. These interventions were due to the religious and political squabbles between Bulgarians and Greeks because of Bulgarian propaganda aimed at the foundation of an autocephalous Bulgarian Church.[31]

Of the enthroned Saints, we shall begin with *St Spyridon of Trimythous* (fig. 1). The saint is presented as being in an interior space and is depicted in full, seated on a golden, richly decorated baroque throne. He is wearing episcopal vestments, though on his head, instead of a bishop's miter, he has his characteristic triangular, knitted pastoral bonnet, known as the *spyridan*, to which, possibly, he owes his name.[32] He is seated with his legs slightly to the side, a pose that introduces the feeling of the third dimension into the flat surface of the work. His face is sculpted with intense chiaroscuro, while his severe expression is reinforced by the

Fig. 1 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Spyridon, 1834, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2019. © I. Zarra

[31] See Evangelos Kofos, «Το Ελληνοβουλγαρικό ζήτημα», in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol. 13 (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 2000), 298–305.

[32] Paul van den Ven, *La Légende de S. Spyridon, évêque de Trimithonte* (Institute orientaliste de l' Université de Louvain, Bibliothèque du Musée, vol. 33: Louvain, 1953), 43.

small, tight mouth, expressing a state of inner withdrawal and sobriety. At the same time, the immobility of the figure, in combination with the oblique, vigilant mien, depict the cessation of physical activities and intellectual movement, eliminating the slightest disruptive movement that might disturb the saint's peace of heart.[33] So the morphological construction of the facial features and especially the suggestion of 'spiritual realities' reveal the specific capacities that clearly demonstrate the sanctity of the figure[34], an indication of the indifference of the saint to the material world surrounding him.

At the four corners of the surface of the icon, and within the patterns defined by the folded gold leaf, there are scenes from the life of the saint that depict his miraculous intervention during the drought in Cyprus (fig. 2), the transformation of the serpent into gold, his participation in the First Ecumenical Synod at Nicaea in Bithynia (325), his confrontation with the heretic Arius, and, finally, his healing of the Emperor Constantine.[35] Low down on the icon, in a baroque scroll, is the signature, which on our first visit in 2002 had been

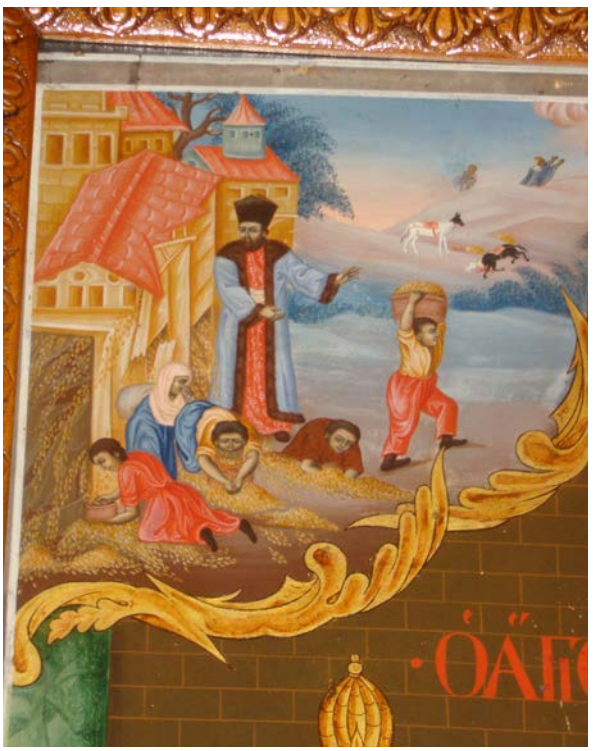

Fig. 2 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Spyridon, detail of figure 1.

[33] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 154.

[34] Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity. Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image*, 68, 69, 71, 155.

[35] The iconographic cycle of the saint was formed in the seventh century. Ioanna Bitha, «Παρατηρήσεις στον εικονογραφικό κύκλο του αγίου Σπυρίδωνα», *ΔΧΑΕ* 19 (1996–1997), 251. For a description of the individual events, see Maximos Margounios (Bishop of Cythera) - Pinelli, Antonio (the Elder), *Βίοι αγίων*, ρλγ΄. van den Ven, *La Legende de S. Spyridon, évêque de Trimithonte*, 11-14, 27–34. Spyridon Papageorgiou, *Ασματική Ακολουθία και Βίος του εν Αγίοις Ημών Πατρός Σπυρίδωνος* (Εν Αθήναις: Μιχαήλ Ι. Σαλίβερος, 1901), 20, 53–55, 55–59, 63, 69–71, 72.

erased and the whole area covered with black (fig. 3). On our second, recent visit, the cleaning of the surface had revealed an inscription with Bulgarian letters[36] and the signature of the painter in Greek: EN ETEI 1834 / *χειρ N(ι)K(ο)Λ(άου)* (fig. 4).

Fig. 3 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Spyridon, 1834, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2002. © I. Zarra

In terms of dating, the icon under examination belongs to a period when the reproduction of the cycle of miracles performed by St Spyridon was very widespread, beginning in the seventeenth century and continuing thereafter.[37] The attachment of the population of Adrianople to the veneration of the saint, as well as the inclusion in the icon of scenes linked to rural life and his miraculous intervention on behalf of those who were deprived of foodstuffs, is testimony to the natural configuration of the Thracian countryside and the fertility of its soil. Favourable geophysical factors of the local hinterland contributed to a total annual production that was enough to sustain the population, while any surplus was exploited for economic gain, with exports to Smyrna, Constantinople, and the countries of Central Europe. Indeed, from the nineteenth century, Greeks owned huge tracts of farmland around Adrianople, Arkadiople, Kallikrateia, and other parts of Eastern Thrace. According to statistical data from the large associations in Constantinople and furnished to the Council of Berlin in 1878, it appears that one third of the land in the sanjak of Adrianople was owned by Greeks.[38]

[36] The true copy of the inscription is as follows *МОЛЕНІЕ РАБА Б ХАРАДИБОЗа ЧИ ПЕТРОВИЧБ СТАНОИРАШКО'ЁН'ЕТЕІ 1834 χρ ΝΚΛ*.

[37] The saint enjoyed particular popularity in Europe, the Middle East and Russia. Bitha, «Παρατηρήσεις στο εικονογραφικό κύκλο του αγίου Σπυρίδωνα», 256, 283 note 144.

[38] Kyriaki Mamoni, *Θράκη» στο Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, vol 13, (Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1977), 369, 374.

Fig. 4 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Spyridon, detail of figure 1.

Of all the military saints who reside on the iconostasis in the church, we will concentrate on the icon of St Theodore (fig. 5) since he is considered to be the first of all the military saints to accomplish the feat of slaying a dragon.[39] The saint is depicted as mounted on a chestnut steed, turning slightly towards the viewer and passing a cross-shaped lance through a green, winged dragon lying below the belly of the horse. The latter's tail ends in a skilfully tied knot, while around its back leg winds the tail of the reptile, which has turned to look at the rider[40]. At this point, obeying the historical and stylistic processing of the model, we should emphasize that these iconographical details constitute a well-established motif that, from the Late Byzantine period, is repeated systematically not only in the icon of St Theodore, but in those of other dragon-slayers, such as St George.[41] To interpret the widespread popularity of this select group of martyr saints—who are not always and necessarily military personnel—in the form of a sacred knight, we have to see it in the context of the time, of the increased influence of a military aristocracy who held large tracts

[39] An event witnessed in the depiction of the act, just as early, in seals that date to between the years 650–730. Christopher Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', REB 57 (1999), 173.

[40] Athanasia Dile, *Η δράση του εργαστηρίου του Θεοδοσίου Κακαβά στην Πελοπόννησο (δεύτερο μισό 16ου αιώνα)* (Reprint of a doctoral thesis presented at the University of Ioannina, Philosophical School, Department of History and Archaeology, Ioannina, 2017), 211, 367.

[41] Dile, *Η δράση του εργαστηρίου του Θεοδοσίου Κακαβά στην Πελοπόννησο (δεύτερο μισό 16ου αιώνα)*, 211–212, whence the older bibliography.

of land in Asia Minor and had promoted the saints on horseback as their patrons, which, simultaneously, made their own lives a model to be copied.[42]

Fig. 5 Moschos Velef, Saint Theodoros, 1833, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2019. © I. Zarra

As regards the incident of the slaying of the dragon, this is introduced for the first time in a text transmitted in manuscript BHG 1464, dated to ca 754,[43] where the narrative tells of a terrible dragon that had appeared in the area around the town of Euchaita, causing the death of many of the inhabitants. St Theodore met the dragon outside its lair and, having made the sign of the cross, slaughtered it and restored order and normality to the region, finally freeing the community of the affliction they had suffered for so long and allowing the inhabitants freedom of movement[44].

Moreover, in the bottom left and right corners, charming concave and convex curves create symmetrical fields in which the artist can portray significant moments from the saint's life and martyrdom. At the same point, within a central shield shape, on a light blue surface, the dedicatory inscription is written in black capital letters: 'Supplication of the servant of God Theodoros and his parents in the year 1833. Hand of Moskhos'.

[42] Piotr L. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, trans. Richard Brzezinski (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 111 notes. 178, 122.

[43] Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', 168, 172–173.

[44] Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaries*, Librairie Alphonse Picard et Fils: Paris, 1909), 20. Titos Papamastorakis, «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών», *ΔΧΑΕ* ΙΚ΄ (1998) [1999], 219. Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', 164.

The version of the saint in his basic military equipment (without shield, helmet or greaves) is a reference to 'spiritual armour'[45], the 'armour of God', which Saint Paul urges every Christian to put on as a soldier of the Lord 'in his mighty power': 'with the belt of truth buckled around your waist'; 'with the breastplate of righteousness in place'; with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace'; 'taking up the shield of faith…'; 'taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (*Eph*. 6, 10, 11, 13-17). All this, completely in keeping with the tranquility and spiritual calm exuded by his handsome face, set in a continuous motion of advancement and withdrawal both the historicity of his existence and the transcendent character of his hypostasis.

Artists and Styles

Regarding our knowledge of the painters of the icons, information is exceptionally limited.[46] The most data we have at our disposal is for Moskhos Adrianoupolitis, who was active at the time of the so-called Bulgarian renaissance (end eighteenth– beginning nineteenth centu-

[45] Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, 181–182, 336, 337

[46] The name of Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis and the same way of writing his signature: 'hand of Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis', can be found in icons of the twelve feasts of the Lord in churches in Didymoteikho, which are donations from guilds of the town and date back to the nineteenth century. See Manolis Hatzidakis-Evyenia Drakopoulou, *Έλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την άλωση (1453–1830)*, vol. 2 *Καβαλλάρος – Ψαθόπουλος*, (Athens: Centre of Modern Greek Studies E.I.E 62, 1997), 243. Likewise, in the municipality of Orestiada and its communities, icons have been recorded in which the abbreviated inscription of the name of the name 'Nikolaos' is distinctly reminiscent of the shorthand of Nikos Adrianoupolitis. In each of these cases, caution must be exercised, given that the records concerned contain the barest stylistic descriptions and are not supported by photographic material. See Martha Theodorou, *Φορητές εικόνες και έργα μικροτεχνίας του ΙΘ΄ αιώνα, των Ι. Ναών Ορεστιάδος και των εγγύς κοινοτήτων του νομού Έβρου* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1992), 6, 9, 27, 176.

ries)[47]. He came from the Strantza region[48], worked both for Greeks and well as Slavophone clients and was likely settled in Stara Zagora.[49]

Be that as it may, as regards the icons in Drama, despite the fact that they are by different hands, they all conform to an aggregation of morphoplastic principles, constructing a unified stylistic language that was dominant in the nineteenth century and was adopted by active professionals who worked both for Greek and Slavophone Christian populations, given that they operated in the extended region of South-East Europe and the Holy Mountain. The basic features of this form of artistic enunciation are its excellent technical execution and naturalistic treatment of the physical landscape, the attention to detail paid to the luxurious texture of the expensive fabrics (vestments of the saints), ancillary objects (carved wooden furniture), and, in general, the refined stylistic treatment of the compositions[50]. At the same time, the iconographers were cognisant of Western methods of painting. They absorbed these and employed in their narratives a kind of empirical perspective, for the most part. They also made discreet use of chiaroscuro and present the bodily hypostasis of the holy protagonists, while through the plastic modelling of the facial characteristics and the naturalistic rendition of the head and facial hair of the holy figures, they project

[47] Assen Vassiliev, *Bâlgarski vâzrozhdenski maystory. Zhivopistsi, rezbari, stroiteli (Bulgarian Renaissance Masters. Painters, Woodcarvers, Builders)*, (Sofia, 1965), 646–648, fig. 416. Newer research also records him as B. Moskho and links him to the Adrianople region, limiting the time of his activity to the period 1840–1858. In our icons, however, the recorded date of 1833 extends his active years. Moreover, it is believed that he lived in the area of Stenimakhos (Asenovgrad). His iconographical production includes portable icons and wall-paintings, while works of his have been found in Haskovo and in villages in the surrounding area, such as Gorski, and Nikolovo, in the villages of Pavelsko and Yugovo in the Smolian region, as well as in the towns of Batskovo, Parvomay, and Asenovgrad. Emmanuel Mutafov – Ivanca Gergova – Alexander Kuzumdjhiev – Elena Popova – Elena Genova – Dimitrios Gonis, *Έλληνες αγιογράφοι στην Αλβανία μετά το 1453 (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences – Institute of Art Studies*, 2008), 96–97.

[48] For information on the region, see Vakalopoulos *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 472, 474.

[49] We also know that he had a son, Stefanos Moskhof Velef, who was born in Stara Zagora and followed in his father's footsteps. See Vassiliev, *Bâlgarski vâzrozhdenski maystory. Zhivopistsi, rezbari, stroiteli*, 648.

[50] See Iliana Zarra, «Νεοτερικά στοιχεία σε αγιογράφους φορητών εικόνων των ναών της Θεσσαλονίκης (19ος αι.)», in *Από τη μεταβυζαντινή τέχνη στη σύγχρονη 18ος-20ός αι.*, Πρακτικά Πανελληνίου Συνεδρίου (Θεσσαλονίκη, 20–21 Νοεμβρίου 1997), (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1998), 45-57. Iliana Zarra, «Δύο ζωγράφοι δεσποτικών εικόνων στο ναό Αγίου Νικολάου Βαθύτοπου και στη μονή Αγίου Δημητρίου Πανοράματος του Νομού Δράμας», in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός*, Γ΄ Επιστημονική Συνάντηση, Δράμα 21–24 Μαΐου 1998 (Drama: ΔΕΚΠΟΤΑ, 2002), 209, 210.

their historical, human character.[51] The individualized modelling of the typological features of the persons involved, the delving into the spiritual aspect of the saints, as well as the registration of their inner nobility and spiritual and intellectual state, in combination with the fine details of the description of their outward appearance, invest the icons with the aesthetic qualities of a portrait.[52] As to the ancillary objects depicted, these are taken either from ready-made artistic models and notebooks of sketches that were circulating within Europe (for instance the miniature figures of a king or Roman nobleman, seated in a baldachin, or the drawn curtain or a variety of vessels), or they were produced from contemporary material reality (for instance, morphological elements of the local architecture, such as the bay windows, the pitched roofs and the use of red tiles on the houses). The figures taking part in the miraculous episodes are dressed in the fashion of the day, always faithful to the clothing stereotypes defined by their social status (fig. 2). This affection of the artists for obvious exuberance and the stimulation of visual pleasure in the person venerating the icon occasionally transcends stereotypical principles, such as in the bold substitution of the simple and monochrome robe of Christ with a luxurious cloth bearing gold stamped flowers, inspired by the fashion of imported silks (fig. 6). And conversely, the need for exuberance in the expression of the sacred narrative stems precisely from the piety and fervent faith of those who commissioned the icons.[53]

To recapitulate the above, regarding the style of the icons under examination, it appears that the treatment of their themes is defined by a mixing and processing of the inherited methods from local tradition and selective adoption of foreign artistic models. An iconographer who accepted a commission composed the traditional format within

[51] Zarra, «Νεοτερικά στοιχεία σε αγιογράφους φορητών εικόνων των ναών της Θεσσαλονίκης (19ος αι.)», 45.

[52] Zarra, «Νεοτερικά στοιχεία σε αγιογράφους φορητών εικόνων των ναών της Θεσσαλονίκης (19ος αι.)», 46. Atanas Boschkov, *La peinture bulgare*, (Western Germany: Reclinghausen, 1974), 295–296.

[53] On this, see the assessment that such elements lend the icons 'a high degree of artistic quality' See Iliana Zarra, «Δύο ζωγράφοι δεσποτικών εικόνων στο ναό Αγίου Νικολάου Βαθύτοπου και στη μονή Αγίου Δημητρίου Πανοράματος του Νομού Δράμας», in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της. Ιστορία και Πολιτισμός*, Γ΄ Επιστημονική Συνάντηση, Δράμα 21–24 Μαΐου 1998 (Drama: DEKPOTA, 2002), 209, 210. Thus, even within the same religious tradition, the sacred depictions were subject to historical change. See Belting, "Iconic Presence. Images in Religious Traditions", 236.

Fig. 6 Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Christ Pantocrator, 1833, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, photo taken in 2019. © I. Zarra

contemporary perceptions and the models that were in circulation (etchings, iconographical guides, blueprints, finished works). But with this activity, within the works, both the dominant spiritual tendencies and the material realities that constitute his environment are absorbed.[54] Thereafter in the church, its liturgical space, the icon becomes more than a locus of veneration and a locus where new encounters with visitors/pilgrims are constantly taking place; it is also a format for reading that lies within the ideological and social horizon of reception of the artist's own time.[55] Popular themes and beloved sacred figures, such as Christ's horseman or the patron saint of the farmer, of the cultivator, of the travelling merchant, and, particularly of the enslaved flock, protect, console, and are models of endurance, unshakeable faith, and psychological support, examples of national awakening and militancy, and they promise the eschatological rectification of the incomprehensible state of affairs that obliged a mosaic of Christian populations to live for centuries enslaved to an infidel conqueror.

The Icons and their Context

Returning to the iconostasis in the church of the Twelve Apostles in the city of Drama, the way in which the images have been arranged

[54] Cornelia A. Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 3, 4, 22.

[55] Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 20. See also Anca Vasiliu, "Voir, nommer, regarder une image à la fin de l' Antiquité", in *Μίλτος Γαρίδης (1926–1996), Αφιέρωμα*, Γενική Εποπτεία: Αθανάσιος Παλιούρας – Αγγελική Σταυροπούλου, vol II (Ioannina: University of Ioannina- Department of Archeology, 2003), 814–815.

from a series of icons, as we view them today, prompted us to make an analytical reading of each one separately. At the same time, seen as a whole, the iconostasis acquires a conceptual cohesion, since, because of their number and the dynamic of their content, the dominant position is occupied by military warrior saints on horseback. The soldiers depicted—St Dimitrios, St George, St Theodore, and St Minas—derive their significance, at first sight, from the combination of Christianity and their military capacity, which in the first centuries of Christianity, arose from the spread of the faith through the ranks of the army and, conversely, from the role the latter played in spreading the faith.[56] For precisely this reason, *St Theodore* was examined as a representative case, since he was regarded as one of the most important and oldest military saints. In the popular mind he was identified with the 'Thracian horseman'[57] and was believed to be the patron saint of the Byzantine army.[58] In the exotic version of him as a dragon-slayer, his triumph over the grim reptile was interpreted as the restoration of order and sound organization[59] with a fair share for all members of a community of people as regards natural resources and public goods, such as water and free access to transit routes. Thereafter, because of the constant succession of military conflicts with people who vied for stretches of the empire,[60] the form of composition, as reproduced over time, functioned

[56] Delehaye, *Les légendεs grecques des saints militaries*, 2. After the proclamation of Christianity as the official religion in the fourth century, the Church reviewed its earlier reservations concerning the enlistment of Christians in the army. This stemmed from the Christian prohibition on committing murder and led to the conviction that peace was a gift of God. Once pagans were excluded from the ranks, the army became Christianized. See Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)*, 63–64, 121.

[57] See Myrtilos Apostolidis, «Περί του Θρακός ιππέως ή του Κυρίου Ήρωος», *Αρχείον του Θρακικού Λαογραφικού και Γλωσσολογικού Θησαυρού* (1939-40), 2–16.

[58] Concerning this, an initial reading of the composition cannot but be influenced by the historical context signaled by an unprecedented intensification of the persecutions of Christians in the third and fourth centuries, at the time of the pagan emperors Diocletian (284–305), Maximian (285–310) and Maximinus Daia (306–313), though Christians still multiplied in the ranks of the army. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)*, 57–58. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 21. As regards St Theodore, we should note another of his functions, since, in the central Balkan countries he was considered to be the escort of souls. Konstantinos P. Haralambidis, «Η πρώιμη εικονογραφία του αγίου Θεοδώρου», *Βυζαντινά* 16 (1991), 118.

[59] Walter, 'Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint', 164. Papamastorakis, «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών», 219.

[60] In attempting to interpret Byzantine militarism, Christopher Walter explains that its roots must be sought in their awareness of the fact that, after the Israelites, they were the anointed chosen people. Hence their central mission was to expand the borders of their realm. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 10, 41, 291, 292.

as a way of bolstering the faith and resistance of believers against infidel pressures to renounce their faith. It follows that any new processing of such themes forces us to see a closer correlation between the political circumstances of the time and also the place where they were located. In order, then, to answer the question as to what the specific theme of a holy horseman meant to people at that time, we need to delve deeper into the events that took place after the third decade of the nineteenth century in the place where they were produced.

After the Greek Revolution and the appearance of the Pan-Slavism movement,[61] the ethnically varied population of Thrace experienced adverse vicissitudes because of emerging nationalist claims within the Balkan region, since the states there looked to expand their lands within European Turkey. This caused intense rivalry among them.[62] If we review the historical context of the icons in this light, the deeply religious character of the military class is again apparent and is founded on the traditional esteem of the Byzantines and their descendants for the militaristic ideal.[63] The density of warriors on the iconostasis of the church could therefore be related to the important position occupied by a particular body of soldiers in the public life of both the Greek State and of the enslaved Christians. This was engendered in the living conditions peculiar to the mountainous regions inhabited by populations in captivity to the Turks, in combination with the conditions of life as shaped by their enslavement.[64] In particular, the plains had had their natural resources depleted to such an extent (scanty water supply or depletion of water reservoirs, neglect of mills, roads, bridges, and other agricultural infrastructure) that communities could no longer survive there and were forced into mountainous areas to engage in animal husbandry.[65] In Thrace in particular, from as early as the beginning of the Turkish conquest, in the fourteenth century, the native populations of

[61] This was a reaction against European ideas and flourished in Russia between 1830–1869. Its ultimate aim was to strengthen Russia, with the prospect of assisting the Slav peoples under Ottoman rule. Bulgarian nationalism would also hatch under the wings of the Pan-Slavic doctrine. See Kofos, «Τα ελληνοβουλγαρικό ζήτημα», 298–305.

[62] Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 223.

[63] Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 2.

[64] Ioannis Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», in *Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Εθνικισμός στη Νεότερη Ελλάδα*, Εισαγωγή-Επιμέλεια: Θάνος Βερέμης (Athens: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, 2003), 184. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 224.

[65] Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 133.

the hinterland were forced to settle in remote mountainous areas and to devote themselves to raising livestock for a living.[66] The perilous conditions of survival that arose from this livestock-based demographic and the state of things in general in the Turkish-held territories, together with outbreaks of violence and robbery, as well as the inadequate measures for the protection of the resources of the mountain region, all combined to make it necessary to form a military grouping, the 'armatoli'.[67]

The attraction exercised by this body of armed men in the nineteenth century (they were known as 'the old military order') was such that historians described them as 'a contingent of irregulars'.[68] Briefly stated, the broad popular acceptance of the irregulars among the enslaved populations of the occupied territories was due to their significant contribution to the liberation movement and national life[69] of the Greek State, an evaluation onto which they also projected their own demand for national reconstruction. It is no coincidence that the term adopted in the historical bibliography to describe this kind of warrior was 'stalwart'.[70] Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, these bands of rebels, which were made up of former miscreants, came to be equated in the public consciousness with the national army.[71] Inevitably, this characterization, as generally perceived, implied an identification of 'the nation' and 'the people',[72] a connotation that was embodied, in the end, in the depiction of the hero, the popular fighter, the warrior *who is one of us*: in other words, someone who came from the class of ordinary believers.

[66] Βακαλόπουλος, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 21.

[67] Κολιόπουλος, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 133–134.

[68] Κολιόπουλος, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 134.

[69] Important support for this evaluation is the confession by Pavlos Melas, according to which, in 1904, he went to fight in the Macedonian struggle dressed as a 'robber'. His motive was not simply to be accepted by the body of irregulars but also his profound sense that this was the role for which he had been preparing for the whole of his life. Quoted in Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 185.

[70] Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 185.

[71] It is very much to the point here to repeat that the above statement is reinforced by information that, when the uprising in Thessaly took place in 1867, men from the regular army joined these rebel bodies. Units of similar composition were also placed on standby in 1885–1886, after the annexation of Eastern Romelia by Bulgaria. See Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 159–160.

[72] This is despite the fact that the definition actually referred to the ineffective handling of national claims by men in public life. See Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 185–187.

The way in which such iconographical patterns worked is familiar to us from the corresponding manner in which portrayals of large numbers of new martyrs were accommodated. These new martyrs emerged during the period of Turkish rule in general and, in particular, at times when persecutions of Christians were intensified, culminating in the wave of forced conversions to Islam in the period following the Greek revolution and the liberation of parts of the Greek population. The onerous conditions of life for Christians in Thrace, too, during the Turkish occupation fueled the rebellious sentiments of those enslaved and encouraged the proclamation of contemporary new martyrs, who became models of faith and psychological support in the avoidance of forced conversion to Islam.[73]

The impact of the depictions of the new martyrs on the Christian public was intensified by the shared sentiments [74] between those portrayed and those venerating. We may suppose that the same is true of our mounted warriors, the religious images of whom encourage a concomitant identification on the part of the members of the community with the fighter-models. Besides, the contrast between the Christian soldier and the alien opponent or monster, with the eschatological promise of the triumph of good over evil (which took the form of a dragon and was related to the changing military circumstances in Byzantium) drew its meaning from the current political conditions and historical protagonists, so that the collective conscience was internalized as the contemporary historical threat at any given time. Thus, in the tenth century, the *bizarre native*, the dragon, was seen as the contemporary invaders, the Arabs, who trampled upon land holdings, seized the property of the local farmers and forced them to abandon their homes.[75] By the same token, the various biographical versions of St Theodore relate the presence of a monster that did not allow access to the source of water in the region, terrified the locals, and prevented passage through the place where it lurked. When the saint appeared, however, scorning the danger and armed with the sign of the cross, he routed it.

[73] In the region of Greek Thrace, in 1835, five martyrs from Samothrace were put to death in Makri. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του βόρειου ελληνισμού. Θράκη*, 215–216.

[74] David Morgan, *Visual piety, A history and theory of popular religious images* (Berkeley-Los Angeles –London: University of California Press, 1998), 70–71.

[75] Papamastorakis «Ιστορίες και ιστορήσεις βυζαντινών παλληκαριών», 219.

The military class of the irregulars had a similar mission: the defence of arable and herding lands against all forms of arbitrary power, violence, seizure or alienation of land holdings, even at the threat to their lives.[76] Gradually, their aim of guarding the security of the mountainous passes and imposing order on the areas under their control made the irregulars synonymous not only with 'armed presence', but with social stability itself and the exercise of political control.[77] As a return for their contribution, these earthly warriors enjoyed particular admiration from the oppressed population, since they were seen as heroic figures with almost supernatural brawn and special abilities, interwoven with virtues such as self-discipline, generosity, and magnanimity. In the end, the point where the earthly warriors crossed paths with the mounted saints was to be found in the fact that, many years after the establishment of the State, the idea of the nation continued to be understood as an equally religious and cultural entity, including in its ranks both the liberated Greeks and also those Christians who continued to live in lands still held by the Turks.[78] This demonstrates that the importance of the military capacity did not wane with the creation of the Hellenic State, but rather that it was enlisted therein even further, through the formation of a irredentist policy in the second half of the nineteenth century.[79] In other words, in the popular conscience, military activity was understood as being the determining mechanism for the promotion of national ideology and policy.[80]

Epilogue

As has been noted, the icons present a particular research interest because, at the time of our first visit we noted a series of human interventions in the signatures of the artists, which, after the cleaning that occurred before the next time they were photographed, in November 2019, had largely disappeared. For example, the initial inscription on the icon of St Minas (fig. 7 a-b) had been erased and

[76] Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 135.
[77] Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 136, 140.
[78] Koliopoulos, «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 166–167.
[79] Paschalis Kitromilidis, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός. Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες*, (Athens: MIET, 2009), 489, 493–499.
[80] Koliopoulos «Ληστεία και αλυτρωτισμός στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αιώνα», 141, 159, 166.

Fig. 7a Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Minas, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, detail of the 2002 photo shoot. © I. Zarra

Fig. 7b Nikolaos Adrianoupolitis, Saint Minas, 130X72 cm., iconostasis, parish of the Twelve Apostles, Drama, Greece, detail of the 2002 photo shoot. © I. Zarra

re-written three times in succession, in either Greek or Bulgarian. The dedicatory inscription on the icon of St Spyridon was completely erased.[81] Be that as it may, even when the signatures in their final version

[81] But the—likely—final layer of the Bulgarian inscription on the icon of *St Haralambos* (130X72 cm), a work by the iconographer Moskhos Belev, from 1834, had been overwritten in Greek.

are in Bulgarian, the artists wrote their names and the year of production in Greek.[82] The linguistic 'hybrid' in question confirms the fact that the artists worked not only for all the Orthodox populations in the Balkan region[83], but also that their best clientele must have been Greek-speaking Christians, since, in the majority of icons, the personal details (name, location) are given in Greek.[84] In conjunction with the political turmoil in the area, such behavior within the intended reception area of the works, which is apparent from the erasure and renewed insertion of the inscriptions on their surface, in a different language each time, is a cause of confusion around the initial destination or 'national' self-determination of the target clientele.

Although it is impossible today to reconstruct the finer shades of these linguistic 'transfers', we can still have recourse, with greater certainty, to historical accounts of the events that defined the political context of the appearance of the works. Relevant research from the third decade of the nineteenth century, to which the oldest icons date, and later, reveals that the incendiary political situation in the Orthodox Balkans is marked by an increasingly intense Bulgarian nationalism, which had been in preparation from as early as the second half of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the linguistic conflict we observe on the surface of the icons brings to the fore one of the three main criteria that contribute to the concept of the nation, that is its language.[85]

[82] To be precise, of all the despotic icons in Drama, the icon of Sts Constantine and Helen has … *1834 χειρ ΝΚΛ αδρπλ*; St Spyridon *ΕΝ ΕΤΕΙ 1834/ χειρ ΝΚΛ*; the Twelve Apostles …*1833/ χειρ ΝΚΛ*; the depiction of the Three Hierarchs…*1834/ Νκλ αδρπλ*; that of St John the Baptist… *εν έτει 1833 / Ν.Κ.Λ*; and St Minas *1833 χ(ειρ) μοσ(χου)*.

[83] Iliana Zarra, «Παρατηρήσεις για την έννοια της αφήγησης στην τέχνη με αφορμή μια φορητή θρησκευτική εικόνα του 19ου αιώνα», *Αφιέρωμα στον Χρύσανθο Χρήστου*, (Θεσσαλονίκη: University Studio Press, 2006), 63. Vassiliev, *Masters of the Bulgarian National Revival*, 646–648.

[84] An exception to this is Moskhos, who signs in Bulgarian only on the icon of St Haralambos. On the basis of word-of-mouth information, the fact that works by him have been located in regions of today's Bulgaria are testimony that the artist was likely of Bulgarian descent. I owe this information to the researcher Alexandros Papadopoulos who kindly brought it to my attention, and I thank him warmly. To the same researcher I also owe the information that Moskhos signs in Greek in the despotic icons from the church of St George in Stenimakhos (on the icon of St Dimitrios he signs in flourishing Greek letters «Χειρ Μο(σ)χ(ου) 1858 Αδρ(ια)ν(ου)π(ο) λ(ί)τ(ου)» and notes the year (1850). Besides, another despotic icon by the painter on the theme of St George dates from the same year. Here the signature is in Bulgarian, though the name of the artist is in Greek.

[85] Thanos Veremis, «Εισαγωγή», στο *Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Εθνικισμός στη Νεότερη Ελλάδα*, Εισαγωγή-Επιμέλεια: Θάνος Βερέμης (Athens: Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, 2003), 12.

Going by the principles of the Enlightenment and European political models, language was promoted as a criterion for clarifying national differences within the broader Balkan society of Christian populations.[86] Another criterion of 'national identity' was religion.[87] But these two components—language and religion—are interwoven on the surface of the icon, and, in a strange way, removed what people were hoping to achieve: a specific 'national identity' for the icons. Instead, they brought to the fore a kind of 'internationalization' of the Christian icon,[88] a situation that, in essence, involved the core element of tradition.[89] Because, although the icon as a visual confession of dogma was stamped in the collective conscience as a kind of unwavering re-production of inherited rules, in fact the preservation of tradition was due to the continuous renewal of the ways in which it was expressed. In the context of this renewal, reference to the iconographical 'canon' was defined by its constant transformations, which resulted, in the case of our icons, in a dominant, eclecticist style.[90]

For this reason, on the one hand, the co-existence of Greek and Bulgarian on the surface of the works and, on the other, the structural similarities in the techno-morphological composition of the themes set

[86] This shattered the image of a cohesive Christian society in South-East Europe under Turkish occupation, as did the rejection of the 'ecumenicity' of the 'supranational Orthodox ecclesiastical society'. Paschalis M. Kitromilidis, «'Νοερές κοινότητες' και οι απαρχές του εθνικού ζητήματος στα Βαλκάνια», in *Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Εθνικισμός στη Νεότερη Ελλάδα*, Εισαγωγή-Επιμέλεια: Θάνος Βερέμης (Μορφωτικό Ίδρυμα Εθνικής Τραπέζης, Athens 2003), 57, 58, 62, 65, 66, 69, 71,73, 83.

[87] The third was a common cultural tradition. Veremis, «Εισαγωγή», 12. Although E. J Hobsbawm explains that criteria such as language per se are vague, inappropriate, and ambiguous, which is why such signposts proved useful for propaganda purposes. See Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, CUP 1992.

[88] This, in essence, was linked to the supranational character of Christianity itself. This is why, in any case, a holy icon is an exceptionally charged locus that creates and preserves the sense of belonging together in a society of like-minded people and, as a concomitant, introduces a link between national consciousness and religion. And, vice versa, it is difficult for an icon to serve as an effective symbol of a 'protonation' because of the universal nature of Christianity, which merges any national, linguistic, or other differences. See Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism*. At this time, the Ecumenical Patriarchate convened a Great Synod in 1872 that denounced the Bulgarians as schismatics and condemned the introduction of 'phyletism' and 'national feuds' into the bosom of the Church. Kofos, «Το ελληνοβουλγαρικό ζήτημα», 304.

[89] In the sense that civilization arises through a process of creation and recreation and interdependence between material objects, images, and agencies, which are linked to commerce and to financial transactions in general. See Monica Juneja, 'Circulation and Beyond—The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner (editors), *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2017), 61, 63.

[90] Tsakiridou *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 1.

the bipolar difference (national) and affinity (cultural) into a continuous back and forth motion that makes it impossible to attribute the works to one or the other national pole. In other words, it is precisely the common aesthetics of the icon that informs ecclesiastical art in the Orthodox Balkans and thus allows claims of 'national' provenance on the part of the two national collectivities that, though they were at odds, nevertheless shared the same faith. Because the treatment in question of the themes, as has been shown, owes its articulation to the constant circulation[91] of the artists concerned, their material creations and the practices and ideas that shaped their technical and morphological principles. As a result, this movement of people and *objets d'art* gave rise to various encounters and creative 'cross-pollination' that in reality transcended the boundaries of locality.[92] Indeed, the fact that it was not a one-way movement,[93] that is, a simple transplantation of imported motifs or methods from an advanced artistic environment into a provincial one, but was, at the same time, a return of the loans, is confirmed by the eclecticist style of the icons, which shows the process of reshaping the context into which the new visual rules were being incorporated. Evidence for this is the similar way in which the adopted technomorphic methods and figural motifs are processed in the conception and realization of the icons by painters active professionally in the South-East Balkans as a whole, whether they were Greek or Bulgarian.[94] A basic feature of the common morphoplastic manner

[91] On the content of the term, see Juneja, 'Circulation and Beyond—The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia', 60 and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner, 'Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner (editors), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (Ashgate: USA, 2017), 2.

[92] Since 'there is no pure tradition unaffected by the artistic forms of other cultures'. See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "Reflections on World Art History", in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Pruner (editors), Circulations in the Global History of Art (Burlington: Ashgate, 2017), 37.

[93] A movement that could be repeated ad infinitum. See Juneja, 'Circulation and Beyond—The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia', 60.

[94] Within the framework of the approach attempted by the present work, special weight is given to the term 'Balkan', which should be understood as referring to the region within the former Byzantine empire and, thereafter the Ottoman (Johan August Zeune, 1808). It was understood by indigenous geographers, national geographers, and historians as a 'locus' of 'intense borrowings' from which stemmed common features, in particular as regards popular culture. According to this particular view, the Balkans were understood as a realm that had come about from the 'intersection' or 'integumentum' of more than one 'loci', which were formed from the common natural environmental conditions and the common cultural repository. In the end, this resulted in the formation of a similar way of life and recognizable outlooks on the part of the people living there, particularly because of their common subjection to Ottoman rule. See

in question is the non-stylistic absorption of imported elements that co-exist with the traditional types in a discreet way.[95] So the registration of the inscription and 'remedial' action of re-inscription in another, different language, Greek or Bulgarian, on the surface of the despotic icons, is not sufficient to determine the 'national identity' of the works.

Moreover, the development of the art of iconography in the Orthodox Balkan region as a whole, with common predominant means of expression, cannot be seen independently from the historico-political context of their reference point. In interpreting the meaning of the icons of military saints, we mentioned above the particular military class of warriors. The formation of this class was a common development throughout the enslaved populations of the Balkan peninsula, since it appeared after the disappearance of the former military castes of the Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians, and Vlachs (Romanian), as well as the Dalmatian spahis (kadimi sipahiler). The irregular gendarmes [*kleftes* and *armatoli*][96] and the Bulgarian hajduks, as a special military 'class', arose from the need of the sultans to control the inaccessible mountain communities and to impose order.[97] It seems, then, that the common past and conditions of life experienced by the competing national groups, the similarities in their political ambitions, and the structural symbolism of the iconographic model of a mounted warrior, as this was perceived on the basis of a common religious faith, allowed in turn for a common manner of viewing the military saints and a quest for such icons by these groups. This reading of the icons and the perception of their meaning by the communion of the faithful would have been impossible, however, if the stance, the garb, and the way in which these warriors of the Christian faith, these soldiers of yore, in their later

Roumen Dontchev Daskalov, 'The Balkans: Region and Beyond', in Roumen Dontchev Daskalov, Diana Mishkova, Tchavdar Marinov and Alexander Vezenkov, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* - Volume Four: *Concepts, Approaches, and (Self-)Representations, Balkan Studies Library* volume: 18, eds Roumen Dontchev Daskalov - Tchavdar Marinov (Brill: 2017), 1, 2.

[95] DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, Joyeux-Pruner, 'Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History', 2.

[96] In particular, with reference to the term 'armatolos', it is first encountered in the texts of Turkish historians of the fifteenth century. Apostolos E. Vacolopoulos, 'Traits communs du développement économique et social des peoples Balkaniques et du Sud-Est Européen à l' époque ottomane', *Balkan Studies* 16 (1975), 159, 160, 161.

[97] Indeed, from the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, a period marked by frequent military conflicts between the empire and Europe, the institution of the 'armatoli' was revived. Vacolopoulos, 'Traits communs du développement économique et social des peoples Balkaniques et du Sud-Est Européen à l' époque ottomane', 159, 160, 161, 166.

guise, did not transcend the mere reproduction of a stereotyped model and did not reveal the essence of their existence: the invincible combativeness and supremacy of the holy mounted warriors over all forms of adversary. In aesthetic terms, this is shown through the application of compositional principles, such as the non-organic relationship between the Christian horseman and the background scenery. Instead of being incorporated into the landscape, he rides above it, bringing a surrealistic reality which endures throughout the centuries, irrespective of any topical necessities and tribulations, or geographical co-ordinates.

This conventional existence of the depictions, which was called *iconicity*,[98] led to a common interpretative view and a familiarized understanding of the content on the part of the faithful as a whole. In other words, the formal external features resonated with the visual apperceptions of the faithful in the nineteenth century, in every era, in every combat, and the mounted saints always emerge victorious, no matter who the opponent is: a pagan Roman in the time of the persecution of Christians; the Arabs in the tenth century; the retrogressive conqueror of the more modern historical period;[99] or the unhistorical and exotic beast that forces the peaceful inhabitants of a region to flee their homeland. There is no room for the ideological springboards or political agendas of the competing sides, which, as the later 'corrections' of the original inscriptions testify, both sides sought to make their own. And, vice versa, precisely because the content of the model warrior depicted was reinforced by the historical context of every previous version, which contained much of its contemporality, it managed to be identified not only with the framework of the political narrative of both ethnic groups, but also with the transcendental experiences of the faithful on both sides.[100]

[98] Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 36, 156, 162, 185.

[99] On the interpretational correlation between the motif and the serpent and issue of liberation, see Iliana Zarra, «Η πάλη ανάμεσα σε αετό και φίδι: Το εικονογραφικό μοτίβο σε δύο παραδείγματα του 18ου και 19ου αιώνα και οι πολιτικές του προεκτάσεις», in *Θεσσαλονίκη*, (Θεσσαλονίκη: Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα Κέντρου Ιστορίας του Δήμου Θεσσαλονίκης, 2013), 91–106, esp. 102, 103–104, whence the older bibliography. Papastorakis 213–219. Paschalis Kitromilidis, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός. Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες*, (Αθήνα: MIET, 2009), 45.

[100] As has been so beautifully put by Cornelia Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 20, 162.

Consequently, the particular dynamic that the saints and warriors of the Christian faith draw upon is actually due to the fact that they always stand at that point when fleeting reality is lost in the hereafter,[101] precisely because this encounter of theirs with the faithful is, every time, an event that is experienced.[102] In this case, the completeness with which believers communicate with the warrior saint and liberator does not involve only the respectful attitude of the church-going public but also its multi-sensory participation in the action of the scene. Believers, or rather the community of believers, experience the animation of the sacred depiction with all their senses (motion, hearing, sight, smell, and taste).[103] Such transcendental events are not unknown in the history of the Byzantine icons. The authors of the well-known *Εκφράσεις* ('Expressions') and other iconographical sources of the period describe occasions when the forms of the saints depicted behave as living creatures: they intervene in human affairs and perform miraculous acts. This type of relationship between the faithful and the icon surpasses historical time and any social coordinates and is 'immune' to formulae that determine their expression stylistically.[104]

Notable evidence of one such experience is preserved in the accounts of residents of Adrianople, which were recorded, decades later, by the soldier and politician Stylianos Gonatas (1876–1966), during a walking tour in Thrace.[105] According to these accounts, in the last phase of Turkish rule Christians suffered inordinately from the repeated demands of the Muslims that they be given halva or rice to eat, particularly during the period of Ramadhan. At some stage this bizarre tax exhausted the funds of the church and therefore the faithful were perforce obliged to contribute directly to these doles. Then the priests, parish council members and leading figures among the parishioners

[101] Zarra, «Η πάλη ανάμεσα σε αετό και φίδι: Το εικονογραφικό μοτίβο σε δύο παραδείγματα του 18ου και 19ου αιώνα και οι πολιτικές του προεκτάσεις», 96.

[102] Tsakiridou, *Tradition and Transformation in Christian Art. The Transcultural Icon*, 20.

[103] Dimitra Kotoula, 'Experiencing the Miracle. Animated Images and the Senses in the Burial Chapel of the Byzantine Saint', in *The Multi-Sensory Image from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, edited by Heather Hunter-Crawley and Erica O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2019), 86–88, 97.

[104] Kotoula, "Experiencing the Miracle. Animated Images and the Senses in the Burial Chapel of the Byzantine Saint", 88, 89.

[105] The people in question were a Christian community who had settled on the western edge of the town, near the Mikhal-kioprou bridge. Their church was dedicated to the warrior St George. Turks lived in the same area, quite a number of whom were janissaries. Stylianos Gonatas, «Αναμνήσεις εκ της Θράκης», *Θρακικά* 25 (1956), 236–237.

'locked themselves in one night and, in tears, implored Saint George to liberate them from this taxation'.[106] The next day, when the janissaries had gathered at the coffee-shop:

> suddenly the road lit up, as if illumined by lightning and Saint George appeared on horseback, passing the coffee-shop a number of times and threatening the Janissaries with his lance.
>
> The latter were overcome with such terror that they not only ceased from demanding halva from the church but even sent measures of wax candles and oil for the candelabras and oil-lamps of the Saint.[107]

In conclusion, the observation persists that historians of art who do not approach the particular aesthetic properties of the icon as a means of giving an existential form to divinity or sanctity refuse to open a dialogue with theologians. And even though the international discourse around the history of art insists on expressing the 'complaint' that the reading of religious sentiment is now satisfied by the prolific production of objects of veneration without any special artistic merit,[108] perhaps we should ask ourselves whether the *artistic deficiency* in question is because we are overlooking the fact that the relationship between the believer/viewer and the icon is not limited to passive observation. On the contrary, it is something that derives from participation in the experience of worship as a whole. As a result, the icon will not allow us to see it in its fullness if we do not respect its integrity.

[106] Gonatas, «Αναμνήσεις εκ της Θράκης», 237.
[107] Gonatas, «Αναμνήσεις εκ της Θράκης», 237.
[108] Martin Warnke in Hans Belting – Wolfgang Kemp et al. *Kunstgeschichte*: *Eine Einführung*, 45.

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