ICONOCLASM: A CHRISTIAN DILEMMA -

A BYZANTINE CONTROVERSY

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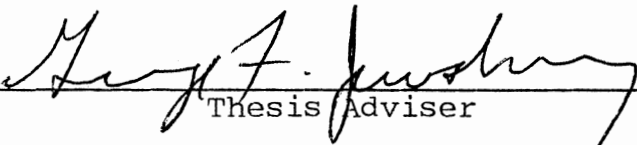
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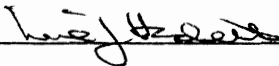
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PREFACE

This thesis is concerned with Iconoclasm, the religious upheaval which troubled the Byzantine conscience for over a century. There have been numerous theories adduced by historians to account for this phenomenon. It is the purpose of this study to view the varying interpretations, analyze their shortcomings, and to put forth a different view of the controversy, one that more adequately expresses the deeply rooted religious nature of the movement, a movement not only of the eighth and ninth centuries but an idea which was nurtured in fertile soil of the Old Testament and Apostolic Christianity.

The author wishes to express heartfelt appreciation to his thesis adviser, Dr. George Jewsbury, whose unflagging solicitude, support, and inspiration were instrumental in the preparation of this work.

A note of thanks is given to Mrs. Karen Hoyer, whose typing expertise, in the final analysis, made the difference between success and failure.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The writing of history is an obstacle course replete
with pitfalls and barriers to confound the unwary and the
unconscientious. These pitfalls and barriers range from
blatant tendentiousness to alleged objectivity and "truth."
Nowhere are these obstacles more real than in the study of
Iconoclasm, that raging Christian controversy which ulti-
mately engulfed Byzantine civilization for more than a
century.

The problem confronting the historian seeking to inves-
tigate this controversy is three-tiered; on the one level,
the chronological and philosophical remoteness of the period
under consideration is staggering and, on the next, there is
an agonizing paucity of hard information upon which to con-
struct a viable hypothesis. But the third level of our tri-
partite problem is, if anything, even more formidable and
relates to the historical obstacle course alluded to earlier.
This third part of the problem can be described as cultural/
philosophical myopia.

Since the Renaissance, humanity has found itself in an
increasingly secular world, divorced from the spirituality
that characterized earlier times. Over the past three

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centuries, man has been bombarded by a succession of philo-
sophical methods ranging from rationalism, to logical
positivism to existentialism, as well as a plethora of lesser
intellectual movements. Small wonder that when materialist
historians think of God or metaphysics at all, they tend to
castigate such abstractions as mere superstition. Therefore,
it is not difficult to understand why many contemporary
scholars are so hard pressed to comprehend an age when one's
relationship to God was of crucial importance, not something
to be dismissed as irrational rodomontade.

Confronted with a complex phenomenon such as Iconoclasm
and dominated by a humanist mind-set, the modern historian
tends to ascribe the rise of Iconoclasm to a variety of
motivations: political, demographic, militaristic, caesaro-
papistic, etc. If religion is even mentioned it is in the
context of extrinsic influences and not as something of over-
riding importance. It cannot be denied that the aforemen-
tioned reasons most often cited by historians do have their
place. Man does not exist in a vacuum and, in a movement as
intricate as Iconoclasm, many forces enter the picture, each
playing parts in the drama. What can be said is that the
primacy of religion has been neglected by modern historians.
A brief historiographical essay will serve to put this fact
in perspective.

In an article entitled "The Supernatural Defenders of
Constantinople," Norman H. Baynes penned this perceptive
observation:

> Modern writers on Byzantium, convinced that religion
> is a sham, have all but banished it from their his-
> tories, with allusions to superstition and/or
> fanaticism, and have thus falsified the picture.
> There can be no doubt that the Byzantines lived in
> a world in which religion could and did play a
> decisive role and this is a factor which any student
> ignores at his peril.[1]

It would seem, then, that many historians have ignored Baynes'

caveat. This is not true of Baynes himself, however. In a

series of articles brought together under the title Byzantine

Studies and other Essays, Baynes manifests profound insights

concerning the nature of Iconoclasm. In an article entitled

"The Icons before Iconoclasm," he traces the rise of the cult

of icons, which began quite early in Christianity, and how

this was resented by many who viewed such actions as renascent

paganism. In a perceptive piece called "Idolatry and the

Early Church," Baynes documents the influence of Neoplaton-

ist thought upon early Christian thinking, especially Chris-

tian views of images. The Neoplatonists strove assiduously

to prove that the statues they venerated were not gods, and

therefore idols, but images which prompted the worshipper to

fix his mind upon the spiritual realm. Baynes demonstrates

how, quite early, the Christians borrowed this idea intact

and, with but few refinements, clung to it throughout the

maelstrom of the Byzantine iconoclastic controversy. Baynes

seems to be one of the few byzantinists of the older school

to appreciate the importance of religion in the iconoclastic

movement.

The problem facing many historians seeking to come to

grips with Iconoclasm is lack of perspective. Too often,

they see Iconoclasm as something akin to Athena emerging fully grown from the forehead of Zeus; in this case however, we have Iconoclasm in the place of Athena and Leo III in the place of Zeus. For too long, historians have viewed Iconoclasm as being <u>inextricably</u> linked with the Isaurian dynasty whose members absorbed their Iconoclasm osmotically from their eastern habitat and loosed it upon the Christian world once they gained power in the eighth century. They refuse to see the movement as a continuum, stretching back to the dawn of Christianity, a movement that <u>culminated</u> in what is known as Byzantine Iconoclasm.

This debunking of religion got a sizeable assist from Gibbon and his monumental <u>Decline</u> <u>and</u> <u>Fall</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Roman</u> <u>Empire</u>, but it is not necessary to go back that far. George Finlay, another English historian, who wrote in the last half of the 19th century, in his generally excellent seven volume <u>History</u> <u>of</u> <u>Greece</u> (the second volume of which deals with the history of Byzantium), sees Iconoclasm as an intrusion of a bucolic religious fanaticism upon a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan society. He sees it as an eastern phenomenon and not a <u>Byzantine</u> one with deep roots in the distant past.

The French byzantinist, Louis Bréhier, in his valuable little volume <u>La</u> <u>Querelle</u> <u>des</u> <u>Images</u>, sees Iconoclasm in much the same way as does Finlay but he goes a bit further in his analysis. He sees Iconoclasm as involving two distinct questions: a) the oft discussed matter of image worship

itself, and b) the question of the propriety or, better yet, the legality of religious art, the question being whether or not art can be used to depict the metaphysical world. It is not implausible that Bréhier may be writing from a biased Roman Catholic point of view.

Bréhier's countryman, Henri Gregoire, sees Iconoclasm as composed of religious and political elements with a marked preference for the latter. He views religion largely as a tool used by the Isaurian emperors to attain their political objectives. For Gregoire, the iconoclastic policies of the Isaurians were an attempt to mold a unified state at a time of dire peril in the Byzantine realm. His views are clearly expressed in his article "The Byzantine Church" in the collection entitled Byzantium, edited by N. H. Baynes.

English historian E. J. Martin in his book History of the Iconoclastic Controversy, gives the primacy of religion short shrift. He sees Iconoclasm as an eastern import greatly influenced by Monophysitism and Judaism. In dealing with Iconoclasm's second phase, initiated by Leo V, the Armenian, Martin is even less charitable. He dismisses religious influences, exogamous or otherwise, stating that "in the later stages of the Controversy the philosophical and theological arguments were subsidiary to the appeal to authority."

Even George Ostrogorsky, a historian possessed of great perspicacity, is not immune from error where Iconoclasm is concerned. His by-and-large excellent little tome Studien zur Geschichte des Byzantinische Bilderstreites grew out of

new studies of the writings of the Patriarch Nicephorus, the assiduous apologist of images, during the early ninth century. Ostrogorsky's work brings to light the iconoclastic dogma as adduced by the Emperor Constantine V in his Inquiries (preserved in Nicephorus' writings) and later refined by the Iconoclastic Council of 754. Ostrogorsky does yeoman service in dredging up these valuable works and presenting them in a comprehensible fashion but his interpretation of the material is not convincing. He, too, sees Iconoclasm as an eastern anomaly, heavily colored by Monophysitism. Therefore, he is unable to see its unique features and its solid link with theological doctrine of early Christianity. Ostrogorsky casts Iconoclasm in the role of a "trendy" innovation, castigating it as a perverse misapplication of the liturgy. If he were not so handicapped by his own bias, he could readily discern that it was dependent upon genuine doctrines laid down in patristic exegeses and drew freely on abundant patristic attacks on idolatry. Constantine's formulations were not chimerical or formed out of thin air.

Ostrogorsky is no more persuasive in his views on Iconoclasm's second phase, which lasted approximately thirty years (A.D. 813-843). In his invaluable synthesis entitled The History of the Byzantine State, he describes the second phase as bearing the "stamp of impotence." He dismisses the Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) convoked by Leo V, as a mere recapitulation of the formulations of the 754 Council. In Ostrogorsky's opinion, the Council of 815 broke

no new ground, being content to mouth the dogma of Constantine V. But this view has been vigorously and successfully refuted by Professor P. J. Alexander in an excellent article entitled "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (Horos),"found in volume seven of the Dumbarton Oaks Papers (1953). Drawing upon his own diligent investigations of the polemics of the Patriarch Nicephorus and the proceedings of the 815 Council which that learned churchman preserved, Alexander has succeeded in shedding new light on the significance of that convocation. Alexander agrees that the Definition of the 815 Council was largely a reprise of the earlier Council of 754. But it is in the florilegium or list of patristic sources and their statements that Alexander detects fresh insight. Rather than retain the Eucharist-as-the-true-image-of-Christ argument propounded by Constantine, an argument, by the way, on tricky theological ground, the bishops used their sources in an intriguing manner and arrived at a whole new definition of what constituted an image. For the bishops of the Council of 815, the true image of Christ was the true Christian man, acting out Christ's commandments in his daily life. This is a rather profound shift of emphasis and would indicate that Iconoclasm in its second period was not a mere shadow as Ostrogorsky would suggest.

Bias can even be imputed to an historian of the eminence of Steven Runciman. In his book Byzantine Civilization, he presents this rather distressingly narrow view of Iconoclasm:

> The Eighth Century was filled by the Iconoclastic Controversy. Northern Syria was a home of Puritanism.

> Nestorianism had been popular there as a puritan
> movement. Its opposite, Monophysitism, also won
> favor there. . . And now a northern Syrian, Leo,
> surnamed the Isaurian, sought to enforce Puritan-
> ism on the Empire. Basically Iconoclasm was a
> Christological question: Could the divinity of
> Christ be depicted? If not, was it not idolatry
> to worship pictures of Him? It was easy to prove
> Iconoclastic theology to be either Monophysite or
> Nestorian; and subtle distinctions were drawn in
> the nature of worship; but Iconoclasm really failed
> because it threatened to deprive the people of the
> pictures they loved. Just as Nestorius had seemed
> to attack the Virgin, now Leo and his successors
> were insulting Christ and all the Saints. Icono-
> clasm only succeeded so long, because it was ably
> led, and supported by the army, mostly Asiatic by
> birth. . . The Seventh Ecumenical Council, at
> Nicaea in 787, condemned Iconoclasm; and though it
> was revived in the next century, the movement was
> largely political and short-lived.[2]

In this one paragraph, there is a fair definition of Iconoclasm

but also something more; we see a list of all the stumbling

blocks which have interfered with the study of Iconoclasm

through the years: Iconoclasm was Monophysitic, it was Asian

in origin, it began with the Isaurian emperors, it was a

creature of a largely Asiatic army, the second period of

Iconoclasm was of little importance. It is these misconcep-

tions that have made Iconoclasm a misunderstood phenomenon

for generations of historians.

On the other side of the fence, several of the younger

Byzantine scholars are beginning to discard these old prejud-

ices. In addition to the above mentioned P. J. Alexander,

the list includes Peter Brown who in two excellent articles,

"Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy,"

in the English Historical Review,[3] and "The Rise and Function

of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," in the Journal of Roman

Studies,[4] seeks to restore the proper perspective while add-
ing some fresh insights. He feels that Iconoclasm was, first
and foremost, a religious question. Indeed, he perceives it
as a struggle over what was to be considered holy in Byzan-
tine life. He also sees Iconoclasm as having its roots in
Apostolic Christianity. He gives political considerations
their due, seeing the icon and the holy man as collateral
centrifugal forces, decentralizing influences during a time
of crisis, siphoning away prestige from the emperors, who
jealously sought to guard the prerogatives of their unique
position as ruler and priest.

Of course, Brown does not answer all the questions. For
instance, if Iconoclasm arose, in part, out of a widely per-
ceived need within the Empire, why did it fade away as it
did? If it arose, in part, in response to grave national
peril, why, in later periods of domestic upheaval and military
catastrophe, did it not reappear? Still, Brown's work is
welcome because of its emphasis upon the profoundly religious
nature of Iconoclasm.

Another historian who gives religion top rank when assign-
ing reasons for the rise of Iconoclasm is Stephen Gero. In a
thoughtful article in Byzantinische Zeitschrift entitled "The
Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts and its
Source,"[5] Gero demonstrates that iconoclastic doctrine as
embodied in the views of Constantine V and the Council of 754
was not something new, trotted out for a special occasion,
but had a solid nexus with the doctrines of the early Christian

church. His thesis rejects that of Ostrogorsky, who espouses a diametrically opposed opinion.

In a recent book entitled The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy, Leslie W. Barnard places himself squarely in the company of those who would put religion back into Iconoclasm. In this excellent treatment of the subject, Barnard acknowledges the complex nature of the movement. He sees Iconoclasm as being possibly influenced by a great many factors but states, quite correctly, that in view of the dearth of primary material on the subject one cannot say with any certainty which of these factors played the biggest role in shaping Iconoclasm. Thus, Judaism may have occupied a major niche but in light of Leo III's own statements and what we do know of the case, it is not reasonable to say this is so.

But on the central issue Barnard is unequivocal. He sees Iconoclasm as a religious phenomenon of great depth and passion which had its genesis not in the eighth century, but in the earliest primitive Christianity. It was always there, lurking in the background, taking the form of an expostulation by a bishop or an isolated disturbance in some city or town, needing only direction from above to give it coherence. This direction came with the rulers of the Isaurian dynasty who possessed the will and the power to put the principles of Iconoclasm into effective action.

As can be seen from this brief historiographical sketch, much that has been written about Iconoclasm has been somewhat

tainted by cultural and theological bias. Many historians, surrounded by secular, materialist philosophies, tend to disregard religion as a viable force in history and so portray Iconoclasm in such a way as to do a grave disservice to the vitality and spiritual fervor of the movement. It is hoped that this paper will help, in a small way, to rectify the misconceptions which have hindered the study of Iconoclasm in the past. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that Iconoclasm was not merely an eighth century struggle over the desirability of religious imagery but a controversy which stretched back to the very beginning of Christianity, a Christian problem which was only incidentally Byzantine.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Norman H. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople," Byzantine Studies and other Essays (Oxford, 1955), p. 248.

[2]Steven Runciman, Byzantine Civilization (New York, 1956), p. 94.

[3]Peter Brown, "Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," English Historical Review, LXXXVIII (1973), pp. 1-34.

[4]Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," The Journal of Roman Studies, LXI (1971), pp. 80-102.

[5]Stephen Gero, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts and its Source," Byzantinische Zeitschrift, LXVIII (1975), pp. 4-22.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL/PHILOSOPHICAL CAUSES

OF THE CONTROVERSY

Iconoclasm was, first and foremost, a question of profound theological importance. It dealt with that most sensitive of all concerns--man's relationship with the infinite. For centuries, philosophers and churchmen, both Christian and pagan, argued the merits of images, either praising them as blessings from God or castigating them as inventions of the devil, designed to lead men's souls to the "gehenna of fire." The arguments adduced by both sides were either simplistic or subtle but, regardless of content were defended with a sincerity, a fervor, even fanaticism that can only bewilder or amuse us, viewing the events of that time from our humanistic, rationalistic world of today. Let us, then, examine in some detail the philosophical undercurrents that sparked religious thought and speculation for generations.

Genesis of the Cult of Icons

Ludicrously elementary though it may be, Iconoclasm could not have come into being without icons, which are pictures or statues depicting the image of Christ, the Virgin, or some

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saint. From whence did these icons come? For millenia, men had fashioned images in an effort to come to terms with an invisible world which was confusing and often frightening. Christianity came into existence at a time when images and statues of the various divinities everywhere abounded. Like its parent, Judaism, Christianity, early on, condemned these practices as idolatry which was expressly forbidden by Scripture. But the new faith grew to a vigorous adolescence at a time when religious syncretism exercised a profound influence. Slowly, ineluctably, Christianity began to co-opt what had once been repudiated, to the chagrin of those elements in the church who desired a pure faith, unsullied by heathen practices. Clearly, the battle lines were drawn quite early in Christianity's existence.

Religious art existed from the first Christian centuries. It was used almost exclusively at first, in obsequies and funerary rites and has its finest examples in the ancient Roman catacombs.[1] But by the fifth century, with the christianization of large numbers of the subjects of the Later Roman Empire, the images of martyrs had become more than mere reminders of faith or of the departed. In fourth century Rome the dangers of the cults of martyred saints, under the aegis of which pagan polytheism could continue, were sufficiently realized for the number of officially recognized martyrs to be kept down to twenty-five. It is arguable that in the East there was a more entrenched pagan tradition to overcome since Western pilgrims in the same

century remarked on the many martyr memorials in Constanti-
nople and other cities, e.g. Edessa. St. Augustine decried
those who in the fifth century had become sepulcrorum et
picturarum adorates.[2] As early as the fourth century, pil-
grims at certain shrines were addressing intercessions to
saints and, in some churches dedicated to martyred saints,
the portraits of these individuals became places at which
the supplicant felt he could approach a saint to intercede
with God for him.[3] These portraits began to be placed in
homes and in public places, as well, to secure divine pro-
tection. Pictures of certain especially revered ascetics,
e.g. Simeon Stylites, began to appear. Theologians sought
to justify this phenomenon. The anonymous author of Barlaam
and Joasaph, living in the early seventh century, stated that
the homage accorded to an image passes to that which it
represents. In 692 the Council in Trullo used almost exactly
the same wording. Some icons were reputed to possess miracu-
lous powers and were believed to have been created by
numinous means.[4]

Image worship was given a tremendous boost by the tre-
mendous influx of gold coincident with Constantine I's support
of Christianity. Indeed, material aids in worship were
becoming de rigueur by the end of the fifth century.[5] Already
by this time, the image cult was being associated with the
belief in magic powers and can be viewed as a "pagan trans-
mutation of Christianity."[6]

In the fifth century, the Stylites of Syria were held in

such awe that the sacred dust or any object which had been in physical contact with their bodies was considered a conduit for conveying God's grace. These men would present clay tablets to visitors impressed with portraits of themselves, made of dirt and sweat from their own bodies. The image cult was not widespread until the middle part of the sixth century when it began to burgeon.[7]

The sphere of the miraculous contains the most far-reaching developments of the image cult. It reached the point where the barrier between the image and the prototype became blurred. This was a survival of an earlier animism and was deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Graeco-Roman world. By the sixth century, images were beginning to supplant even the deeply ingrained Imperial cult in the minds of the people. The processions of icons, especially the image of Christ, began to be referred to in terms of the Emperor's royal procession. Even Christ's image was referred to by the term heretofore reserved for the ruler's portrait.[9] The cult of Mary was of great importance in, and was intimately connected with, Constantinople. The following anecdote concerns the great Church of the Virgin at Blachernae and the icon of the Mother of God housed therein. It serves to illustrate how the perception of images had become distorted through the years. During the reign of Leo III, after the Emperor had instituted his iconoclastic policies, the Patriarch took the icon of the Virgin down to the sea to save it by launching it on a voyage to Rome. Standing bolt upright, the icon sailed

itself to Rome in twenty-four hours (certainly no mean feat, even for a miraculous image) and was welcomed by the Pope who caused it to be hung in a church dedicated to St. Peter. After the Council of 787, the icon knew that it was time to return to its original home. It proceded to tear itself from the walls of the church (much to the consternation of the congregation) and made its way to the Tiber. It sailed down the river to the open sea where it was able to return to Constantinople and find a home in the Virgin's Church in the Chalikopiateia district of the city near St. Sophia. The icon was periodically carried "throughout the city which the Virgin had chosen for her dwelling place."[10]

The cult of images in the orient was of the same character as relics in the West. The Image of the Virgin of Edessa, for example, was important during the reign of Heraclius. It was used in the great naval engagement against Phocas in 611. It appeared on a banner at the head of the army that defeated the Persian and regained the True Cross.[11]

It seems that the cult of images and Iconoclasm germinated in the same soil. In houses and basilicas discovered largely intact and dating from the beginning of the fourth century, there is manifested a rich decoration and sculpture featuring Christian symbols, e.g. the monogram of Constantine, but virtually no representation of the human form.[12] In the various areas of the Byzantine Empire, there were indigenous iconographies and favorite subjects like St. George or the Crucifix; but more often than not, the forms of men and animals

were conveyed in geometric shapes.

We see much the same thing among the Germanic peoples at the other end of the Christian world. In extant sarcophagi of the period, the human form is absent. The reason for this preference for ornamental art is profound. The geometric lines with their complex interlacings and the repetition of the same motif with symbols of vegetation and animals were an expression of the infinite.

The growth and proliferation of image worship stemmed from the growing palpable adumbration of insecurity which may have gripped large portions of the population of the eastern Mediterranean during the trying years of the sixth/ seventh century. What causes a people to sense a decline or decay with the concomitant search for firm foundations is tenuous speculation at best. All the same, official resistance to such pressure definitely ebbed at the time.[15]

The fact that images were assuming a role analogous to that of the imperial portrait was not lost on the observers of society in that day. In a series of ceremonial processions in the years between 554-560, a copy of the image of Camuliana was paraded through various cities in an effort to raise funds for a charitable institution. The unnamed chronicler writing in 569 described these processions in terms of an emperor's adventus and interprets them as symbolic of Christ's Second Coming. He even referred to the image of Christ by using a term for the portrait of the ruler.[16]

Increasingly, the cult of images extended beyond the

sphere of private piety. In 656 a theological debate was
held between Maximus the Confessor and Theodosius, bishop of
Caesarea, in the castrum of Bizya in Bithynia, where Maximus
was confined. At a given point in the proceedings, when it
appeared that a compromise had been attained, all the parti-
cipants rose, prayed, kissed the gospel book, the Cross, the
icons of Christ and the Virgin, in whose presence the colloquy
had evidently been held, and placed their hands on these
objects in confirmation of what had been transacted. This
was an official ecclesiastical ceremony enacted by clerics
and featuring icons as quasi-legal instruments along with the
book of the gospel on which oaths had been sworn since the
fourth century.[17] It is clear that the "urge to behold the
unseen, to have the ineffable made palpably real and present,
broke through with unprecedented strength."[18]

Mohammed's last temptation was to give the angels powers
of intercession with Allah. He resisted the temptation. He
rejected icons because heaven was without human intercessors.[19]
The belief in intercession was the lever which moved Byzan-
tine art in the early years. Angels appeared quite early
despite apprehensions about giving them a human form. The
Virgin was of crucial importance and her intercessions had
the infallible efficacy of a blood relative.[20]

The holy man was the "impressario" of the piety that
focused upon the icon. He was the tangible presence of an
intercessor before God. He helped foster the idea that
material objects could be the vehicles of miraculous cures.

Objects blessed by holy men had been viewed in this light
since the fourth century.[21]

Icons came into being along with relics and played a
psychological role comparable to the holy man. They served
to bridge the chasm separating the awesome holy and the
frail believer. Approaching the icon infused confidence
into the supplicant drawing near the holy of holies.

The success of icons can be attributed to changes in
official government circles, which was in turn motivated not
only by popular pressure but by agitation among the elite,
as well. Icons did not appeal only to those of low birth
and little education. The intellectual elite were as involved
as the plebians if not more so. The prominence of the icon
in the late sixth and early seventh centuries was not repre-
sentative of a final ineluctable triumph of popular feeling
and the iconoclastic reaction was not simply an attempt to
control the unbridled superstition of the masses.[22]

The most influential feature of sixth century religious
life was the ebullience of civic patriotism so salient
throughout the East. The alarms of warfare fostered the
need for communal symbols of loyalty and protection and the
cult of the civic saint fulfilled this longing. St. Demetrius
of Thessalonica was the visible bond which linked the commun-
ity and the intercession of the patron saint. The Mandylion
of Edessa and the great icon of the Virgin which hung over
the city gate at Constantinople are but two examples of this
obsession with "supernatural prophylaxis."

The Byzantine Empire was an empire of cities, as the rise of icons clearly demonstrates. The Byzantines travelled through the realm much as their antecedents had done during the heyday of the Antonines. Naturally, homesickness was a common affliction and the icon often served as a reminder of their homeland. And while this renewed civic sense made icons public and put them into widespread circulation, it was the holy man who kept them beloved and invested them with intimate religious status. The icons of the city might face the world from the arcades of churches and from city gates, but it was the monks who brought them into the church, the holy place. The holy man was still an average Byzantine and his piety was essentially that of the layman writ large; this accounts for his popularity. The hermits hung icons in their cells to fulfill the need for a resilient figure to focus upon.[23]

The monk/holy man adhered to a mystical theology which was, in reality, a sophisticated psychological theory concerning the function of the image as an aid to contemplation; he was the first to put this theory into practice. The icon became a vehicle for expressing the divine plan of salvation. The basic tenet of the contemplative function of the icon, i.e. that the worshipper should spend many hours at ease before the images of the invisible, was best adhered to in the monasteries. In fact, this practice was not that different from the pagan idea of lingering in holy spots. Also, monastic manufacturing of icons removed them from the suspicion

that still hampered secular artists who delved into the
sacrosanct.[24]

The monks contributed more to the cult of images than
through example of individual religious ritual. The holy man
presided over the inculcation of Christian discipline in the
community.[25] The icons and the holy men were connected on a
visceral level because both were outside the vested religious
hierarchy.[26] The holy man was holy because he was believed
to be so by his clientele. The schema, or monastic garb,
conferred holiness on the holy man, not some bishop.[27]

The icons were invested with sanctity because they
expressed the continuing need of the ancient city. They
entered into circulation as part of the relationships between
the holy man and his mostly urban clientele and, in so doing,
inherited the strengths and weaknesses of the religion of
the ancient urban center; it proved to be their undoing.
Public use of icons depended on a close association with an
intense local patriotism. This was too centrifugal, espe-
cially in the face of Slav and Arab onslaughts. The local
saint overshadowed the emperor and his officials. This
proved to be very disruptive to the unity of the Empire.[28]

If the icon served to focus strong collective feelings,
it also bore the brunt of the urge for privacy, for a special
relationship with the divine, for advice and blessing in
stressful situations. Images became increasingly popular
among the upper classes and in every stratum of society the
icon helped to overcome the great loneliness of men and women

in an urban setting. The great basilicas stood empty and
were used only on special occasions and for celebrating the
Eucharist. The liturgy seemed awesome and distant and
personal piety leaked away to the icons. Ex voto icons
appeared even in the basilicas as individuals searched for a
more intimate rapport, a more personal relationship. Unfor-
tunately, it was a luxury they could not long afford. A more
orderly and militant age would see it as superstition.[29]

There was a double ethic which was of primary signifi-
cance in Byzantium. There were 1) the ordinary Christians
in the work-a-day world and there were 2) those haunted by
the words of Christ: "If thou woulds't be perfect."[30] The
holy man was God's initiate and, as such, a source of power
and wonder. The saint was a very real and present help in
times of trouble. The village priest, married and with a
family to support, did not foster popular reverence. People
desired a religion of meditation but not exclusively priestly
meditation. It was to this meditation--the freedom of access
to God--that they turned.[31]

Clement of Alexandria and Origen went to school with the
Neoplatonists and led Dionysius the Areopagite to plant the
seed in the soil of Christianity. This did enable Christian-
ity to become accepted in society, on an equal footing with
paganism but at a considerable price. Was God

> an undifferenced ground of all existence, tran-
> scending not only matter but mind, creative
> without will or causality, unknowable save in
> the unio mystica, having no character save that
> of being a ground.[32]

Is He ineffable, enabling man to say what He isn't, not what
He is? Is it all a negation of a negation? Is God to be
denied Being because such a concession would limit the
infinite? How does all this square with the concept of a
God who notes the falling to earth of the least sparrow of
the forest?[33]

There was the continuing question of the legitimacy of
the cult of icons. The "Mixed Enquiries of Hypatius of
Ephesus" addressed to Julian, bishop of Atramntion, concerned
"things in the holy churches."[34] Hypatius was a prominent
proponent of Chalcedonian orthodoxy during the reign of
Justinian, while Julian seems to have been a conscientious
prelate who was worried by the scriptural prohibition of
images, the making of them, and destroying those already
made. Julian allowed representations in his churches but no
figures of wood or stone and no sculptures.[35] These repre-
sentations were on the door curtains but nowhere else. In
reply, Hypatius urges Julian to consider the reason for the
Old Testament ban and why the making of sacred things is
allowed as it is. Some thought that the Godhead was akin to
the gold and silver and stone works of art, thus making and
worshipping the creature rather than the creator; God repudi-
ated them. Nothing on this earth is the equal of the Holy
Trinity. The ineffable and uncomprehensible "philanthropy"
of God towards humanity and the images of the saints shall
be glorified in sacred representations, though we (meaning
the elite, the chosen) have no joy in them, no pleasure in

anything formed or in any representations. But this seeming
contradiction is negated by this argument, common to many
iconodule apologists: The images are necessary for the
ignorant city denizens and the bucolic peons so that they may
see the light. It is a case of the divine making concessions
to the weak to secure their salvation.[36]

Religious syncretism (this era was perhaps the zenith
of syncretism) did not recommend itself to these men. It was
simply a matter of divine and temporal noblesse oblige.
Hypatius cited Moses, who fashioned cherubim for the Ark of
the Covenant, as an example of divine philanthropy modifying
the stringent code to benefit the souls of those who still
must be led by the hand. "Therefore," continued Hypatius
magnanimously, "we allow material ornament in our churches,
not as though we thought that God was a god of gold and silver
and silken vestments and vessels adorned with precious stones,
but making a concession so that each order. . . may be led by
the hand. . . to the Godhead."[37] Worship was to be offered
through the spirit and holy souls were to be God's temples.
So the sacred objects were not removed, rather the helping
hand was extended to the spiritually immature.

Is it possible that Hypatius' viewpoint, "As for ourselves,
we have no delight in icons," persisted, in spite of his elu-
cidations, among a majority of the bishops and that this
belief helped to foster the iconoclast movement when extreme
iconophile apologies of icons became commonplace?[38] It is
well known that pagans and others who were not adherents to

the imperial faith believed that Christians, by their inor-
dinate kowtowing to icons, were worshipping dead idols. Chris-
tians found themselves in a ticklish dilemma. Perhaps pagan
remonstrances played some part in the questioning and ultimate
rejection of icons.

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The Scriptures as the Foundation

of Iconoclasm

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It is a tremendous asset to any cause when its adherents
can cite an ultimate authority to buttress their arguments.
The proponents of Iconoclasm found a veritable mother lode in
the Bible, not only in the Old Testament but in the apostolic
New Testament as well. Let us examine some of the biblical
texts which proved so useful in the first full flower of
Iconoclasm. The first unequivocal statement concerning images
and the prohibition thereof is found in the Old Testament book
of Exodus and it states:

> Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou
> shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any
> likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or
> that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the
> water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down
> thyself unto them, nor serve them. Ex. 20:3-5

Later on in the Pentateuch, God, speaking through Moses, warns
"Turn ye not unto [images], nor make yourselves molten gods:
I am the Lord your God." Lev. 19:4. In the book of Numbers
we read, "Then ye shall . . . destroy all their pictures, and
destroy all their . . . images . . ." Num. 34:52. Lastly, in
the book of Deuteronomy, the last of the books of Moses, there
is a recapitulation of the injunction found in Exodus, a

solemn caveat against making images. It states, "Thou shalt
not make thee any . . . image, or any likeness that is in
heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath . . ." Deut.
5:8. The prophet Jeremiah inveighed against the concept of
images when he proclaimed, "And I will utter my judgments
against them . . . who have . . . burned incense unto other
gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands." Jer. 1:16.
[Emphasis added]

The iconoclasts utilized the gospels and apostolic epis-
tles to their distinct advantage. The iconodules could rather
easily refute citations from the Old Testament by claiming
that the Jews were under a different dispensation and by
demonstrating that the Old Testament was really not anti-image
by drawing attention to Moses fashioning the golden cherubim
for the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 37:7) and Solomon construct-
ing his temple and including all manner of images, apparently
with God's permission (I Kings 7:14-51). Refuting the
strictures found in the New Testament, penned by the founders
of the faith, was a bit more difficult. The iconodules who
believed that Christ's nativity and resultant humanity made
depiction of this earthly form permissible, foundered on the
hard rock of John's gospel. In the very first chapter he
affirms: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begot-
ten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared
Him." Jn. 4:24. [Emphasis added] In chapter five Jesus
states: "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath
borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any

time, nor seen his shape." Jn. 5:37.

The anti-image attitude of the New Testament is not limited to the Johannine gospel. In the epistles of Paul, that religious envoy extraordinaire, there is a definite inchoate iconoclastic tendency. In the first chapter of Romans he apodictically declares:

> Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorrupt- ible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator . . . Rom. 1:22- 23, 25.

Later in the same letter, Paul seems to repudiate the icono- dules who asseverated that images are the tutors of the spiritually immature. He avers: "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17. In the same vein, he states in a later epistle: "For we walk by faith, not by sight . . . Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." II Cor. 5:7, 16.

In the book of Revelation, that apocalyptic vision of a world and a universe on the wane, John lays a firm foundation for rejecting those who would worship images of saints, angels, and other heavenly beings. John witnessed thusly:

> And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. Rev. 22:8-9.

The iconoclasts and the iconodules seemed poles apart and intransigent foes. The iconodules held that images of Christ were proper because to deny them was tantamount to denying Christ's humanity and His saving death. Christ lived on earth in human form, so this human form could be represented. The same was true of images of the saints. Moreover, it was not the image of the saint that was worshipped but the spirit and, anyway, hadn't St. Basil said that the reverence offered to the images passes to the saints in heaven? Very little of the theology of the iconodules was scriptural but they could always fall back on "tradition" as enunciated by the fathers and doctors of the church.

The iconoclasts saw all this as invidious heresy. They held that images of Christ were improper because to so represent Him would mean reducing Him to a mere mortal, and thus lessening His divinity. Christ was "uncomprehensible and uncircumscribable" and to portray Him in a picture would either confuse His human and divine natures or separate them excessively; He would be too human or too divine and both these positions were heretical.

They held a similar view with regard to images of the saints. They believed that the saints were now spirits residing in the Kingdom. To represent something incorporeal by means of mere colors and tiles was certainly heresy. Moreover, the saints had said nothing about fashioning pictures to aid the believer in remembering them and had indeed gone out of their way to condemn such things in holy writ. We will

examine the christological arguments in a later chapter. Suffice it to say that the iconoclasts were on firmer ground scripturally.

There is one little known aspect of this controversy which may prove illuminating. No one in the New Testament, with the sole exception of John who does so obliquely, not Matthew, Mark, Luke, or Paul goes so far as to call Christ God. No matter what they might feel in their hearts, they shrank from publicly equating Christ with God. These men, pious Jews all, knew the scriptural commandment concerning the One God and other gods and, despite their devotion to Jesus and His message, they could not see their way around this prohibition. He might be the Messiah, the only begotten Son but to come right out and call him God was blasphemy.

The iconoclasts, with their greater devotion and adherence to Scripture, must have perceived this, hence their emphatic rejection of images, especially of Christ. If Christ was God, as they believed Him to be, then the fact that He was on earth in the flesh made no difference; even the iconodules held that the infinite God could not be depicted. So Christ, being the infinite God, was incapable of being portrayed in any way, because to do so would divide Him and resurrect the old argument of the one God versus the many gods.

Precursors of the Iconoclast Movement

Far from being merely a movement of the eighth and ninth centuries, Iconoclasm's roots extend back to the earliest days

of organized Christianity. The great leaders of the early church saw clearly the inherent danger implicit in image worship and did their best to check its proliferation. Let us examine the relevant opinions of five of the most prominent figures in post-Apostolic Christianity.

Origen

One of the greatest and most original thinkers of early Christianity was Origen, who was born in Alexandria circa 185 A.D. He was the child of a Christian home and was the scion of a large family. His father, Leonidas, educated him carefully in scriptural and secular subjects, dying a martyr's death under Severus in 202. He maintained himself and his family through teaching and, at the behest of Bishop Demetrius, assumed control of the famous school for catechumens in 203. Unfortunately, at about this same time, he castrated himself (c. 202-3) while at the school, interpreting Matthew 19:12 too literally.[40]

His life as an educator was divided into two parts. His tenure as head of the Alexandrian school (203-231) was a successful one and saw pupils flocking to him from heretical circles and even pagan schools of philosophy. He attended the lectures of Ammonius Sacras, the founder of Neoplatonism, who had a profound influence upon him. He journeyed to Rome in 212 and to Arabia (the sources do not give the precise location) in 215. After the looting of Alexandria by the Emperor Caracalla in 216, Origen travelled to Palestine where

he preached sermons of the urging of the bishops of Caesarea,
Jerusalem, and other cities. This provoked discord between
him and Bishop Demetrius because Origen had not been ordained
a priest.[41] When in later years bishops Alexander of Jeru-
salem and Theoctistus of Caesarea ordained him, Demetrius,
seeing that Origen was "prospering and a great man and dis-
tinguished and famous in the sight of all," and "overcome by
a human weakness,"[42] rejected the ordination on account of
Origen's castration, convoked a synod and had Origen excom-
municated. After this, he left for Caesarea in Palestine
where the Bishop of Caesarea persuaded him to found a new
theological school over which he presided for twenty years.[43]

In 244 he went again to Arabia to contend against a
group of heretics called Monarchians. This anti-Trinitarian
group held that God was one person as well as one being. At
about this same time, he was persecuted under the Emperor
Decius. In his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius recounts
Origen's sufferings in these words:

> . . . Of all these matters the man's numerous letters
> contain both a true and accurate account [of] the
> nature and extent of that which he endured for the
> word of Christ, chains and tortures, punishments
> inflicted upon his body, punishments as he lay in
> iron and in the recesses of his dungeon; and how,
> when for many days his feet were stretched four
> spaces in that instrument of torture, the stocks,
> he bore with a stout heart threats of fire and
> everything else that was inflicted by his enemies;
> and the kind of issue he had thereof, the judge
> eagerly striving with all his might on no account
> to put him to death; and what sort of sayings he
> left behind him after this, sayings full of help
> for those who needed uplifting.[44]

His health broken by these sufferings, Origen died in Tyre
about 253 A.D.

Origen states, in his great apology against Celsus, that even Celsus, himself, establishes the correctness of regulations concerning idolatry. Origen affirms that

> . . . Christians do not consider those to be gods that are made with hands, on the ground that it is not in conformity with right reason to suppose that images, fashioned by the most worthless and depraved of workmen, can be regarded as worthy of veneration.[45]

Later in this same work, quoting Zeno of Atium, Origen affirms the following: "And then there will be no need to build temples, for nothing ought to be regarded as sacred, or of much value, or holy, which is the work of builders and mean men."[46] Further: "It is evident then, with respect to this opinion, that there has been engraven upon the hearts of men by the finger of God a sense of the duty that is required."[47]

Concerning the prohibition of idolatry in the Old Testament, Origen speaks of the Jews as being men

> who represented upon earth the shadow of a heavenly life, and that amongst them God is recognized as nothing else save He who is over all things, and that amongst them no maker of images was permitted to enjoy the rights of citizenship. For neither painter nor image-maker existed in their state, the law expelling all such from it, that there might be no pretext for the construction of images--an art which attracts the attention of foolish men and which drags the eyes of the soul from God to earth. The law, indeed, wished them to have regard to the truth of each individual thing, and not to form representations of things contrary to reality, feigning the appearance merely of what was really male or really female, or the nature of animals, or of birds, or of creeping things, or of fishes. Venerable, too, and grand was this prohibition of theirs: 'Lift not up thine eyes unto heaven, lest, when thou seest the sun, and moon, and the stars, and all the host of heaven, thou shouldst be led astray to worship them and serve them.'[48]

Origen felt that the first task of the church in instruct-
ing Neophytes was to install in them a scorn of all idols and
images. They were to move from servitude to things to the
love of God who made all things.[49] Though he was ready to
learn from the Greeks and to build a theology with the aid of
Greek philosophical teaching, he was adamantly opposed to
representational art.[50]

Origen's argument against images had four parts. In the
first place, he did not trust man's ability to view images
abstractly. He feared that if men revered images, they would
be lured into the belief that the images are gods. Second-
ly, he believed that the honor belonging to God would be
diverted, diluted, withdrawn, and debased if the same honor
was given to an image. Thirdly, he held that demons took
up their abode in images and in places where these images
are placed. In the last place, he believed strongly that
the Old Testament sanctions were binding on the Christian
church.[51]

Eusebius

Origen's arguments were confirmed by Eusebius (263-339
or 40), the first chronicler and archivist of the early
Church. He was born at Caesarea and was a lifelong admirer
of Origen, whose works formed the basis of a library which
the presbyter Pamphilius enlarged and made a seat of scholar-
ship. He even called himself Eusebius Pamphili (or spiritual
son of Pamphilius) out of gratitude to his mentor who was

martyred under Diocletian in 310. After a "close encounter
of the worst kind" with martyrdom in 313, he became bishop
of Caesarea.[52]

It was not long before Eusebius became embroiled in the
tangled skein of the Arian controversy. His major problem
was his inability to comprehend the gravity of the arguments
involved. He deluded himself into thinking that he could
convince the parties to make bilateral concessions. He
communicated often with Arius and was very influential in
the Synod of Caesarea which declared Arian doctrine orthodox.
He was also a prime mover in the Synod of Antioch which
excommunicated the local bishop for rejecting Arian teaching.
He continued to act as peacemaker at the great Council of
Nicaea in 325. He advocated a central position which attri-
buted divinity to Christ in biblical terms but rejected the
Homoousion (of one substance with the Father) doctrine of
Athanasius as leading to Sabellianism.[53] He reluctantly
signed the creed at Constantine's urging but with no sincer-
ity of feeling. He took leading roles in the synods of
Antioch and Tyre (300 and 335 respectively) which excommuni-
cated Athanasius.[54]

He was a great admirer of Constantine and the Emperor's
chief theological advisor. On the twentieth and thirtieth
anniversaries of Constantine's accession to the imperial
throne, he composed elaborate panegyrics and dedicated a
lengthy eulogy at the time of that great monarch's death on
22 May 337.[55]

Eusebius' attitude toward images is clear, judging from his treatment of the subject. In his writings, he tells of the town of Paneas where Christians reverenced a statue which they interpreted as depicting Christ and the woman with an issue of blood. From his supercilious description, it is likely that the statue was of pagan origin, commemorating some miracle Aesculapius. Eusebius did not believe it had been erected by Christians. It was natural for pagans who had benefited from the actions of Christ or the apostles to make images to honor their various saviors.[56]

He even went so far as to write a letter to Constantine's sister, Constantia, who had asked him for a portrait of Christ. Considering the rather exalted figure to whom it was written, the letter is more peremptory than didactic. What did she desire, Eusebius enquired, a picture of the true unchanging Christ or He of the humiliation? On the first question, there was no doubt; Christ had said that no one knoweth the Father but the Son and no one knows the Son but Him who begot Him. But even the latter form is not an ordinary human form, declares Eusebius, but the gloria divinitatis temperata and the mortal swallowed up by life, mortale a vita absorptum. Mere lifeless colors were incapable of representing Him. This was even more emphatically the case for the Christ after the ascension, who had exchanged forma servi, for the glory of God. To represent Him at all, man would have to emulate the pagans who only used figures of men to represent gods and heroes.[57]

Christians must not do this, Eusebius warned. He coun-
selled Constantia to recall Exodus 20:4. Had she ever seen
such a thing in a church? All such things had been banished
from churches and were forbidden to Christians. He himself
had confiscated from a woman pictures of Paul and Christ so
that it would not look as if Christians carried their gods
around with them like the heathens. Yes, the word of God
was the best painter of Christ. Yet, he did not condemn
Constantine for erecting statues representing Daniel in the
lion's den and the Good Shepherd. He felt that there was
no inconsistency there. The former was a scenic composition
and not a single figure, while the latter was purely a symbolic
representation. There was no danger such as in the case of a
single figure which, in an idolatrous world, could be easily
misconstrued by pagans. Eusebius was steadfastly opposed to
any representation of Christ in art.[58]

Eusebius' bishopric of Caesarea was an important see,
yet he could ask Constantia if she had ever seen images in a
church or had heard such a thing from another. Eusebius was
well travelled; he knew Antioch, had been present at the
Council of Nicaea, had been in Egypt during the persecutions,
and had witnessed the sufferings of the martyrs there. This
was in the fourth century, thus seeming to belie the claim
that Antioch and Alexandria had been centers of a flourish-
ing Christian artistic culture for centuries, serving as
models for Christians in Rome and their catacomb frescoes.[59]

Fear of idolatry was a potent factor and the Christian

fought his battle with weapons forged by pagan thinkers in a pagan society. There was a new idolatry to contend with, which followed in the wake of Constantine's espousal of Christianity. The Emperor was in almost complete control of the church-empire alliance; many pagans entered the church and, in that syncretistic age, with predictable results.[60]

Epiphanius

Epiphanius of Salamis (Cyprus) was the first cleric to take up images as a cause celebre. He was a passionate opponent of imagery and the foundation of his hostility is contained in the passage, "When images are put up the customs of the pagans do the rest."[61]

Epiphanius was born in 315 near Eleutheriopolis in Palestine. He was something of a philologist and was conversant in Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Coptic, and Latin. After a visit to Egypt in 335, he became a fervent supporter of monasticism and founded a monastery near his birthplace over which he presided for some thirty years. In 367, his reputation for learning and sanctity led the bishops of Cyprus to choose him as metropolitan and he occupied the see of Constantia for a generation.[62]

He was commendably zealous in his defense of ecclesiastical and dogmatic purity, but tact was not his strong suit. He simply could not comprehend Origen and this lack of understanding grew into a mortal antipathy for the great Alexandrian whom he held responsible for Arianism and whose

allegorical interpretations he regarded as the heresy of heresies. He saw Origenism as the most dangerous teaching and he pursued it relentlessly. In 392, he even went so far as to journey to Jerusalem, the home of Origen's most influential supporters, and, in the bailiwick of John, bishop of the city, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he delivered a scathing denunciation of Origen and all his works. The resulting contretemps caused Jerome, formerly an adherent of Origenism, to alter his views and seek a condemnation of Origen from Bishop John. When John refused to acquiesce in the matter, Epiphanius broke off ecclesiastical communion with him. The controversy reached its climax in 400 with Origen's repudiation at a Council at Alexandria convoked by Theophilus, a local metropolitan, who saw Origen as the "hydra of heresies." Epiphanius closed ranks with the crafty ecclesiastic in the expulsion from their monasteries in the Nitrian desert of the renowned "Tall Brothers" and other adherents of Origen. In 400, he went to Constantinople for a test of arms with the Origenists there. When he learned of Theophilus' duplicity, he set out for Cyprus but died at sea on 12 May, 403.[63]

Epiphanius was an early repudiator of images. In the iconoclastic period, his writings were a chief source of inspiration. The iconodules could denigrate Eusebius as an Arian heretic but not Epiphanius, the orthodox "Hammer of the Heretics."[64]

Epiphanius' chief work is his Three Treatises Against

Images, written about 394. In this pamphlet, he calls it
idolatry to manufacture images of Christ, the Virgin, martyrs,
angels, and prophets. He rejects the excuse that such repre-
sentations honor the saints; to Epiphanius, they are forgeries.
The saints are with Christ and are spirits. How, then, can
they be represented as bodies? The angels and saints do not
want their images venerated.[65] To buttress his argument, he
turned to the Scriptures. In the First Epistle of John, it
is written that "when He shall be revealed, we shall be like
unto Him." (I Jn. 3:2) and Paul, in the eighth chapter of
Romans, had called the saints "of the same form as the Son
of God." How can the saints, who are destined to shine in
glory, be represented in dumb dead matter? How can angels
be reverenced, who are spirits living forever? He quotes
Revelation 19:10 where John attempts to worship the angel.
The angel exclaims, "See thou do it not: I am a fellow
servant with thee . . . worship God." In Acts 10:26, Peter
says to Cornelius: "Stand up. I myself also am a man."

One cannot say that just because Christ became a man,
albeit a perfect man, that He can be pictured as a man.
Epiphanius queried, "Was the object of the Incarnation that
He should be represented at your hands in painting?" God
forbid! For Epiphanius, such art is a contempt of He who
said, "Thou shalt reverence the Lord thy God and Him only
shalt thou worship."[66]

In 394, Epiphanius sent a pastoral letter to Emperor
Theodosius I, seeking his help in combatting images. The

epistle did little good. The images continued to proliferate and he was mocked by the people and ignored by his fellow bishops. In the letter, he introduces himself as being born of Christian parents of Nicene persuasion. He feels certain that the august ruler will support him, owing to the emperor's zeal in extirpating pagan idols. Images are Satan's way of leading the faithful back to idolatry. He asks rhetorically if it is proper for Christians to have a painted God. None of the Fathers or former bishops ever dishonored Christ in this way either in a church or in a private house. Images are the products of the wretched fancy of the artists who have never seen the subjects of their work. The saints are depicted as young, then old; Christ is pictured as a Nazarite, although he was not because He drank wine. Peter is pictured as old with a short beard, Paul as bald with a long beard. All are forgeries. They should be taken out and used as shrouds for the poor. Frescoes should be whitewashed and mosaics removed if possible but under no circumstances should any new ones be made.[67]

In a letter to John, bishop of Jerusalem, Epiphanius relates an early encounter with religious imagery. He was walking past a church when he noticed that its door curtain was dyed and bore an embroidered image of a human face. Epiphanius continues:

> It bore an image of either Christ or of one of
> the saints; I do not rightly remember whose image
> it was. Seeing this, and being loth that an image
> of a man should be hung up in Christ's church
> contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, I
> tore it asunder and advised the custodians of the

place to use it as a winding sheet for some poor
person. They, however, murmured, and said that
if I made up my mind to tear it, it was only fair
that I should give them another in its place. As
soon as I heard this, I promised that I would give
one . . . I have now sent the best that I could
find, and I beg that you . . . will afterwards give
directions that curtains of the other sort--opposed
as they are to our religion--shall not be hung up
in any church of Christ.[68]

Unfortunately for Epiphanius, such heroics were in vain.
In the final analysis, he could only warn his own flock in
his will to "keep the traditions they have received: it is
in your heart that you keep God in memory, there that the
things of God should be inscribed." If anyone should seek
to represent the divine through material colors, let him be
anathema.[69]

The icons had come into the church but there was no
theology extant to justify them as a bridge to the metaphys-
ical. For old Epiphanius they were but idolatry, an irruption
of paganism into the church. The iconoclasts would later
take up and develop alike the charge of idolatry and the
Christological argument of Epiphanius that the incarnate
Christ, though fully man, was not mere man because while man
He was still God.[70]

A few words on historical interpretation are in order
at this juncture. Certain historians, notably George Ostro-
gorsky, dispute the authenticity of certain of Epiphanius'
writings because they seem to refute a defense of images
predicated on the contention that Christ could be portrayed
because of His humanity. Ostrogorsky claims that such state-
ments are characteristic of the iconodule position in

Iconoclast times. If Epiphanius had used such a Christological argument in the fourth century, this would have been quoted in the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 which also preserved the Horos of the Council of 754. Therefore Epiphanius is not authentic.[71] Q.E.D. Unfortunately, in this, as in many of his writings concerning Iconoclasm, Ostrogorsky is unconvincing. Epiphanius' argument was anticipated by Eusebius in his fourth century letter to Constantine's sister Constantia (which has already been discussed), in which he refused her request for a picture of Christ. Epiphanius was not arguing against a logically reasoned defense of images--he says merely, "Some say" Christ is represented as a man because He was born of the Virgin Mary. There was certainly no reason for the Council of 787 to produce a hostile fragment as proof of a Christological argument. Epiphanius did not venture far beyond Eusebius.[72]

Clement of Alexandria

Of the prominent ancestors of the Iconoclast movement, one of the earliest was Clement of Alexandria. He was born about 150 A.D. in Athens. Little is known of his life. It would seem that he was not a Christian at the outset. He became something of a wanderer, roaming through many lands, hearing many teachers. Six of these he singles out for praise, but not by name. The last of the six he encountered at Alexandria; this was probably Pantaenus, head of a catechecical school in that city.[73] He became presbyter of the

church and taught at the school twenty years, succeeding Pantaenus as headmaster. He left Alexandria in 202 at the beginning of the persecutions instigated by Emperor Septimus Severus and never returned.

The next glimpse we have of him is in 211 when he carried a letter from one Alexander, later bishop of Jerusalem, to the church of Antioch. He was described by Alexander as "Clement, the blessed presbyter, a virtuous and esteemed man . . . who upheld and extended the Church of the Lord."[74] Alexander was a former pupil of Clement's, as was the great Origen. He must have died not long after delivering this letter as Alexander, writing to Origen a few years later, refers to Clement together with Pantaenus as "those blessed men who have trodden the road before us."[75]

Clement was a dedicated opponent of imagery and his writings exude a profound distaste for all pictorial representation. He begins by saying, "There is not a single living creature that is not more worthy of honor than these statues . . . ."[76] He continues

> But the statues are motionless things incapable
> of action or sensation . . . The dumb earth is
> dishonored when sculptors pervert its peculiar
> nature and by their art entice men to worship
> it. For a statue is really lifeless matter
> shaped by a craftsman's hand but in our view
> the image of God is not an object of sense made
> from matter perceived by the senses, but a men-
> tal object. God, that is, the only true God, is
> perceived not by the senses but by the mind.[77]

Clement excoriates the sculptors who create images after the likeness of a friend, lover, etc., or just out of their own minds. In this view, he antedates Epiphanius. He uses

as an example the Athenian sculptor Phidias who inscribed on
the finger of his Olympian Zeus "Pantarces is beautiful."
Now it was not Zeus Pantarces (meaning all powerful) he
referred to but his male lover of the same name.[78] He fur-
ther declares

> But in your case art has another illusion with
> which to beguile; for it leads you on, though not
> to be in love with the statues and paintings, yet
> to honor and worship them . . . Let the art be
> praised [an intimation that later iconoclasts,
> expressing much the same opinion, did not shun
> art itself as an abomination] but let it not
> beguile men by pretending to be truth.[79]

In a similar vein, Clement asserts that ". . . we are
expressly forbidden to practice a deceitful art. For the
prophet says, 'Thou shalt not make a likeness of anything
that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath?'" Further
". . . With the utmost plainness and brevity the prophetic
word refutes the custom of idolatry, when it says, 'All the
gods of nations, are images of daemons, but God made the
heavens,' and the things in heaven."[80]

For the iconodules of the remote future (and the Neopla-
tonists for that matter) who at various times invoked custom
as a pretext for the veneration of images, Clement's repudi-
ation is devastating. He states:

> But, you say, it is not reasonable to overthrow a
> way of life handed down to us from our forefathers.
> Shall we not even at the risk of displeasing our
> fathers, bend our course towards the truth and
> seek after Him who is our real father, thrusting
> away custom as some deadly drug.[81]

He continues

> For 'the image of God' is his Word (and the divine
> Word, the light who is the archetype of light, is

a genuine son of Mind) . . . But statues in human
form, being an earthen image of visible, earthborn
man, and far away from the truth, plainly show
themselves to be but a temporary impression upon
matter.[82]

He concludes: "Surely, it is plain to everyone that images
are stones."[83]

St. Augustine

No man played a more significant role in the religious
life of this time than St. Augustine. We remember the high
points of his life: His birth in North Africa, his brilliant
intellectual attainments, his professorship of rhetoric at
the University of Milan, his Manichaeanism, the brilliant
court life of a declining empire, his conversion struggle in
the garden, the mystical experience at Ostia, his ultimate
return to North Africa and his appointment as bishop of the
see of Hippo. He can be credited as much as anyone with
safeguarding Christianity in a time of spiritual malaise,
nurturing it until a new civilization, Christendom, was able
to bring it to full flower.

Augustine had no real use for images and often complained
that many worshippers of icons were to be found among Chris-
tian people. He felt his opposition to be justified when he
perceived how the prevailing piety, focused as it was on
material things, could lead many to a superstitious vener-
ation of images.[84] As he phrased it: "Novi multos esse
picturarum adoratores. De moribus ecclesiae catholicae."[85]
This worship of images brought opprobrium upon the church

from many pagans and heretics such as the Manichaeans, who saw it as ethical inconsistency and idolatry. Augustine felt that these image worshippers belonged to the vast body of nominal Christians to whom the essence of true Christianity was and would continue to be unknown. As he tersely put it: "Professores nominis Christiani nec professionis suae vim aut scientes aut exhibentes."[86]

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Apologists of Images -

The Neoplatonists

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It has often been observed that the image of Christ was the prime concern of much of the iconoclast/iconodule theorizing. The nexus between the Trinitarian doctrine and the concept of the image itself explains this. Christ being the image of God is the pinnacle of a great pyramid of hierarchies.[87] This is blatant Neoplatonism combined with a mild tincture of Christianity. In point of fact, Christianity owed a considerable debt to Neoplatonist thought--adopting Neoplatonist terminology and rationales. Let us examine the views of a few of the better known Neoplatonists and see how they influenced iconodule thinking in a later era.

Plotinus

One of the earliest and greatest of the Neoplatonists was Plotinus who was born in Alexandria about 205 and died in Rome about 270. Plotinus was not a great lover of images of any kind, but he deals with them frequently in his writings

and finds ways to justify them. For Plotinus, corporeal
things are images comparable to the images of art and both
classes of images have reality insofar as they are in contact
with the intelligible images of the unimaginable supreme
unity, the One.[88]

In Neoplatonism, the concept of creation moving along a
continuum from the lowest to the highest was an integral part
of the philosophy. Writing in the fifth Annead, Plotinus
states:

> But there is yet another way to this knowledge:
> Admiring the world of sense as we look out upon
> its vastness and beauty and the order of its
> eternal march, thinking of the gods within it,
> seen and hidden . . . let us mount to its arche-
> type, to the yet more authentic sphere . . . [89]

Returning to the subject of artistic creation and
images, he speculates

> Suppose two blocks of stone are lying side by
> side: one is unpatterned, quite untouched by
> art, the other has been minutely wrought by the
> craftsman's hands into some statue . . . not a
> portrait but a creation in which the sculptor's
> art has concentrated all loneliness. Now it must
> be seen that the stone thus brought under the
> artist's hand . . . is not beautiful as stone
> . . . but in virtue of the . . . Idea introduced
> through the art.[90]

Such Neoplatonist ideas are evident in the iconodule posi-
tion.

In a similar vein, we can see how another of Plotinus'
statements seems to have exerted a great influence on icono-
phile perspectives of a later era. Though Plotinus was no
great admirer of representational art of any kind (he himself
would never consent to having his likeness depicted in any

artistic medium), he could still make allowances for them and ascribe to them certain metaphysical attributes. The iconoclasts, before and during the great Controversy, often reproached statues and images as being merely the work of some unskilled, uncouth mechanics, certainly unfit for such tasks even if images of Christ and the saints were permissible. Plotinus would seem to reject this stance and, indeed, sounds something like St. Basil and his image/prototype argument when he affirms:

> Still, arts are not to be slighted on the ground
> that they create by imitation of natural objects
> . . . for . . . we must recognize that they give
> no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go
> back to the Reason Principles from which Nature
> itself derives . . . Thus Phidias wrought the
> Zeus upon no model among things of sense but
> by apprehending what form Zeus might take if he
> chose to become manifest to sight.[91]

Therefore, if an artist constructs a likeness of an entity no one has ever seen, it is even more fitting to create an image of Christ who had certainly lived on earth in human form. His humanity made it necessary to fashion images. Certainly, there is more than an adumbration of Plotinus' Neoplatonism in the iconophile view that by creating an image of Christ (or of a saint) and paying homage to it, that reverence passes through the image to, as Plotinus might say, the One, the Reason Principles, God.

As the iconodules would always emphasize, the statue or image is not itself worshipped, nor is the material in it revered. The Neoplatonists took great care to emphasize the same thing. This view is embryonic in Plotinus, the idea

that the image and the prototype are certainly not of the same essence. He declares:

> This universe, characteristically participant in images, shows how the image differs from the authentic beings: against the variability of the one order, there stands the unchanging quality of the other, self-situate holding an existence intellective and self-sufficing.[92]

Plotinus believed that love is the motive force behind creation. However, this love is not love for that which is to be or has been created; rather, it is the love which the creative principle feels for what is above it. This longing reproduces, as it were, an image of its object.[93]

Porphyry

Porphyry, another great Neoplatonist, was a student of Plotinus. He was born at Tyre about 233, hence his popular surname of the Phonecian. He wrote voluminously but many of his works were destroyed by fanatical Christians who considered his writings extremely dangerous to the new faith. Nevertheless, where images are concerned, his views parallel quite closely those of the later iconodules. He avers:

> Images and temples of the gods have been made from all antiquity[94] for the sake of forming reminders to men. Their object is to make those who draw near to them think of God thereby, or to enable them, after ceasing from their work, to address their prayers and vows to them. When any person gets an image or picture of a friend, he certainly does not believe that the friend is to be found in the image, or that his members exist inside the different parts of the representation. His idea rather is that the honor which he pays to his friend finds expression in the image.[95]

Proclus

Proclus was born in Constantinople in 410 and died at
Athens in 485. He was the last great original thinker and
systematizer of Neoplatonism. He studied under Olympiodorus
at Alexandria but became dissatisfied with the teaching there
and went to Athens about 430. To Proclus, everything except
the very highest intelligible and the very lowest material
can exist in its cause, in itself and by participation in
something higher, in the manner of an image.[96] He taught
that through secret initiating rites, the images can be made
like the gods and fit to receive divine illuminations.[97] He
believed that the power which proceeds (from the spiritual
hierarchy) and reverts back to it is essentially one, that
the powers which have proceeded are carried back, and the
processive power itself is reverted upon its source.[98] This
is another way of saying (using a Christian emphasis) that
grace, truth, power, or whatever, proceeds from God, passes
through the image, is reverted to God by the reverence paid
to the image, and then passes to God himself.

Iamblichus

The Neoplatonist Iamblichus was a proponent of theurgy
juxtaposed with theology. Theurgy was called the "theology
of action" and consisted of magical incantations and varying
kinds of mystical hocus-pocus. He taught that images "draw
off from them, the source, the prototype, some likeness to

them."[99] He viewed the image in a metaphysical sense as
seeking to preserve the imprint of something prior to it.
from which it receives the characteristics of form.[100] He
went further than any Neoplatonist when he postulated the
idea that the gods are present in the images or at least
communicate to them supernatural virtues.[101]

Maximus of Tyre and Dion of Prusa

Maximus of Tyre and Dion of Prusa stressed the tradi-
tional aspects of images. Both believed that since worship
involving images is the common law of all men, it would be
well to make no innovations but to follow the common prac-
tice.[102] The principles of Stoicism and Neoplatonism exclude
images but for both Maximus and Dion, the "common law" was
too strong and each devised ways of justifying popular
devotion.[103] Dion of Prusa stated that

> . . . there is in all men a passionate longing to
> honor and serve the Divinity, to draw near to it,
> to lay hold on it with assurance, to . . . desire
> in every way to be in their presence and to com-
> pany with them.[104]

Maximus of Tyre cast images in a didactic role. He
states

> A divine nature has no need of statues or altars,
> but human nature being very imbecile and as much
> distant from divinity as earth from heaven devised
> these symbols.

Those whose memory is acute and who can directly extend their
souls to heaven to meet with God do not need images. But
everyone else does need this kind of assistance,

which resembles that devised by writing masters for
boys who give dim marks as copies, by writing over
which . . . they become, through memory, accustomed
to the art. It appears to me therefore, that legis-
lators devised these statues for men . . . as tokens
of the honor which should be paid to divinity . . .[105]

The Emperor Julian

The scholarly pagan Emperor Julian, who had read his
Bible as a young man, learned that God is not worshipped with
men's hands as if He needed anything. Just as those who make
offerings to the statues of emperors who are in need of
nothing nevertheless induce goodwill towards themselves
thereby, so, too, those who make offerings to the images of
gods, though the gods need nothing, do persuade them to help
and to care for them. For though God stands in need of
nothing, it does not follow that on this account nothing
ought to be offered to Him. He does not need the reverence
that is paid in words. But having said that, is it rational
to deprive Him of worship? By no means, says Julian.[106]

Julian, while he conceived the divinity as incorporeal
and invisible, treated as gross prejudice any denunciations
of the making of images, viewing them as proper to worship
of the gods.[107] He believed that all should regard

the temples and images of the gods with due honor
and veneration and by worshipping the gods as
though he saw them actually present. For our
fathers established images and altars and the main-
tenance of undying fire, and, generally speaking,
everything of the sort, as symbols of the presence
of the gods, not that we may regard such things as
gods but that we may worship the gods through
them.[108]

For though the gods are in need of nothing,

another class of images was invented on the earth,
and by performing our worship to them we shall
make the gods propitious to ourselves . . . There-
fore, when we look at the images of the gods, let
us not indeed think they are stones or wood, but
neither let us think they are the gods themselves
. . . It follows that he who loves the gods delights
to gaze on the images of the gods and their like-
nesses, and feels reverence and shudders with awe
of the gods who look at him from the unseen world
. . . It is our duty to adore not only the images
of the gods, but also their temples and sacred
precincts and altars.[109]

Apologists of Images - The

Early Christians

Fervent proponents of images were to be found in the

leaders of the early church. They were creations of an age

of syncretism and were obviously influenced by Neoplatonic

thought and even, perhaps, by the vast influx of formerly

pagan peoples into the church at this time. At the risk of

violating the rule of Ockham's Razor, it is possible that

they felt some sort of accommodation with the "common law of

all men" was necessary in order to bring as many into the

church as possible lest these people suffer eternal damna-

tion. A cursory perusal of the positions of some of these

men is in order.

St. Basil

Of all the early leaders and their views concerning

images, the most frequently quoted by later iconodules was

St. Basil. His teaching on the subject of icons coincided

most closely with the position of the iconophiles. He was

greatly influenced by Neoplatonism as can be inferred from this excerpt from his writings:

> How, then, if one and one, are there not two Gods?
> Because we speak of a king, and of the king's
> image, and not two kings. The majesty is not
> claven in two, nor the glory divided. The sover-
> eignty and authority over us is one, and so the
> doxology[110] ascribed by us is not plural but one,
> because the honor paid to the image passes on to
> the prototype. Now what in the one case the image
> is by reason of imitation, that in the other case
> the Son is by nature, and as in works of art the
> likeness is dependent on the form, so in the case
> of the divine and uncompounded nature the union
> consists in the communion of the Godhead.[111]

The passage dealing with the image and the prototype is an important one. The iconodules quoted it assiduously in their effort to refute the charge of idolatry with which the iconoclasts were continually hectoring them. This quote could explain that reverencing an image wasn't really rever- encing an image but was instead, reverencing Christ or a saint of whom the image was merely a symbol.

In another letter, he speaks of the images of the saints in a manner which would have made him feel at home among the iconodules of the eighth and ninth centuries. He professes "Wherefore also I honor and kiss the features of their images, inasmuch as they have been handed down from the holy apostles, and are not forbidden, but are in all our churches."[112] Here he stresses the factor of tradition which played so large a role in the philosophy of the Neoplatonists.

Leontius

Leontius, Bishop of Neopolis in Cyrrus, was another early booster of images. Many of his letters and polemical writings

were directed toward the Jews who saw the Christians as interlopers, introducing idolatry into the Church. The Jews stood upon the God-given law, but Leontius argued for another legal tradition. He pointed out that God told Moses to fashion two cherubim of gold; he showed Ezekiel a temple with palms, lions, men, and cherubim. Therefore, God revoked His own ordinance.[113] Undaunted by this bit of presumption, Leontius asseverates that God gave no instruction for the adornment of His temple yet, on the precedent of God's command to Moses, Solomon filled it with all manner of images: molten, carved, men, beasts, trees, etc. God had not ordered Solomon to make all these, but Solomon was not condemned because they were made to the glory of God just as Christians do in making their images.

Leontius goes on to say that God allowed each nation to worship its own gods through man-made things so no one might raise objections over the Christian use of the Cross and the Christian obeisance before icons. He states emphatically: "We do not make obeisance to the nature of the wood, but we revere and do obeisance to Him who was crucified on the Cross."[114]

Returning to the Jews he says to them: "You call us idolaters when it was Christian saints and martyrs who destroyed the temples of the idolaters." It is by means of the relics of martyrs and through icons that demons are vanquished, yet perverted men laugh at these things. He poses this question to the Jews: "If the bones of the just

are impure, why were the remains of Jacob and Joseph carried
back to the Promised Land with all honor? How then did a
dead man, touching the bones of the prophet Elijah stand
up?" If God can work through bones, so too can He with
icons.[115] It is through the icons that Christians bring
respect and worship. Man was made after God's own image and
His icon can be the abode of the Holy Spirit. The Cross and
icons are not gods, they evoke for us Christ and the saints.
The honor paid to the saints courses back to God.[116]

Leontius' protests are interesting. Could it be that
he was more interested in confuting the beliefs of Christians
impressed by Jewish arguments than refuting the claims of the
Jews? The repetition of his arguments, bordering on the
tautalogous, would seem to suggest this possibility.

John Moschus - The Pratum Spirituale

John Moschus wrote his Pratum Spirituale or "Spiritual
Pasture" some time in the latter part of the sixth century.
John knew the monastic and ascetic life well. He completed
his novitiate at the St. Theodosius monastery near Jerusalem.
From there he went to the Jordan as an anchorite and, later,
was a monk in the New Laura monastery of St. Sabas. He later
lived in Antioch, then Alexandria as the Persians advanced.
He lived at various monasteries and solitaries in Egypt and
died in Rome.[117]

In the Pratum Spirituale, the ritual of Christian worship

comes alive; it also illustrates how far image worship had deteriorated to mere superstition and folk magic, even at this comparatively early date. For example, Conon, a priest at the monastery of Penthoukla, a powerful, vigorous man, baptized the numerous neophyte Christians who came there. He was embarrassed at having to baptize women. Tradition did not permit women to administer the sacraments. He could not bring himself to baptize a particularly beautiful Persian woman. Miraculously, St. John the Baptist intervened and prevented Conon from realizing the sex of the postulant.[118]

The Pratum shows how profound a hold the sacred icons already had on the popular mind. The demon of harlotry knew their powers well. This demon had long been tormenting some hapless monk who was now quite desperate. "Swear you will not adore the icon of our Lady bearing the Christ Child," said the demon, who was quite devout in his own right, "and I will trouble you no longer."[119]

Another such tale is even more illustrative. A certain woman caused a deep well to be dug but found no water. A friend told her to fetch the icon of St. Theodosius from the Monastery of the Rock and God would supply the water. Accordingly, two messengers were dispatched to bring the icon. It was lowered into the well and the water flowed copiously. In a similar vein, in a monastery twenty miles from Jerusalem, a solitary had a cave and in it he hung an icon of the Virgin with the infant Christ. Whenever he planned to go on a journey he would pray to God that he might travel safely.

He would turn, then, to the Virgin, telling her he would be gone many days and would she be sure to keep her candle burning until his return. He might be gone six months but the candle was never extinguished.[120] It was superstitions such as these that the iconoclasts repudiated.

A final excerpt from Moschus' work emphasizes the true Christian spirit apart from naked superstition and thaumaturgy. A Christ-loving man labored at a charitable institution, distributing linen clothing brought from Egypt. In this, he was heeding Christ's words found in Matthew 25:40, to wit: "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me." An indigent wayfarer came to him and asked for clothes, not once or twice but four times. The distributor expostulated, saying that others were in need also and he should not come again. That night, Christ came down from the icon, confronted the distributor and, raising his cloak, revealed his clothes, the four the distributor had given the mendicant. "Look," said Christ, "one; look, two; look, three; look, four! Do not be grieved, for, believe Me, from the moment that you gave these to the poor they became my clothes."[121]

Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa was the brother of the renowned St. Basil. He received recognition from the church in his own right and ultimately achieved sainthood. That he was a passionate devotee of images can be gleaned from the following:

> Those who behold them embrace, as it were, the
> living body itself in its full flower, they bring
> eye, mouth, ear, all their senses into play, and
> then, shedding tears of reverence and passion,
> they address to the [image] their prayer of inter-
> cession as though he [the martyr, saint] were hale
> and present.[122]

Referring to the miraculous powers reputedly possessed

by images, Gregory affirms:

> And so there are many things, which if you con-
> sider you will see that their appearance is
> ordinary, but the things they accomplish are
> mighty . . . And the images are of saving effi-
> cacy for all men . . .[123]

This passage would seem to indicate that it is not only the

saint represented by the image that has the saving efficacy,

who produces miraculous cures, etc., but the image itself,

which can produce these wonders.

In another section, Gregory is speaking of the relation

of the image of Christ with its prototype, which is the Deity.

He declares:

> . . . as the Scripture tells you, say that the
> one is like the other. For that which is 'made
> in the image' of the Deity necessarily possesses
> a likeness to its prototype in every respect; it
> resembles it in being intellectual, immaterial,
> unconnected with any notion of weight, and in
> eluding any measurement of its dimensions; yet
> as regards its own peculiar nature it is some-
> thing different from that other. Indeed, it
> would be no longer an 'image,' if it were alto-
> gether identical with that other; but where we
> have (A) in that uncreated prototype we have (a)
> in the image; just as in a minute fragment of
> glass, when it faces the light, the complete disc
> of the sun is often to be seen, not represented
> thereon in proportion to its proper size, but so
> far as the minuteness of the particle admits of
> its being represented at all. Thus do the reflec-
> tions of those pure[124] ineffable qualities of God
> shine faith within our narrow limits . . .[125]

Gregory uses the word similarity in linking the man/God

relationship to the image/prototype relation. For Gregory,
the definition of human happiness is the greatest possible
similarity or likeness with God.[126]

Pseudo Dionysus the Areopagite

Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite is perhaps the ultimate
synthesizer of Neoplatonist and Christian thought. He blazed
the trail which others, most notably John of Damascus, fol-
lowed during the heyday of the Iconoclast Controversy. Little
is known about him and some believe him to be "that Dionysius
the Areopagite" mentioned in the Book of Acts as a convert
of St. Paul when he preached at Athens. However, because no
unassailable reference to him or his works emerges before
the sixth century, it is generally believed that he was a
Christian Neoplatonist who had either been a student or a
critical hearer of the philosopher Proclus. His concept of
"Heavenly Hierarchies" influenced centuries of Christian
thought on up through Duns Scotus, Acquinas, and Dante.[127]

Dionysius' concept of the image greatly influenced John
of Damascus; the following quotation shows why this is so.
Dionysius states:

> . . . in sensible images, if the painter looks
> without interruption at the archetypal form,
> neither distracted by any other visible thing nor
> splitting his attention toward anything else, then
> he will, so to speak, duplicate the person painted
> and will show the two in the similitude, the arche-
> type in the image, the one in the other except for
> their different essences [i.e. natures].[128]

It is obvious why the later Byzantine iconophiles loved this
quote. This and similar ones enabled them to bolster their

ever recurring contention that the images of Christ in a work of art can be identical with Him in one way though not in another; it could be identical as to the form of His humanity and even as to His divine-human hypostasis or person, but not identical to His divine, invisible, nature or essence.

Intriguing Parallels in the Neoplatonist/
Christian Justification for the
Veneration of Images

The initial conflict between the Weltanschauungen of the Neoplatonists and the Christians was transformed into a fairly comfortable almost symbiotic relationship. Christianity was the accepted faith of the Empire but Neoplatonism provided a fashionable structure and access to the rarified atmosphere of the aristocracy upon whom Christianity would have to depend for its ultimate survival. In fact, with regard to images, Christianity co-opted in toto, the Neoplatonist rationalization of images. Neither system countenanced the use of images, the Neoplatonists because of philosophical conviction, the Christians because of divine prohibition and scriptural injunction. Both groups experienced great syncretistic pressure from above and below and Christianity, always an adaptable creed, readily adjusted.

The Neoplatonist and Christian justifications of images were for all purposes identical. Both groups stated emphatically that image veneration did not constitute idolatry. The images were not gods or God. Their sole purpose was to

lead man to God. Further, following the precept of Maximus
of Tyre, both sides viewed images as man's copybook, helping
him to engrave upon his memory the likeness of God. Also,
the two creeds held that the images, with the end of sacred
rites, whether pagan ceremony or ecclesiastical benison, were
fit to receive the divine. They could be imbued by more than
human power and endowed with miraculous energy. Lastly,
images were permissible because man was made in the image
of the gods or God. This appealed greatly to the Christians
because Christ had dwelt on earth in human form, unlike
statues of the gods whom no one had even seen. Images were
seen to be symbolic of God's kinship with man.[129] Seldom
have two such diametrically opposed systems of thought
reached a point where their respective views so closely
resembled each other.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Louis Bréhier, La Querelle des Images (New York, 1969), p. 7.

[2]David Howell, "St. George as Intercessor," Byzantion, XXXIX (1969), p. 133.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Bréhier, La Querelle des Images, p. 7.

[5]L. W. Barnard, The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy (Leiden, 1974), p. 51.

[6]J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene A.D. 395 to 800 (London, 1889), II, p. 52.

[7]Barnard, pp. 52-53.

[8]Ibid., pp. 54-57.

[9]Ernest Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, VIII (1954), p. 124.

[10]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[11]Bréhier, La Querelle des Images, p. 8.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," pp. 119-20.

[16]Ibid., p. 124.

[17]Ibid., p. 99.

[18]Kitzinger, The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies (Bloomington, 1976), p. 107.

[19]Peter Brown, "Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," English Historical Review, LXXXVIII (1973), pp. 13-14.

[20]Ibid., p. 14.

[21]Ibid., p. 15.

[22]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[23]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[24]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[25]Ibid., p. 20.

[26]Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," Journal of Roman Studies, LXI (1971), pp. 91-92, 95.

[27]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy," English Historical Review, LXXXVIII (1973), p. 21.

[28]Ibid., p. 22.

[29]Ibid., p. 23.

[30]N. H. Baynes, "The Thought World of East Rome," Byzantine Studies and other Essays (Oxford, 1955), p. 26.

[31]Ibid., p. 27.

[32]Ibid., p. 28.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Baynes, "The Icons before Iconoclasm," Byzantine Studies, p. 227.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., p. 228.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., p. 229.

[40]Johannes Quasten, Patiology, II, The Ante Nicene Literature after Irenaeus (Utrecht, 1953), pp. 37-38. The verse reads: "There are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

[41]Ibid., p. 39.

[42]Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, tr. J.E.C. Oulton (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964), II, p. 31.

[43]Quasten, p. 40.

[44]Eusebius, II, p. 95.

[45]Origen, Contra Celsus, tr. Frederick Crombie, in The Ante Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325 (Buffalo, 1885), IV, p. 398.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid., p. 510.

[49]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 117.

[50]Ibid., p. 120.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Quasten, Patiology, III, The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon (West Minster, Md., 1960), pp. 309-10.

[53]The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F. L. Cross (London, 1957), p. 914. Sabellianism is a synonym for the modalist form of monarchianism which held that in the Godhead the only differentiation was a mere succession of modes or operations.

[54]Quasten, Patiology, III, pp. 310-11.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 121.

[57]Ibid., pp. 121-22.

[58]Ibid., p. 122.

[59]Ibid., pp. 122-23.

[60]Ibid., pp. 125-26.

[61]Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," pp. 92-93.

[62]Quasten, Patiology, III, p. 384.

[63]Ibid., pp. 384-85.

[64]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 126.

[65]Quasten, _Patiology_, III, p. 391.

[66]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," _Byzantine Studies_, p. 127.

[67]Quasten, _Patiology_, III, pp. 391-93.

[68]St. Jerome, _Selected Works and Letters_, tr. Henry Percival, in _The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers_ (New York, 1894), VI, p. 352.

[69]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," _Byzantine Studies_, p. 128.

[70]Ibid.

[71]George Ostrogorsky, _Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites_ (Amsterdam, 1964), p. 68.

[72]Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," p. 93 footnote 28.

[73]Clement of Alexandria, _The Writings of Clement of Alexandria_, tr. G.W. Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. XI.

[74]Ibid., p. XII.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid., p. 115.

[77]Ibid., p. 117.

[78]Ibid., p. 121.

[79]Ibid., p. 133.

[80]Ibid., p. 141.

[81]Ibid., p. 197.

[82]Ibid., p. 215.

[83]Ibid., p. 221.

[84]Augustus Neander, _General History of the Christian Religion and Church_, tr. Joseph Torrey (Boston, 1854), II, p. 293.

[85]St. Augustine, _Opera/Obras_, tr. P. Victorino Campannaga, 18 vols. (Madrid, 1957), I, p. 547.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Gerhard B. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, VII (1953), p. 9.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Plotinus, The Anneads, tr. Stephen MacKenna (New York, 1969), pp. 371-72.

[90]Ibid., p. 422.

[91]Ibid., pp. 422-23.

[92]Ibid., p. 438.

[93]W. R. Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus (London, 1929), I, p. 196.

[94]Tradition was an important point which the Neoplatonists could not dismiss.

[95]Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus, I, pp. 66-67.

[96]Ladner, "The Concept of the Image," p. 9.

[97]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 133.

[98]S. E. Gersh, A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus (Leiden, 1973), p. 276.

[99]Iamblichus of Chalcis, In Platonis Dialogas Commentariorum Fragmenta, tr. John M. Dillon (Leiden, 1973), p. 104.

[100]Ibid., p. 177.

[101]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, pp. 132-33.

[102]Ibid., p. 129.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid., pp. 131-32.

[106]Ibid., p. 131.

[107]Thomas Whittaker, The Neo-Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism (Hildesheim, 1961), p. 144.

[108]The Works of the Emperor Julian, tr. Wilmer C. Wright (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), II, p. 309.

[109] Ibid., pp. 309-11 and 315.

[110] St. Basil, Letters and Selected Works, tr. Blomfield Jackson, in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (New York, 1895), VIII, p. 28, footnote 4. "For of thee is the kingdom and the power and the glory, of Father, of Son, and of Holy Ghost, now and ever."

[111] Ibid., p. 28.

[112] Ibid., p. 326.

[113] Baynes, "The Icons before Iconoclasm," Byzantine Studies, pp. 230-31.

[114] Ibid., pp. 231-32.

[115] Ibid., pp. 233-34.

[116] Ibid., p. 235.

[117] Baynes, "The Pratum Spirituale," Byzantine Studies, p. 261.

[118] Ibid., p. 262.

[119] Ibid., p. 264.

[120] Ibid., p. 265.

[121] Ibid., p. 268.

[122] Gregory of Nyssa, Writings and Letters, trs. William Moore and Henry A. Wilson, in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (New York, 1893), V, p. 519.

[123] Ibid., pp. 519-20.

[124] Ibid., p. 437. The word 'pure' indicates Gregory was influenced by the Neoplatonists.

[125] Ibid., pp. 436-37.

[126] Ladner, "The Concept of the Image," p. 12.

[127] Whittaker, The Neoplatonists, p. 187.

[128] Ladner, "The Concept of the Image," p. 13.

[129] Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 133.

CHAPTER III

A CENTRAL QUESTION: WHAT IS HOLY?

As was stated at the beginning of this paper, the main
bone of contention between the iconoclasts and the iconodules
was a legitimate difference of opinion concerning the nature
of what constituted a holy thing in Byzantine theology.   The
fact is that the two sides were not so far apart or irrecon-
cilable as they believed.   But each saw the other as an
implacable foe from whom no quarter was asked or given.   For
the iconodules, the argument was put fairly by Canon 82 of
the Council in Trullo which stated:

> In certain reproductions of venerable images, the
> precursor is pictured indicating the lamb with his
> finger.   This representation was adopted as a sym-
> bol of grace.   It was a hidden figure of that true
> lamb who is Christ our God, shown to us according
> to the Law.   Having thus welcomed these ancient
> figures and shadows as symbols of the truth trans-
> mitted to the Church, we prefer grace and truth
> themselves as a fulfillment of this law.   There-
> fore, in order to expose to the sight of all, at
> least with the help of painting, that which is
> perfect, we decree that henceforth Christ our God
> must be represented in His human form, and not in
> the form of the ancient lamb.[1]

Before Leo III issued his formal decrees against images

the Patriarch Germanus I (715-730) articulated the issue

thusly:

> In eternal memory of the life in the flesh of our
> Lord Jesus Christ, of His passion, His saving death,
> and the redemption of the world which results from

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them, we have received the tradition of representing Him in his human form--i.e., in his visible theophany --understanding that in this way we exalt the humili- ation of God the Word.[2]

These excerpts serve to demonstrate what the iconodules considered holy and worthy of veneration. But what about the iconoclasts? On that score, the iconoclasts were adamant. Only subjects solemnly blessed by an ordained priest were holy, and they raised from the material to the supernatural only three objects: the Eucharist, given by Christ and con- secrated by the clergy; the church building, consecrated by the bishop; the sign of the Cross, a sign directly from God, as shown to Constantine the Great. Images were viewed as crossing the frontier from the holy to the profane.[3]

The icons were not holy because they had not received consecration from above but only illicit consecration from below. Images of Christ and the saints were only thought to be holy, like pagan cult objects. The iconodules were unable to wrench free from the riptide of this argument over what was holy and it was the obsession with this problem of the holy that was the nexus between the iconoclasts and the iconodules.[4] The iconodules wanted to have their cake and eat it too. They inherited an impressively clear solution from the ancients. If the images move, record, jog man's memory, then they can communicate the Christian message. But this utilitarian function was not enough for them; they wanted them to be holy too.[5]

The iconodules plainly accepted the criterion of the holy espoused by the iconoclasts, that of consecration. But

they begged the issue. They could not claim that an artist-produced image was holy simply because it had been blessed in a solemn manner. They could not refute the relevance of consecration hence the idea of crediting some images (e.g., the Mandylion of Edessa) with immediate divine origin. They were not made with human hands and so were above mere art.[4]

The iconoclasts offered a group of holy objects which were not unduly spiritualized or without potent visual impact. These were the Eucharist, the basilica (and its relationship to Jerusalem), the Cross, and even the Ark of the Covenant. For them, the iconodule superstition was a hemorrhage of the holy into a hundred little paintings.[5] Iconoclasm was a centripedal force, with a few central objects, opposed to the centrifugal piety of the iconodules which spread holiness to a goggle of unconsecrated baubles.[6]

The identification of the image with the holy and the rejection of this tenet by the iconoclasts was the issue at stake, not the status of the arts in Byzantine society. The rise of the cult of icons, and not the origins of Iconoclasm, was the central problem of the Iconoclast Controversy.[7]

The tendency to worship individual icons was ever present in the Mediterranean world. Up to the late sixth century, the elite offered resistance to the "naive, animistic ideas of the masses."[8] In the late sixth century "the resistance to much pressure on the part of the authorities ceased . . . and this relaxation of counterpressure from above was at least a major factor in the development."[9]

The imperial court was responsible for the changes. There was one privileged oasis of feeling for an image which had survived intact--the veneration of imperial images.[10] Religious images began to receive marks of veneration analogous to that bestowed on imperial images in the sixth century. But by the end of the century, the emperors took the final conscious steps in fostering these practices. They permitted icons of Christ and of the Virgin to stand in place of the imperial images and so receive the same pagan worship as their own images had always received.[11] By the seventh century, images were firmly established in the public religion of the empire. The masses received from sacred images what they would never expect from imperial images--healing and a flood of tears of repentance for their sins.[12]

Disrespect for the imperial image released a real torrent of emotion. The reaction of the iconodules to iconoclast edicts should be interpreted in this light. They argued negatively, from the dire consequences of disrespect for the imperial image to be the impiety of disrespect for the image of Christ the emperor.[13]

Iconoclastic Christological Dogma

Leo III

The Christological views of Leo III were rather simplistic. There is some evidence that Leo wanted, at first, to proscribe all images except Christ and then only after the Resurrection.[14] He rejected the cult of saints and of the

Virgin, basing his antipathy for images in large measure upon the prohibitions of Scripture.[15] It seems that no real articulate theology of Iconoclasm was developed in written form during Leo's reign.

Constantine V

This changed abruptly during the reign of Constantine V, regarded as the zenith of the first phase of Iconoclasm. Constantine built on the heritage of Leo III but his religious formulations, and that of the Council of 754 give evidence of considerable advances over the earlier period.

The Christological dilemma comes as a breach birth during this period. The image maker either divides the two natures, like the Nestorians, or confuses them, as did the Monophysites. These heresies are now joined with idolatry.[16]

The Patriarch Nicephorus, the indefatigable ninth century iconodule author, preserves parts of the inquiries of Constantine V. These were used by the Council of 754 in formulating dogma. The first inquiry adduces the doctrine that a true image is of the same substance as the original.[17] In the second inquiry, Constantine gives an account of the institution of the Eucharist, calling the elements a type of Christ's body.[18] Constantine explicitly declares that the Eucharist can be regarded as the image of His body, as a form of it. Of course not all bread and wine are His body and blood (i.e. true images) unless they are transferred by sacerdotal consecration from the realm of "handmade" to that of "made without hands."[19]

The Council of 754 adopted and rephrased the Emperor's arguments[20] and declared that the Eucharist is the true image of Christ,[21] the only form chosen to represent his incarnation.[22] The Eucharist is explicitly characterized as the image of His body.[23] The Council then declares that a non-anthropomorphic image was chosen by God in order not to bring another person into the Trinity, thereby giving man a motive for idolatry.[24] There is an explicit parallel drawn between the incarnation proper and the eucharistic consecration. The sanctification of the natural body in the Incarnation was likened to the sanctification of the eucharistic bread by the descent of the Holy Spirit brought about by priestly consecration. In this way is the true icon of the Christ manifested.[25]

Nicephorus' refutation denies the existence of any biblical basis for calling the Eucharist an image though prior to the consecration, calling it an "antitype" is permissible. He essayed to impale Constantine V on the horns of his own paradox saying that, since the Eucharist can be circumscribed (i.e. by mouth, teeth), it is corporeal and palpable, thus making Constantine's contention invalid.[26] This eucharistic argument was not so important in the ninth century and was not emphasized by the Council of 815.[27]

Constantine assumed that the Eucharist (the true image) is _homoousios_ with the Flesh of Christ. This follows from the fact that in his first inquiry the true image had the same essence as that which is pictured. Therefore, Constan-

tine's assumption that the eucharistic elements are homoou-
sios with the body of Christ is orthodox.[29] This idea that
the image is homoousios with that which is depicted goes back
to the New Testament and had wide currency in the trinitarian
arguments and controversies and in Athanasius' writings. It
was not "oriental-magical conceptions,"[30] but an example of
biblical patristic usage.[31] The Council of 754 did not reit-
erate the homoousios definition of images. It condemned,
like Constantine V, the identification of anthropomorphic
images of Christ as "Christ" by means of a title. The Council
did not offer an alternate, precise definition of image.[32]

The Council of 754 may have felt that the homoousios
argument applied only to the Trinity. They placed great
emphasis on the Eucharist as the only true material image of
Christ.[33] Constantine and the Council do agree regarding
the Eucharist as the true image of Christ. The iconoclasts
maintained a realistic view of the Eucharist; indeed, it was
truly the body and blood of Christ.[34]

Eusebius, commenting on Genesis 45:12,[35] relates the
words to the resplendence and purity of the sacramental
nourishment.[36] His letter to Constantia, which denies the
lawfulness of portraying Christ in glory or in humiliation,
was used extensively by Constantine V and the Council of 754.
He does not introduce the real Eucharist/image argument to
balance his view of the unlawfulness of human portraiture in
his letter to Constantia. Perhaps the iconodule polemicists,
whose quotations of the letter provide our only knowledge of

it, knew a good argument when they saw one and thought it wise not to cite it. At any rate, it is likely that this part of iconoclastic doctrine is attributable to Eusebius.[37] He does not state, in his extant works, the antithesis between the true image of Christ given in the Eucharist and the false anthropomorphic images made by artists' hands, but perhaps this was an effort to mount a polemical counterattack against the widespread characterizations of miraculous images "made without human hands."[38]

The doctrine of Iconoclasm also owes something to Apollinarius. Commenting on Jacob's blessing, he draws a parallel between the legacy left by the Patriarch and that bestowed by Christ at His ascension. At that time, the Holy Spirit, who made men sons of God, made them images of Himself. This was not a direct allusion to the Eucharist/image but refers to the restoration by the Paraclete of the divine image in man destroyed by sin. Both Apollinarius and the Council of 754 stress the role of the Holy Spirit.[39]

It is obvious that the iconoclastic doctrine of the Eucharist was not really an innovation or a perverse misapplication of liturgical language. Rather, it was dependent upon extant bona fide patristic exegesis. The way in which the iconoclasts used these arguments was uniquely their own, but they drew upon extensive patristic polemics against idolatry. The eucharistic formulations were not plucked from thin air or imagination. Indeed, the iconoclasts could say, with John of Damascus that "I shall say nothing which is the fruit of my own understanding."[40]

Christology During Iconoclasm's

Second Phase

The Christological view propounded by the Council of
815, ushering in Iconoclasm's second period, has been denig-
rated as a tautology, a mere recapitulation of the argument
of Constantine V and the Council of 754, that pictorial images
of Christ are spurious and the only true image of Christ was
the Eucharist.[41] As has been stated previously, this was
not the case. Images were viewed as "spurious," to be sure.
In fact, they were not seen as images at all. Images could
be used for the saints only if they could be used to repre-
sent Christ, which was impossible because He is incomprehen-
sible and uncircumscribable. He must be worshipped in spirit
and in truth and not through some false image.[42]

But there the similarity ends. The doctrine of the
Council of 754, which made the Eucharist the only true image
of Christ rather than His body and blood, was on shaky ground
theologically. The doctrine of spuriousness was different
in 815. The Eucharist was no longer the true image of Christ;
instead, this image became Man endowed with Christ's virtues.[43]
The true image was not only kind of pictorial representation.
The only true image was man who, by the grace of God, made
himself resemble God.[44]

Importance of Exogamous Influences on

Iconoclasm

The Paulicians

Many historians view Iconoclasm as a movement motivated almost solely by external forces. Rather than see Iconoclasm as a Christian phenomenon with Byzantine overtones, they profess to detect all manner of exogamous influences, from heretical Christian sects to the Arabs. Let us investigate the extent of the influence of these outside forces and determine their true role in the emergence of Iconoclasm.

The most prominent heretical sect mentioned in connection with Iconoclasm is that of the Paulicians. This sect was founded by an Armenian named Constantine, who was born at Mananolis during the reign of Constans II (641-68). Constantine venerated St. Paul greatly, though he was originally a follower of Mani. Later, this association with Manichaeans was repudiated and the Paulicians anathematized Mani. Constantine assumed the name of St. Paul's companion Silvanus. This Silvanus originated the practice of giving Paulician churches names associated with Paul's travels.[45]

The first general persecution of the Paulicians came during the reigns of Constantine IV (668-85) and Justinian II (685-95).[46] Until the mid-eighth century, the Paulicians were concentrated mainly in rural areas but after this period they spread in increasing numbers to the towns and cities. They even appeared in Constantinople. Their increased

presence was due in large measure to the historical situation
which obtained in Byzantium, especially during the reigns of
Leo III and Constantine V. Leo pursued a stern policy against
them as heretics, though their propaganda was very useful to
him.[47] Despite the fact that their anti-monachist views
closely paralleled those of Constantine V, there is no evi-
dence that he officially tolerated them.

There were significant differences between the icono-
clasts and the Paulicians. Iconoclasm was not dualistic,
while the Paulicians had a marked propensity toward this
heresy. The iconoclasts did not reject the Old Testament
and were not Manichaean. The Paulicians forbade the material
cross and used the outstretched arms of Christ as a surrogate.
For the Eucharist, they substituted the words of Christ. The
iconoclasts retained the cross and the Eucharist as true
symbols.[48]

The two groups also differed fundamentally in their
respective attitudes toward the ecclesiastical hierarchy.
Constantine V replaced intractable men with docile ones, but
did not ride roughshod over the church hierarchy who were
linked with the state. For their part, the Paulicians relent-
lessly attacked the foundations of church organization. They
called the Byzantine church "Roman," despised the Orthodox
clergy, and believed that they alone were Christians and sons
of the true church.[49]

The Paulicians fitted easily into Iconoclasm but they
had no alliance with the ruling hierarchy. On the contrary,

the Iconoclast Emperor Leo V the Armenian instigated a per-
secution which did them overwhelming harm. Under Theophilus,
the last iconoclast emperor, many Paulicians were in prison
condemned for this heresy.[50] So it is clear that there are
no grounds for connecting Iconoclasm and the Paulicians,
though Iconoclasm may have provided conditions suitable for
its proliferation. Paulicianism lacked an appeal to tradi-
tion, unlike Iconoclasm which did not neglect this vital
element. The Paulicians sought to return to the simplicity
of early Christianity by appealing to the cult of St. Paul.[51]

The Arabs

The threat of Islam called for sacrifices from both the
Emperor and the people. The wealth and luxury which had been
lavished abundantly on images had to give way to a simpler,
purer faith more in keeping with austere, desperate times.
In this sense, Iconoclasm was a reaction against Islam, not
an adoption of its tenets.[52]

Islam itself was not uniformly iconoclastic. Islam did
not prohibit human representation, as Umayyad baths and other
art manifests.[53] The Koran says little about artistic repre-
sentation because idols were not perceived as dangerous in
Mohammed's time. Arabic polytheism, in pre-Islamic times,
had no priests, temples, or literature but was, instead, a
fetishism based on a cult of certain stones, e.g., the Kaaba
at Mecca, which was even incorporated into Muslim belief.[54]
Islamic art did not become totally non-representational until

late in the eighth century after the ascendency of the Abba-
sid dynasty, the rulers of which were more puritanical and
influenced by Jews who accepted the new religion and assumed
important posts in the bureaucracy and subsequently hardened
the anti-representational biases of the Arabs.

Despite the ukase promulgated by Yazid II against images
in 721, there is little or no evidence to indicate that Leo
(despite his Syrian origins) had any discussions with the
Arabs concerning image worship or even knew of it, for that
matter, during his Syrian period. The main developments in
image worship came under Justinian II and his successors.[55]

Many early and some modern sources have attempted to
show that Leo was directly affected by Yazid II's edict of
721 against Christian and Islamic images. However, establish-
ing a nexus between Leo and Islamic iconoclasm was the work
of later iconodule apologists but was not found in the earliest
source where reference to the Edict is made, the letter of
the presbyter John of Jerusalem which was read to the fifth
session of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. John places
sole blame on a Jewish magician.[56] Actually, Yazid's edict
was a culmination of Islamic iconoclasm and not an initia-
tion.[57] It is just possible that Yazid was simply anti-
Christian and this enabled the iconodule polemicists to graft
their own enemies on Yazid. This would explain the icono-
clastic turn the edict takes in Christian sources.[58]

Various sources and authors allude to a Jew named
Tessarakontapechys or "forty cubits," as the man who inflamed

Yazid's iconoclastic zeal. Vasiliev argues that this man
is, in reality, a certain Syrian freedman named Beser, a later
crony of Leo III and a convert from Islam, thus establishing
a link between Leo and Yazid.[59] Unfortunately, there is no
hard evidence to support this contention.[60]

Georgius Monachus, a monk and hardline iconodule, offers
a variation on the original theme. In Georgius' work, the
single Jew, Tessarakontapechys, becomes two Jewish youths who
dupe Yazid and convince him that he will enjoy a long and
prosperous reign if only he will destroy the religious images.
He does so but dies little more than a year later. The two
flee across the Isaurian frontier, meet Leo, and infect him
with the poison of Iconoclasm.[61]

Syrian sources mention Yazid's edict but disclaim any
knowledge of Jewish influences and are silent on the subject
of Leo III, as are the Arab sources. Therefore, it is rea-
sonably safe to assume that Yazid's edict was issued on his
own initiative. It was a culmination of a trend and not a
genesis of a movement. Lastly, Yazid would hardly have done
such a thing at the behest of some Jewish sorcerer.[62]

John of Jerusalem states that the Christian bishop of
Nacoleia and his supporters heard of Yazid's iconoclasm and
imitated it. In his letter to Thomas, bishop of Claudiopolis,
the Patriarch Germanus blames Thomas for removing the images,
saying that the words and deeds of the Arabs, designed to do
harm to the church, should be overthrown and the equanimity
of the church demonstrated. The Jews, likewise, have long

reproached the church, he stated, for idolatry, but they themselves are the true idolaters, attempting to besmirch the faith and the devotion of the church to images. The Arabs have adopted a similar view, he opines later, but they can be easily confuted for they worship a true idol, the Kaaba, in Mecca. Having said all this, John does not state categorically that Byzantine Iconoclasm was directly influenced by the Arabs or even the Jews.[63]

Another thought presents itself. If Leo was imitating Yazid, as some have alleged, why did he wait nine years to do it? For example, there is a seal extant dating from the first years of Leo's reign, which bears a portrait of the clean shaven Leo III on one side and a representation of the Virgin and Child with a cross and diadem on the other. The inscription reads, "Leo and Constantine, the faithful Emperors of the Romans." It must date from after 720 when Constantine V was functioning almost as a joint ruler with Leo.[64]

At the time of Yazid's edict, Leo could be said to have been a supporter, guarded perhaps, of icons as his correspondence with the Caliph Umar II suggests. Umar was the immediate predecessor of Yazid, dying in 720. In his letter to Umar, Leo gives a punctilious defense of images.

> We honor the Cross because of the suffering of that
> Word of God incarnate bore thereon . . . As for
> pictures, we do not give them like respect, not
> having received in Holy Scripture any commandment
> whatsoever in regard to this. Nevertheless, find-
> ing in the Old Testament that divine command which
> authorized Moses to have executed in the Tabernacle
> the figure of the cherubim and animated by a sincere
> attachment to the disciples of the Lord, who burned

> with love for the Savior Himself, we have always
> felt a desire to conserve their images . . . Their
> presence charms us, and we glorify the Saints. But
> as far as the wood and the colors, we do not give
> them any reverence.[65]

The icons were part of an imperial orthodoxy that Leo wanted

to preserve, but they had no mystical significance. This

interpretation was not so different from the attitude of the

Patriarch Germanus who represented the official view of

icons.[66]

Leo's letters are the first formal refutation of Islam

by a Byzantine writer. Leo's was not a closed religion, he

and Umar believe in the same God. This seeming affability

has convinced some authorities that the correspondence between

Leo and Umar was a calculated Christian overture towards

Islam, based on minimizing the role of images.[67] However,

this may have been Leo's own view and not adopted for poli-

tical reasons. He was, no doubt, unhappy concerning the

superstitious practices in Byzantium.

In the arts, the iconoclastic emperors employed artists,

built churches, and decorated new buildings in spite of their

antipathy to religious art and images. Theirs was a positive

art program which allowed scenes from nature. In this, it

was somewhat alien to Islam. Perhaps because iconoclasm was

well received in the eastern areas among Jews and Monophysites,

Leo adopted it to shore up his authority in these areas. If

this was the case, it was certainly not a major motive and

was not directly related or indebted to Islam.[68]

The Jews

The question of Jewish influence on the iconoclastic movement is a prominent one, especially during the reign of Michael II (820-29). Michael was born at Amorium in Phrygia, which had a large Jewish population. Also, this area had a reputation as a breeding ground for heresies and religious heterodoxy.[69] In that region there dwelt a more or less flourishing sect known as the Athinganoi.[70] This group practiced an exaggerated levitical purity, utilizing astrology, demonology, and thaumaturgy. They also observed the sabbath on the seventh day.[71] It is not possible to trace direct Jewish influence on this sect, though biased iconodule polemicists attempted to do this.[72] Despite this literary juxtaposition, there is no evidence that Michael II had even been an Athinganoi.

Athinganoi or not, Michael was definitely of the Iconoclast persuasion, although he was moderate in his support of the movement. He released numerous prisoners and restored the religious exiles, even that old nemesis Theodore the Studite. He refused to recognize either the Second Council of Nicaea or the Iconoclastic Synod of 815. He believed that many of the clergy and laity were disenchanted with and alienated from certain aspects of icon worship, and ordered that no one speak either for or against images. He entrusted the education of his son to iconoclasts (John the Grammarian) and nominated an iconoclast to the patriarchal throne.[73]

Jewish hostility to images fell into two categories,

intrinsic and extrinsic. The former was the old story of biblical interpretation, but the latter was a new phenomenon. At this time, the defense of icons began to play a significant role in the polemics directed at the Jews. "Jew" and "infidel" were rather loose terms of approbrium freely bandied about by Christian apologists. Physical aggression as a counterstroke against these literary polemics was begun by the Jews at this time. Attacks on images by the Samaritans were particularly common. There is evidence that the surviving remnants of Graeco-Roman paganism were sufficiently alert and vigorous to take advantage of and exploit the oxymoron inherent in pro-image polemics, particularly in light of early Christian denunciations of images and their worship.[74] After all, the Jews were certainly not about to save the Christians from idolatrous exercises. It was a case of hitting the opponent in his most vulnerable spot. Image worship was a questionable issue for many and the opposition to this seeming departure from the early Christian spirituality never really ceased.[75]

Any question of Jewish influence can be answered by viewing the events of Leo's reign. In 721-22, coincident with Yazid's edict on images, Leo III ordered that all Jews (and Montanists as well) be forcibly baptized. It is hardly consistent to follow a group's beliefs and then baptize them by force.[76] At the same time it is not difficult to recognize the sensational old argument that it is the Jews who have sown the seeds of Iconoclasm among the heretics.[77] This accusation,

as others, of such Jewish responsibility, was a gross over-
simplification. The Jews were not the cause of Iconoclasm.
Iconoclasm was merely an expression of Christian iconoclastic
ideas that were as old as icons themselves.[78]

If we accept the fact that Iconoclasm was essentially
an inner development within Byzantine Christianity, and that
even such a group as the Paulicians, similar though they were
to the Iconoclasts in many respects, played no great role in
its genesis, what room is left for so-called Jewish influ-
ence? With respect to Leo III, there is the legend that
some Jews persuaded Yazid and Leo to adopt Iconoclasm. This
is based on the historical personality of Beser (whom we have
already described), a convert from Islam and Leo's lieutenant
in Iconoclasm. We have already alluded to Michael II and
have, for the most part, discounted the possibility of Jewish
influence. Basing an opinion solely on the historical record,
one would be hard put to make a case for appreciable Jewish
influence in the iconoclastic controversy.[79]

The Question of Monophysitism

Many historians have stated that the iconoclasts had
salient monophysitic propensities because they were influenced
by eastern religious leaders or because the majority of men
in the theme armies came from the East. If Armenia can stand
as an example, this hypothesis may have to be reconsidered.
The Armenians have been long stigmatized as Monophysites by
the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches. Perhaps this is

true if the term "one nature" is used in the Cyrillian sense (St. Cyril of Alexandria) but not if this is understood in the classic eutychian definition (Eutyches of Constantinople).[80]

The furor emanates from the Nestorian controversy which pitted the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools of religious thought in a battle for theological supremacy. The doctrine of Antioch was concerned primarily with the life and human experience of Christ and sought to make a clearcut distinction between the human and the divine in Him.[81] Diodorus of Tarsus saw in the term "Savior" a distinction between the son of God and the son of David, in whom the Word dwelt "as in a temple." The man born of Mary was the son of God by grace not by nature, this being reserved for the Word alone (only the Word was the son of God by nature). His disciple, Theodore of Mopsuestia, went still further and looked upon the union as a conjunction of distinct elements and said that "not God, but the temple in which God dwelt is born of Mary."[82] Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, carried the argument to its ultimate conclusion when he claimed that the two natures had remained complete and distinct after the union, each retaining its specific properties and acting according to them. Thus, the union of Christ was a personal one. This resulted in there being two Sons in Christ, the person of Christ in the Incarnation being not absolutely identical with the Word before the Incarnation. The redemption effected by Christ was thus threatened, since salvation was impossible from a mere man.[83]

The Alexandrian school took the opposite view, insisting upon or, more properly, emphasizing the divinity of the Word incarnate and the intimate union of the two natures in His person. Cyril of Alexandria held that the person of Christ was identical with that of the Word; the Word Incarnate is Christ and is complete in divinity. On the other hand, the humanity that the Word has assumed is also complete, composed of a body and a soul. Avowed Cyril:

> The two distinct natures had been united into a true unity, and from both one Christ and one Son had come, not as though the difference of the natures had been done away by the union, but, on the contrary, that they constituted the one Lord Jesus Christ and Son by unutterable union of the Godhead and the Manhood.[84]

Cyril defined this intimate union by the formula "one incarnate nature of the God Word."[85] There is only one Son in Jesus Christ and He, being identical with the Word is the natural Son of God; this same Word incarnate is Mary's son by nature; Mary is the "Godbearer." Q.E.D. The Antiochene school rejected this reasoning.

The Christology of Cyril triumphed at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and Nestorius and his followers were anathematized as heretics. But some of Cyril's followers, especially Eutyches, archimandrite of a monastery near Constantinople, distorted his teaching by overemphasizing the union, thus confusing the two natures in Christ, absorbing the manhood into the Godhead. They denied that Christ's body was of the same substance as that of ordinary humanity and this raised the question of whether the manhood of Christ was true or

docetic, or illusory. The Synod of Constantinople, convoked

by the Patriarch Flavian in 448, interpreted this as heresy

and excommunicated Eutyches. The Alexandrian bishops were

angered by this treatment and at the so-called "Robber"

Council of Ephesus in 449, headed by Dioscorus of Alexandria,

Flavian was condemned and Eutyches rehabilitated.[86] A state

of hopeless confusion reigned.

By the time the new Emperor Marcian summoned the Council

of Chalcedon in 451, the rift between Constantinople and

Alexandria had become a yawning chasm. Pope Leo I played a

significant part in convoking the Council and in its proceed-

ings and decisions.[87] The Chalcedonian creed was recognized

as the law of the church. It reads in part:

> One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten,
> proclaimed in two natures, without confusion,
> without change, without division, without separ-
> ation; the difference of the natures being in no
> way destroyed on account of the union, but rather
> the peculiar property of each nature being pre-
> served and concurring in one person and one
> hypostasis--not as though parted or divided into
> two persons, but one and the same Son and only-
> begotten, God the Word, Lord, Jesus Christ.[88]

The Council of Ephesus had met to end the Nestorian

heterodoxy, which separated the two natures, and the profes-

sion of faith adopted by it insisted on the union of the two

natures. Chalcedon, seeking to root out Eutychianism, or

confusing the two natures made too sharp a distinction between

them. The Alexandrian bishops, at least, thought so and they

and several Eastern ecclesiastics rejected the Chalcedonian

formula. They objected to there being two natures after the

union, which differed from Cyril's "one nature of the God Word

incarnate," and declared that Nestorianism had recrudesced at Chalcedon. They also resented other acts of the Council such as deposing the Patriarch Dioscorus and adopting the XXVIIth Canon which bestowed on the see of Constantinople second rank in the Universal Church after Rome and placed the dioceses of Pontus, Proconsular Asia, and Thrace under its jurisdiction, while stipulating that the annointing of all metropolitans take place at Constantinople.[89]

Chalcedon served only to exacerbate existing antagonisms and resulted in virtual schism with the East. The Emperor Zeno published his Henotikon in 482 which declared the true manhood and Godhead of Christ, anathematized all who sought to divide or confuse the two natures, and all those at Chalcedon or any other synods who thought differently from the Nicaean Creed. Under Justinian in 553, the Council of Constantinople condemned the "Three Chapters," a group of writings by Nestorians which were particularly abominated by Monophysites. All those acts were to no avail. Chalcedonian prestige was weakened without assuaging the hatreds of its opponents.[90]

The Armenian formula of "one nature united" is based on the writings of Cyril. The Armenian church recognized the divine and human natures in Christ, His complete humanity animated by a rational soul. The church vehemently rejected the mingling or confusion of the natures (Eutychianism) and anathematized Eutyches along with Arius and Nestorius.[91]

The Armenians were accused of Monophysitism in the

Eutychian sense because of the Trisagion in their liturgy:
"Holy God, Holy and Powerful, Holy and Immortal, Who was
crucified for us," with the addition made in the fifth century
by Peter the Fuller, bishop of Antioch. To these Greek objec-
tions, the Armenians maintained that they sang the Trisagion
in honor of Christ, not of the Trinity, and inasmuch as the
Godhead was present in Christ incarnate, it was permissible
to state that God had been crucified for us.[92]

The greatest Armenian refutation of Eutychianism and all
ancillary doctrines emanating from it is by the Catholicos
John Odsnetsi in his work, "Against the Phantasiasts." The
writer rejects and denies adamantly the fake belief that the
humanity of Christ was chimerical, an operation akin to the
imprint of a seal on wax. The body of Christ is real and of
the same substance as man's and His divine and human natures
exist in Him without confusion. He states:

> The Word, in becoming man and being called man,
> remained also God; and man in becoming God and
> being called God, never lost his own substance
> . . . It is evident that it is in the incompre-
> hensible union and not the transformation of the
> natures which leads us to say one nature of the
> Word incarnate . . . There is one nature and one
> person in Christ, if we must state it briefly, and
> this is not because of the identity or the consub-
> stantiality of the natures . . . but, as I have
> frequently said, because of the ineffable union of
> the Word with His body.[93]

How Far East?

Iconoclasm is said to have originated in the eastern
portions of the Byzantine Empire. Just where in the East it
was supposed to have germinated has never been made very

clear. Some historians claim to have traced its origins to Anatolia, others to Phrygia, still others to Syria or Armenia. But in an Armenian work in the manuscripts of one Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh, a poet and belletrist who lived in the latter part of the sixth and the start of the seventh century, we get the idea, or at least the adumbration that Iconoclasm was not necessarily a product of the vivid imagination of the East.

This particular work is a treatise against the iconoclasts by a man of some importance in the Armenian church of that time.[94] The work alludes to the images used by Moses in making the Ark of the Covenant. Quoting Exodus 25:18-22, it speaks of Moses as being commanded "to form images of gold; two cherubim in the likeness of man, made of gold and placed at the ends of the mercy seat; and the Lord of Lords will meet with thee there." The writer also quotes Hebrews 9:5: "The cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat."[95]

The treatise refers to Solomon and the building of the great temple, the description of which is found in I Kings 6:23-35:

> And Solomon made the cheribums of the temple of olive tree overlaid with gold and within the oracle he also placed two cherubims. And he covered all the walls round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers.

Also, the vision of the prophet Ezekiel is mentioned:

> The Lord brought me into a house on a high mountain and upon entering I beheld a man of marvelous aspect. And he showed me the temple, both the inside and the outside with cherubims and palms upon the walls. And all the walls of the temple were so covered; cherubims in the shape of man, two by two and all wonderful to behold.[96]

The age of the work is certain because the terms employed have nuances derived from Persian sources and not from the Arabs. While it is true that some vestiges of Persian idiom remained after the Arab conquest, its usage was so rare as to be almost nonexistent. Also, the material on which the work is written is uniquely Armenian and its use was extremely rare after the sixth century. Particularly convincing are the references to specific Armenian churchmen and their acts, e.g. St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Hrip'simé, and St. Gazané, which prove that the writer was very familiar with the Armenian church and was not working from second hand Greek sources.[97]

The work cannot have come from iconoclastic times. There were certainly enough instances of Iconoclasm before its eruption in the eighth century. We have such examples as Eusebius' letter to Constantia, the diatribes of Epiphanius, the numerous outbreaks in the West such as Marseilles, where the bishop Serenus removed images from his churches and was reprimanded by Pope Gregory the Great. There also out-breaks in sixth century Antioch and Edessa, where soldiers stoned the miraculous image of Christ and in Constantinople, also at the end of the sixth century, where an image of the Virgin was hung in a latrine.[98]

This work is important because the East is always thought of as the hotbed of Monophysitism and, later, Iconoclasm, the region which nurtured the iconoclast Emperors, and from whence they were imbued with their early biases against images. But

if the work of Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh is to be believed, it is
clear evidence that the area around Armenia was not such a
fertile ground for heresies or Iconoclasm. The treatise
speaks of the imprisonment of many anti-image types in 633.[99]
Now certainly there were anti-image denizens in Armenia as
there were everywhere in the Empire, but most were not rabid
iconoclasts either before or after the movement began.
Literary sources, such as the historian Ghevond, speaks of
the crosses and images of Christ and His disciples destroyed
during the Arab invasions.[100] If Armenia was indeed a breed-
ing ground for Monophysitism and, therefore, did not resist
the Arab conquest all that vigorously, why do we have a
record of the existence of all the images? It would seem
that branding the East with the stigma of being the cradle
of Iconoclasm is a too facile attempt to avoid searching for
more complex, subtle explanations for this complex episode
of history.

The Iconodule Perspective

We have examined in some detail the precursors of Icono-
clasm and Iconodulism. We have looked at the early detractors
and proponents of religious imagery. Let us examine the views
of the iconophiles who fought the battle against Iconoclasm
when the movement was at the zenith of its power.

John of Damascus

John of Damascus, perhaps the greatest iconodule apolo-
gist, living and writing in the Christian ghettoes of the

Middle East, devoted much space in attempting to show that
behind the iconoclast charge of idolatry was an abberrent
fear of matter which amounted almost to Manichaeanism.[101]
In his three treatises for the defense of images, he gives
a reasoned defense of images, which, for the Damascene, serve
various purposes:

1. The image may be a recollection of past events like
a book or other written record.

2. It may be a type foreshadowing something else.

3. It may be an analogy. John uses such examples as
the sun, its light and its beam, or the rose, the tree, the
flower, the scent which are images of the Trinity.

4. It may be an image by imitation, as the created
cannot strictly be an image of the uncreated.

5. It may be a plan of a future undertaking, like the
foreknowledge in the mind of God.

6. It may be the image as contrasted with the live
essence. The example is Christ, who is the self-existent
image of God, as man is the potential image of Him.[102]

John puts the picture or statue, the earthly image, lowest
in the list as its significance is only found in the others.
He sees six stages evolving from God:

1. Christ the direct image of God

2. The thought of God, His creative mind

3. Man actually created but having affinities with the
uncreated

4. The visible world as a medium revealing God but in
no way a part of Him

5. Particular objects or incidents in the visible world alluding to particular facts in God's plan

6. The historical icon, recording good and evil, to promote virtue or shame.[103]

This ladder of revelation, this transfer of image from the material to the intellectual arena is traceable from Hellenistic and early Christian thought, from Plato to Philo to St. Paul to Plotinus and Proclus (Neoplatonists) to Pseudo Dionysius to John of Damascus.[104]

For John, the visible is in some measure endowed sacramentally with the virtue of the invisible it represents. As the image of the Ruler is the Ruler, so the image of Christ is Christ, and the image of the Saint is the Saint. Thus:

> If the power is not divided nor glory distributed, honoring the image becomes honoring the one who is depicted in the image. Devils have feared the saints and fled from their shadow. The shadow is an image, and I make an image that I may scare the demons . . . Material things are endued with a divine power because they bear the names of those they represent . . . Material things in themselves demand no veneration, and if the person who is represented be full of grace, the material becomes partaker of grace metaphorically by faith.[105]

In John's opinion, an image is in some sense a sacrament and from the image to God and from God to the image, there is a graded ascent and descent as in the neoplatonic scheme.

This sacramental view of images made articulate the sentiments of those wedded to icons. The iconoclasts had trouble answering satisfactorily this sacramental view although it probably led them to concentrate on the Christological issue. It may be that they realized that an image of Christ

or a saint had a relation to its prototype that a pagan idol did not have.

It was this sacramental perception of images coupled with a belief in a progressive revelation that enabled the Greek church to escape the prohibitions of the earlier Mosaic dispensation. John of Damascus states:

> And I say to you that Moses through the children of Israel's hardness of heart and knowing their proclivity to idolatry, forbade them to make images. We are not in the same case. We have taken a firm footing on the rock of faith, being enriched with the light of God's friendship . . . Thus we worship images and it is not a worship of matter but of those whom matter represents. The honor given to the image is referred to the original, as St. Basil rightly says.[106]

This friendship of God and man symbolized through matter--the reconciliation of God and man mediated through matter and therefore capable of being symbolized in matter--this is the crowning Christian apologetic.[107]

Theodore the Studite

The second great apologist, active primarily during Iconoclasms second phase, was Theodore, surnamed the Studite, after the monastery of Studion over which he presided during his later years. He was born in Constantinople in the year 759. His father Photinus held a post in the imperial treasury and his mother, Theoctista was a lady of good if not lofty birth. Besides Theodore, there were three other children in the family, Joseph, Euthymius, and a daughter whose name is not preserved in the existing records.[108]

Little is known of Theodore's formal schooling. In the

fashion of the time, he studied grammar, dialectic (i.e.
philosophy), and rhetoric. Whether or not he gained a first-
hand knowledge of classical literature is problematical as is
shown by the dearth of direct quotations from them in any of
his writings.[109] But he did possess a zeal for knowledge,
manifesting a profound knowledge of the Scriptures and the
Greek fathers. He was known for his eloquence and rhetorical
flair.[110]

The quiet years of study lasted until he was about 22.
Whether he was being groomed for a profession such as his
father had pursued is equivocal. However, it is likely that
before he embraced the cloister he was looked upon as a young
fellow with definite prospects.[111]

Theodore had a deep respect and appreciation for piety
and purity. To him, the monastic life had always been the
highest calling. In this view he was greatly influenced by
his uncle Plato, his mother's brother, renowned for his piety.
Plato had left Constantinople and had wandered about on the
Asiatic side of the Bosporus until he found a cavern, which
he entered. His head was shaved by his servant who had accom-
panied him. He sent his servant away with his clothes, put
on a verminous robe, and journeyed on until he reached the
monastery of Symboli, over which an abbot named Theoctistus
presided (it seems there were familial ties here). Plato
became famous for his rigorous asceticism and on Theoctistus'
death succeeded him as abbot.[112] At any rate, Theodore seems
to have soon after embraced the schema as his true calling.

Theodore was a professional theologian. He believed that the imperial government had no voice in matters of cult and dogma. In the Iconoclast controversy, the profoundest points at issue were brought to the fore and Theodore seems to have realized the true nature of the struggle as he hammered home his arguments with lucidity.[113]

The principal argument of Theodore and the Orthodox against the iconoclasts was the reality of Christ's manhood. The debate brought about a recrudescence of the Antiochian contribution to the Christology of Chalcedon. From the time of Justinian, the humanity of Christ had been expressed in terms of "human nature," assumed as one whole by Jesus. This view did little to justify an image of Christ as a concrete, palpable human being. The profound fear of Nestorianism prevented many Byzantine theologians from seeing a man in Christ, for to do so would seem to imply an individual human consciousness, which would necessitate a separate human hypostasis. In Theodore's anti-iconoclastic writings, he overcomes this by a return to Aristotelian logic. To wit:

> Christ was certainly not a mere man; neither is it
> orthodox to say that He assumed an individual among
> men but the whole, the totality of the nature. It
> must be said, however, that this total nature was
> contemplated in an individual manner; for otherwise
> how could it have been seen?--in a way which made
> it visible and describable . . . which allowed it
> to eat and drink . . .[114]

For Theodore, humanity "exists only in Peter and Paul," i.e. in real human beings, and Jesus was such a being. Otherwise, Thomas' experience of placing his finger into Jesus' wounds would have been impossible. The iconoclasts claimed

that Christ, in virtue of the union between divinity and
humanity, was indescribable and, therefore, that no image
of him was possible; but, for Theodore,

> an indescribable Christ would be an incorporeal
> Christ; . . . Isaiah [8:3] described him as a
> male being, and only the form of the body can
> make man and woman distinct from one another.[115]

The firm stand on Christ's individuality as a man again
raised the issue of the hypostatic union, for in Chalcedonian
Christology the unique hypostasis or person of Christ is that
of the Logos. Obviously, then, the idea of hypostasis cannot
be identified with either the divine or the human character-
istics, neither can it be identical with the idea of human
consciousness. The hypostasis is the ultimate source of
individual, personal existence, which, in Christ is both human
and divine.[116]

Theodore postulated a hypostatic or personal identity
between image and original--the relation being like that of
man and shadow distinct only in substance. As Peter's shadow
wrought healing in the New Testament, so, by virtue of the
saint represented, an image can work miracles. The image and
the original are so closely identified that Theodore can con-
gratulate a man who brought an icon as godfather for a child.[117]
This was no idolatry because the material thing was not wor-
shipped but Christ or the saint in the image. Matter is
endued with a divine power through the prayers offered to
those depicted in the image. Material things demand no
veneration, but if the person represented be full of grace,

the material creation shares in that grace.[118] In this idea,
Theodore echoed John of Damascus.

For Theodore, an image can be the image only of a
hypostasis, for the image of a nature is inconceivable.[119]
He went to laborious lengths to prove that there was a dif-
ference in essence between Christ and the image of Christ.
This was necessary or else he could not defend himself against
a charge of idolatry.[120] On the icons of Christ, the only
proper inscription is that of the personal God, "He who is,"
the Greek equivalent of YHWH of the Old Testament, never
such terms as "divinity" or "kingship" which belong to the
Trinity and so may not be represented. This principle shows
that the icon of Christ is for Theodore not only an image of
"the man Jesus," but also of the incarnate Logos. The mean-
ing of the Christian Gospel lies in the fact that the Logos
assumed all the characteristics of a man, including describ-
ability, and His icon is a permanent witness of this fact.[121]

The humanity of Christ, which makes icons possible, is
a "new humanity," having been fully restored to communion
with God, deified in virtue of the communication of idioms,
manifesting again the image of God. Thus, we have iconography
as an art form, the artist receiving an almost sacramental
function. Theodore compares the Christian artist to God
himself, making man in His own image: "The fact that God
made man in His image and likeness shows that iconography is
a divine action." In the beginning, God created man in His
image. By making an icon of Christ, the iconographer also

makes an "image of God," for this is what the deified human-
ity of Jesus truly is.[122]

The Patriarch Nicephorus

By position, temperament, and style, Nicephorus, Patri-
arch of Constantinople (806-815) was the direct opposite of
the irrascible Theodore. As was stated previously, he belongs
to the series of Byzantine patriarchs who were elevated to
the patriarchal throne after a successful civil career. As
patriarch, he adhered to a conciliatory policy and suspended
the canonical sanctions imposed upon the priest Joseph who
had officiated at the so-called "adulterous" marriage of
Constantine VI. This statesmanlike act elicited torrents of
rumbustious anguish from Theodore and the monastic zealots,
who continued to hector Nicephorus for this act to the end
of his days.[123] He was deposed by Leo V in 815 for his
assiduous espousal of icons and died in 828, leaving behind
him an assortment of iconodulist apologies, including a
Refutation of the Council of 815, three Antirrhetics, one
Long Apology and a treatise Against Eusebius and Epiphanius,
whose works formed the sword and buckler of iconoclast dogma.

Nicephorus' Refutation of the Council of 815 attacked
the pronouncements of that ecclesiastical conclave on three
fronts, calling its proceedings (1) lawless, (2) undefined,
and (3) truly spurious.[124] The Council was lawless because:
(a) The bishops abjured their pledge not to meet in holy
synods; (b) they raised a dogmatic issue yet the patriarchs

and the Pope were not represented. No local synod could nullify the work of an ecumenical council, i.e. the Council of 787.

It was undefined because it rejected the Council of 787 without adducing anything positive of its own. Lastly, it was truly spurious because Nicephorus considered the Council's line of attack (i.e. ultimately, the true image of Christ was man endowed with Christian virtues) to be the most profound and dangerous.[125]

In seeking to confute the iconoclastic argument, Nicephorus had recourse to Aristotelian logic, especially the doctrine of causation.[126] He also relies heavily on the exemplary cause. The exemplary cause of Christ's pictorial image is Christ Himself or His form and the iconoclasts, by calling the images spurious, destroy the corporeal form or pattern (paradigm) itself, after which the image is modeled.[127]

As for the positive side of the iconoclast argument, Nicephorus deals with it twice. In the first place, if the virtues of the saints can be reproduced, this is all the more true of their bodies. Virtues are activated by bodies, which are active, productive causes while virtues are passive, receptive entities. Secondary virtues may reveal capabilities but form reveals the saints themselves and are thus more worthy of honor. Secondly, a body bears witness to the condition of the soul and is an instrument of sainthood. Concurrently, sight is the most impressive and foremost of the senses.[128]

Nicephorus' thought is directed against the Origenist notion that deification of humanity presupposes some sort of transmografication to a purely intellectual form of existence. In a similar vein, the patriarch constantly emphasizes the New Testament evidence that Jesus experienced weariness, hunger and thirst like any other man. Likewise, in dealing with Jesus' ignorance, Nicephorus also attempts to reconcile the relevant scriptural passages with the doctrine of the hypostatic union. In Origenism, ignorance was tantamount to sinfulness. The original state of intellects before Adams' unfortunate encounter with Satanic horticulture was that of divine gnosis. Jesus, possessed of a non-fallen intellect, preserved the knowledge of God and any other form of inferior gnosis.[129] The authors of Justinian's time, followed by such luminaries as Maximus of Tyre and even John of Damascus, repudiated any ignorance in Christ in virtue of the hypostatic union but they interpreted the Gospel passages speaking of Jesus' lack of knowledge in some areas an examples of Christ's oikonomia, or pastoral desire, to be seen as a true man and not evidence of true ignorance. Nicephorus opposed tradition on this point. He maintained that Christ assumed all aspects of human existence including ignorance. In becoming man, the Logos did not adopt some ideal, stylized humanity, but the red-blooded humanity which existed in history, in order to redeem it.[130]

This fullness of humanity implied describability and Nicephorus applied this logic to the Eucharist which, at one

time, many iconoclasts considered the only admissable image or symbol of Christ. In Nicephorus' opinion, this concept was unacceptable because he understood the Eucharist as the very reality of the body and blood of Christ and not as an image; an image is made to be seen while the Eucharist remains food to be eaten. By being absorbed into Christ, the Eucharistic elements do not lose their connection with this world.[131]

Nicephorus' insistence upon the clear and present humanity of Christ sometimes led him away from the classical Christology of Cyril. He evaded Theopaschism by refusing to admit that the Logos suffered in the passion. He minimized the value of the communication of idioms (the divine knowledge being communicated to the human nature) as tending to obfuscate the issue. Despite the risk of being labeled a Nestorian, Nicephorus saw the necessity of reaffirming Christ's humanity and this led other Byzantine theologians to a revival of the Antiochian tradition.[132]

Summary

In this chapter, the core of the Iconoclastic Controversy has been examined. The Christological views of the great Iconoclast Emperors, Leo III and Constantine V, have been explored. Regarding the Second Phase of Iconoclasm, traditionally viewed by historians as an epizone, a mere shadow of Iconoclasm's initial phase, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that this period was unique in its own right and made a significant contribution to the philosophy of the movement.

In addition, the problem of outside influences was discussed and its real importance called into question. Concerning the primacy of Monophysitism in the Iconoclast movement, an attempt has been made to show that its importance has been distorted and vastly overrated by many scholars. Also, the eastern origins of Iconoclasm have been considered and have shown to be of dubious significance. Lastly, the views of three outstanding iconodule apologists have been presented. The views of all three were shaped by the belief that Christ's humanity and His saving death made the making of images of Him and of the saints permissible.

The following chapter moves away from the religious aspects of the controversy and explores the political currents which helped to shape Iconoclasm. No movement as complex as Iconoclasm has only one motivating factor, though religion was the most significant element in the controversy.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Quoted in: John Meyendorff, <u>Byzantine Theology:</u> <u>Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes</u> (New York, 1974), p. 45.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," p. 5.

[4]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[5]Ibid., p. 8.

[6]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[7]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[8]Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," p. 146.

[9]Ibid., pp. 119-20.

[10]Ibid., p. 91.

[11]Ibid., pp. 125-26.

[12]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," pp. 10-11.

[13]Ibid., p. 11. See also Gotthard Strohmaier, "Hunan ibn Ishaq und die Bilder," <u>Klio</u>, XLIII-XLVI (1965), p. 527.

[14]Bréhier, <u>La Querelle des Images</u>, p. 43.

[15]Stephen Gero, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts and its Source," <u>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</u>, LXVIII (1975), p. 4.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ostrogorsky, <u>Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites</u>, pp. 8-9. Afterwards <u>Studien</u>.

[18]Gero, p. 5.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ostrogorsky, <u>Studien</u>, p. 14.

[21]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[22]Gero, p. 6.

[23]Henry Percival tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (New York, 1900), XIV, p. 544.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., pp. 544-45.

[26]Gero, p. 8.

[27]Ostrogorsky, Studien, pp. 48-51.

[28]Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 651.

[29]Gero, p. 9.

[30]Ostrogorsky, Studien, p. 44.

[31]Gero, p. 10.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ostrogorsky, in his Studien, p. 41, clearly misses the mark when he says: "Diese Auffassung ist . . . zweifellos nicht nur Konstantin sondern allein führenden Köpfendes Ikonoklasmus eigen gewesen." He puts the cart before the horse.

[34]Gero, p. 11.

[35]"En! oculi vestri et oculi fratres mei Benjamin vident, quod os meum loquator ad vos." The Vulgate.

[36]Gero, p. 16.

[37]Ibid., p. 17.

[38]Ibid., p. 19.

[39]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[40]John of Damascus, Writings, tr. Frederick H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, D.C., 1958), p. 5.

[41]P. J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (Horos)," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, VII (1953), p. 41.

[42]Ibid., p. 43.

[43]Ibid., p. 44.

[44]Ibid., p. 45.

[45]Barnard, The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy, pp. 105-06.

[46]Ibid., p. 106.

[47]Karl Schenk, "Kaiser Leons III Walten in Innern," Byzantinische Zeitschrift, V (1896), pp. 285-86.

[48]Barnard, pp. 108-09.

[49]Ibid., p. 109.

[50]Ibid., pp. 114-15.

[51]Ibid., p. 117.

[52]Ibid., p. 13.

[53]H. Stern, "Les Representations des Conciles dans l'Eglise de la Nativité a Bethleém," Byzantion, XI (1936), p. 122.

[54]Barnard, p. 13.

[55]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[56]Ibid., pp. 15-17.

[57]Ibid., p. 20.

[58]Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, XVIII (1964), pp. 83-84.

[59]A. A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, IX-X (1956), pp. 30-31.

[60]Barnard, pp. 18-19.

[61]Ibid., p. 20.

[62]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[63]Ibid., p. 22.

[64]Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II," pp. 25-26.

[65]A. Abel, "La Lettres polémique d'arethas a l'emir de Damas," Byzantion, XXIV (1954), p. 348; also Barnard, pp. 23-24.

[66]Barnard, p. 24.

[67]John Meyendorff, "Byzantine Views of Islam," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, XVIII (1964), p. 127.

[68]Barnard, p. 33.

[69]Ibid., p. 40.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid., p. 44.

[72]Ibid., p. 41 and 45.

[73]Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[74]Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," pp. 129-30.

[75]Ibid., pp. 130-31.

[76]Joshua Starr, The Jews in the Byzantine Empire (New York, 1939), p. 2.

[77]Ibid., p. 48.

[78]Andrew Sharf, Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade (New York, 1971), p. 73.

[79]Starr, p. 76.

[80]Sirarpie Der Nersessian, Armenia and the Byzantine Church: A Brief Study of Armenian Art and Civilization (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), p. 37.

[81]Ibid., p. 33.

[82]Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[83]Ibid., p. 34.

[84]Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[85]Ibid., p. 35.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid.

[88]The Council of Chalcedon, Henry Percival tr., in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, XIV, pp. 251-52.

[89]Ibid., p. 287.

[90]Der Nersessian, Armenia and the Byzantine Church, pp. 36-37.

[91]Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[92]Ibid., p. 38.

[93]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[94]Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Une Apologie de Images du Septieme Siecle," Byzantion, XVII (1944-45), p. 58.

[95]Ibid., p. 59.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Ibid., p. 74.

[98]Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[99]Ibid., p. 73.

[100]Ibid., p. 74.

[101]Barnard, p. 95.

[102]E. J. Martin, History of the Iconoclastic Contro-versy (London, 1930), pp. 118-19.

[103]Barnard, p. 96.

[104]Ladner, "The Concept of the Image," p. 5.

[105]John of Damascus, Writings, tr. S. D. F. Salmond in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (New York, 1899), IX, pp. 88-89.

[106]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, pp. 138-39.

[107]Ibid.

[108]Alice Gardner, Theodore of Studion: His Life and Times (New York, 1974), pp. 15-17.

[109]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[110]Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[111]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[112]Ibid., pp. 24-26.

[113]Ibid., pp. 149-52.

[114]Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes, p. 47.

[115]Ibid., p. 48.

[116]Ibid.

[117]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 137.

[118]Ibid.

[119]Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 48.

[120]Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," Byzantine Studies, p. 135.

[121]Meyendorff, p. 48.

[122]Ibid.

[123]Ibid., p. 49.

[124]Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (Horos)," p. 46.

[125]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

[126]Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[127]Ibid., p. 49.

[128]Ibid.

[129]Meyendorff, p. 49.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Ibid., p. 50.

[132]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE ICONOCLAST

CONTROVERSY

Despite the dominance of theology in the rise of Icono-
clasm, no movement, as complex as the Iconoclastic contro-
versy undoubtedly was, can exist in isolation. Other issues
were involved, if only tangentially. Some of these ancillary
questions had definite political overtones.

The Arab Menace

The Arab menace certainly provided Iconoclasm with a
potent motivational factor. Indeed, the Arab attacks were
as blows to the soler plexus which created a deep demorali-
zation within the Empire. This loss of confidence is not to
be found on the face of the official records of the Empire,
but it was pressing in on every facet of the world of
Byzantium.[1] But fear is never the only reason why a society
(or an emperor) chooses a scapegoat. The emperors and their
subjects knew that God could get angry at them for their sins.
They knew what these sins were: homosexuality, blasphemy,
and tolerance of Jews, pagans, and heretics. The authorities
frequently punished such sins. Leo III attempted to force
all the Jews within the Empire to accept baptism, but this

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was not enough.[2] The iconoclastic emperors were intent on
removing and punishing not particular sins but the "deep
stain of the error of idolatry."[3]

A change in the mindset of the era accounts for such a
striking shift of emphasis.[4] Islamic propaganda was really
unnecessary. Even if there had been enough Syrian or Egyptian
adventurers in the Arab armies to provide Greek-speaking prop-
agandists, who would have listened? The Old Testament had
been putting down firm roots in the Empire since Heraclius.
Byzantium was to be the New Israel.[5]

The raw mood of the iconoclasts and the savagery with
which they attacked the icons owes a great deal to their
ability to put their apprehensions into words. The icono-
clasts saw that the people showed a marked proclivity to lapse
into idolatry and this they found writ large in the Old Testa-
ment, where a stern God was continuously chastising the Jews
for their apostasy. St. Paul inveighed against the idolatrous
tendencies of humanity and it seemed that the Arab invasions
were brought on by a national apostasy for which no amount
of individual sin could account. In her apostasy, Israel
had invariably returned to idols. The steady increase in
idolatry was viewed as the source of the Empire's decline.
The iconoclasts appealed to the elemental historical awareness
of the people, to events of the not-too-distant past, and
focused attention on the vast increase in the use and promin-
ence of images.[6]

Flowing beneath the surface of Iconoclasm was a strong

current of optimism. After all, the pious kings of Judah and the pious emperors after Constantine the Great had expunged idolatry. Buttressing the reforming zeal was the frank admission that institutions can get worse and also the confidence that they can be made better. And this feeling was not an isolated one as can be seen in the case of the Venerable Bede in Britain, ruminating on the day of reckoning which would one day be faced by the Saxon invaders of his land. Certainly, the stock theme of the apostasy, derelictions, and repentance of the people of Israel, had become contemporary to men who were beginning to feel the cold chill of advancing Arabs.[7]

In Dostoyevsky's titanic work The Brothers Karamazov, there is a poignant segment which tells how Alyosha Karamazov's faith is shaken when the dead body of his late master, the holy and therefore corporeally incorruptible Father Zosima, begins to rot. This disillusionment and the incipient contempt for failing gods is important for Byzantium. In many respects, Byzantium's age of faith was only skin deep.[8]

It can be said that the Arab invasions marked the end of the ancient world. Many cities were razed or totally cut off, causing the icons to lose half of their backing. The icons owed much of their holiness to a civic patriotism which was either destroyed or languishing. The morale of the towns was badly shaken, many pilgrimage sites were destroyed, and their relics either abandoned or transferred. The resultant overflow of images brought about what can be described as a

Gresham's Law for icons. Many images lacked local approval
and their increasing standardization made them unfamiliar to
many. The western provinces of Asia Minor were the first to
experience this anomie. This malaise stemmed not from any
intrinsic or inherent iconoclasm, for iconodulism was the
rule, but the roots were shaken by the Arab onslaught.[9]

It was slowly dawning that the system symbolized by the
icons was out of date. The Empire was a commonwealth of
cities no longer. Self-help and civic patriotism had failed.
A new patriotism was founded, but on the idea that the Byzan-
tines were the people of God, possessing a political imagery
borrowed lock, stock, and barrel from the Old Testament.
What was important was not that the Second Commandment for-
bade idolatry, as everyone knew, but that the Byzantines were
the people of God and receivers of the holy law. The church
became the core of Byzantine identity and the Byzantines
became the baptized people.[10]

The people perceived themselves as united. The Christ-
ological rancors of the sixth century had disrupted the reli-
gious life of the towns, but now this life was falling into
place around the basilica, the liturgy, and the Eucharist.
The Eucharist was a potent symbol of "the holy" which the
iconoclasts put forth as the only correct alternative to
icons. This feeling was not shared by the sprawling urban
population of the sixth century, but in a more compact terri-
torial entity it could bid fair to regain its primacy.[11]

In this era of uncertainty and travail, the Emperors had

to win battles to survive. The Cross, with its intimate
associations with the sublime victories of four centuries,
was both more ancient and more compact than any icon.[12] The
cross was strong medicine and the Christians were called not
icon-worshippers but "worshippers of the wood" by the Arabs.[13]
The iconoclasts, by choosing only a limited number of symbols
to be invested with holiness, were picking those best suited
to a more collective, centralized society. The "steel frame-
work"[14] of the Byzantine state stood out sleek and hard after
years of cluttering by traditions of a more insouiciant age.[15]

The iconoclast persecution of the iconodules was of
minimal scope. The policy had the backing of a majority of
the Byzantine secular clergy. The church was strengthened
at the expense of those groups who wielded disruptive and
illegitimate spiritual power. The symbols utilized by the
iconoclasts appealed to yearnings for a strong central govern-
ment. Indeed, it was the iconodules rather than the icono-
clasts who polarized strong local feelings. In fact, only
after Iconoclasm did a few cities regain a shadow of the
exemptions and privileges which had been granted on the
pretext of honoring the patron saints of the cities.[16]

Attempts to Consolidate the Empire

If Iconoclasm sought to deal, at least in part, with the
disillusionment engendered by the collapse of the old order,
it was also a means of attempting to consolidate what was
left of the Empire. The center of gravity had now shifted

from the Mediterranean to Anatolia. Theology is an excellent motivational tool and the iconoclast emperors would have been foolish not to use fervently espoused principle to further political ends. This policy could not fail to appeal to the many already iconoclastic groups within the Empire, i.e. the Paulicians, the Jews, other Manichaean splinter groups, plus a considerable segment of the population of Anatolia. Leo III and Constantine V could not have failed to grasp the fact that the adoption of Iconoclasm would not only satisfy their moral scruples but would also bolster their authority in these areas.[17] It was necessary that the rustic swains of Phrygia and Pisidia fight on their own soil, which was now the military frontier of the Empire. If official policy coincided with the views of Phrygian bishops and clergy, who believed that the defeats of the Empire were brought about by God's displeasure at corruption in the Church, so much the better.[18] And when the iconoclast emperors brought glory to the arms of Byzantium, Iconoclasm was ratified in the minds of all the people because of the military successes of the Empire.[19]

When the four iconodule successors of the great Isaurians (Irene, Nicephorus I, Stauracius, and Michael Rangabé) proved militarily inept, the Bulgar invasions brought economic and political crises just as the Arab juggernaut had produced a century earlier. Again, church corruption was the charge heard throughout the land. The people prayed at the tomb of Constantine V for a revival of the heady days of martial

glory. Leo V, the Armenian, Michael II, and his son resur-
rected Iconoclasm and were victorious. Indeed, Iconoclasm
would leave behind a durable legacy of imperial order, an
order wherein the Emperor kept the Empire's enemies at bay,
led the army personally, and resisted the fanatical elements
within the realm. In many ways, Iconoclasm did indeed
triumph.[20]

Constantine V has been accused of an anti-urban bias,
but this belief is not borne out by the facts. He sought to
build a new city which was the center of a central govern-
ment and not of local autonomy. He succeeded. He revived
the full-blooded and concrete mystique of the Hippodrome,
the associations of victory with the good luck of the city
and the Emperor. Perhaps this was a welcome change from the
anxious dependence on the invisible Virgin. Be that as it
may, Constantine, unlike Heraclius, remained in the city
rather than trust its welfare to an icon of the Virgin and,
in return, he reaped a huge popular devotion. He made Con-
stantinople the hub of the Empire and was the founder of
medieval Byzantium.[21]

The Problem of Monastic Influence

During the iconoclastic epoch, the military or provincial
governor and the local bishop formed a bulwark against the
encroachments of the monks. _Cherchez le moine_ was the key to
the iconoclast policy, as iconomachy was transformed into
monachomacy.[22] What was at stake was not the dissolution of
the monasteries but an attempt to break the power of the monk

in Byzantine society as the principal bulwark of the power
of the icon and as a force in itself.[23]

The iconoclasts' attack on the monasteries was incidental
to their main purpose, i.e. severing the links of the indiv-
idual monk and his clientele.[24] It was analogous to the
sorcery purges of the fourth century, which can be viewed as
a struggle between the vested power of the imperial adminis-
tration and the power of the more traditional classes of the
old Roman world. The same can be said of the clash with the
monks during the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V. The
iconoclast clergy were committed to the vested power and
only those entities properly sanctified by the correct
authorities could be viewed as being blessed.[24]

<center>Centrifugal Effects of the Holy Man

and the Icon</center>

The independent monk and the icon stood out in stark
contrast to this interpretation. They had developed concomi-
tantly and met needs which were of a private not a collective
nature. His retreat lay outside the city and he was not
directly included in the structure of the church. This
conflict was brought into the open by the recurring crises
and the subsequent depletion of the cities. The delicate
balance between the collective civic cult of the image and
the private ministrations of the ascetic and the wonder-
working icon was upset. Either the independent monk or the
local bishop had to be the moral Polaris in Byzantium. The

self-proclaimed holy monk nurtured the proliferation of icons
but the bishop now discovered that this was contrary to the
law of God as he and the Emperor understood it.[26]

The monk lightened the penitential system; the bishop
saw Byzantium as the New Israel living under a single divine
law with himself as chief administrator and leader. The monk
had opted out of polite society while still living within
easy travelling distance of the town. The bishop and the
provincial governor were committed to seeing that the many
small hamlets and towns did not sink back into the country-
side.[27]

Holiness was viewed as power. The monks were asked to
handle large sums of money; aristocratic ladies and army
officers might be their clientele. This was a real source
of power when coupled with the fluid, competitive upper
classes with their collections of private icons. Indeed, the
use of icons as patron saints and godfathers was a definite
source of trouble for the central government.[28]

Political success was determined to a great extent by
the ability to manipulate these alternative sources of power.
It was widely known that political affairs were being discussed
on the mountains of the holy monks, whether as a result of
direct consultation or through desultory conversation. Con-
stantine V was determined to avoid this confusion of authority.
Holy monks were executed if they catered to especially tena-
cious clientele. Constantine V "deconsecrated" the potential
holy monks and the holy images. He wanted to sever the links

between the laity and their monastic spiritual advisor. An
"abba" could not be visited and it was forbidden to have
communion with him lest embarrassing revelations leak out.[29]
Constantine also attacked the monastic garb or schema. He
caused a solemn defrocking ceremony to be performed in the
Hippodrome, and at Ephesus his governor, Michael Lachonodracon,
forced the monks to don the robe of a bridegroom. In an iron-
ic twist, the garb first given to John the Baptist in the
Judaean desert was replaced by the robe worn when one is
finally committed to this world.[30]

The monachist faction resisted the iconoclast assaults
but their efforts were hampered by several obstacles. The
first of these was the overwhelming popularity generated by
the iconoclast emperors following their military success
against the Arabs and the Bulgars. Secondly, the iconoclasts
could count upon the ambitions of certain high church digni-
taries as well as the moral support of the secular clergy in
many areas of the Empire. Thirdly, the monachists had to
contend with the less than compassionate instincts of a
populace aroused by a tendentious propaganda which did not
scruple at calumny. Monks were forced to parade in the
Hippodrome with women; volcanic eruptions in the region of
Santorini were adduced as proof that idolatry was dragging
the Empire down. Lastly, the monachists ran headlong into
harsh economic reality. Vasiliev suggests, citing the
historians Kondrakov, Andreev, and Uspensky, that the confis-
cations and secularization of monastic properties, this

economic and fiscal aspect of the struggle, was an important
or even one of the principal features of Iconoclasm.[31] Quoting
N. P. Kondrakov, Vasiliev states that the number of monasteries
and other religious properties continued to grow on into the
eighth century. Citing I. D. Andreev, Vasiliev says that
there were approximately 100,000 monks in the Empire during
the era of Iconoclasm, a vast number in the comparatively
small area of the Byzantine realm. This would undoubtedly
cause an economic drain on the Empire, caught as it was in
the grip of a seemingly imminent peril. Quoting Uspensky,
Vasiliev maintains that the movement was partially an attempt
to despoil the monastic properties for distribution to small
landowners and for the state in order to bolster an economy
put in straited circumstances due to continual wars and
invasions. Uspensky sees the theological issue as a blind to
obscure the pertinent economic issues.[32]

We have briefly touched upon the subject of the holy
ascetic, the independent monk in a preceding portion of this
chapter. We have seen that the persecution of monks and
monasticism was not specifically aimed at the extirpation of
monasticism itself but an attempt to break the power of the
holy monk for reasons that embraced theological and political
factors. It now seems appropriate to examine this phenomenon
of the holy ascetic more closely, to discover why he played
so salient a role in Byzantium and why his existence proved
so disquieting to the Empire.

There have been several interpretations posited to account

for this unique phenomenon. One view held that through his life of service, through his catering to the needs of the people, the holy man charged his body with the normal hopes and fears of his fellow men. Others maintained that the literature of the ascetic world served to evoke the popular feelings that centered on this man, though this does not explain why his fellows were willing to see him in such a light at this particular time and place. Yet another opinion was propounded by Gibbon who saw the rise of the holy man as coincident with the decline of Roman civilization in the East. The meaner sort were seen as being on the lower rung of evolution, diluting by popular superstition the beliefs of the intellectual elite.[33]

Whether or not these views are spurious, Syria was the province renowned for its ascetic virtuosity even though Egypt was the cradle of monasticism. The holy men who were the avatars of the saint in society came from Syria, Asia Minor, and Palestine but not Egypt. It has been adumbrated that Egypt suffered as a result of monophysitic isolation, but this has been greatly exaggerated.[34]

Egypt can be viewed as the unadorned melodic line of a baroque score while Syrian influences can be likened to the complex and breathtaking interpolations devised by a virtuoso instrumentalist. This is because the Egyptian monks did not intrude upon society as they did in Syria. One need only survey the contrasting landscapes to learn why. In the Egyptian desert, compartmentalization in the form of self-

contained villages was required for survival. This was not the case in Syria.[35] The Syrian climate was more benign and one could co-exist with the desert if he merged with it, keeping on the move in search of food and water. Syrian monks were peripatetic and, as a result, influenced many more people. The holy men were seen as being analogous to the beasts and wild men: free and demonic. Actually not a few of these holy men had been bedouin shepherds and called themselves mountain men or shepherds. They were not necessarily opposed to village life but they were at best marginal urbanites. The Syrian holy man was impelled by fate to "stalk his god."[36]

The itinerent monk was a product of the increasing prosperity and not the misery of the people. He filled a crisis in leadership which arose with the evolution of independent farmers following the break-up of the old latifundia. A rural patron was a necessary fact of village life and as these men gradually faded from the scene, the holy man came to fill the gap.[37]

Exorcism formed an important part of the ascetic's bag of tricks. In reality, this was a stylized one act play complete with props, a device for objictifying that violence which was ubiquitous in society. He reconciled grievances and served as a strong brake on the diremptive elements in a largely agricultural society. Nor was he merely a "charismatic ombudsman," in a violence-ridden bucolic hinterland. His power could be applied to the more universal problems in

an urban setting as well.[38] In iconoclastic times, this would prove to be his undoing.

The holy man was deliberately unhuman. His asceticism was one long, attenuated ritual of dissociation. He cultivated the image of the "total stranger," a man dead to all ties of family and economic interest. His powers were self-created, derived from outside the human race. He lived in the desert in close identification with the animal kingdom, at the opposite pole of humanity.[39]

A feature of Byzantine society was the belief that such men were needed as mediators. These men avoided (or at least pretended to eschew) committing themselves to any one faction. Daniel the Stylite was a salient example. He managed to retain his status as a total stranger in the faction-ridden city of Constantinople. The fact that he spoke only Syriac, thus rendering his orthodoxy impenetrable, was a definite asset. He reconciled opposing factions and ajudicated lawsuits of international importance. He even refused to be ordained by the Patriarch, claiming that he had been ordained by God alone. This declaration placed him on an equal footing with the basileus,[40] a fact that was not lost on the iconoclastic emperors of the Isaurian dynasty.

The holy man was not possessed by a god as were the old oracles. He needed to keep his identity and his wits intact. His position in society was real and concrete so he repudiated the trance; instead, dissociation replaced this ancient ritual. He was a man with a clearly defined role and function

in society. He provided for the people an on-going ritual
of "self-definition."[41]

Holy men were believed to have won their way to intimacy
with God, a privilege earned by obedience and hard work at
the court of the King. Power thus gained was a reward for
service. This power needed an audience, but the theatre
remained the main source of styles in the public eye. Thus,
the holy man had to become the "athlete," the competitive,
mobile, often victorious image of the self-made man. Here
was power in a society that was unabashedly based on achieved
status.[42] The holy man had no recognized niche in the hier-
archy.

The locus of power was different in the East than in the
West. In the West the clergy stood supreme while in Byzantium
the center of power wavered in a fluid society. In spite of
the challenge of Iconoclasm, the aura that surrounded the
"God-bearing man" of the earlier centuries now came to invest
the "God-shadowed image" with the same predictable efficacy.
The hierarchy of the church witnessed the continual eruptions
of spiritual fire. The bishops might wield the power of the
Eucharist but the monk kept his grip on the keys to the king-
dom through his intimacy with God.[43]

The holy man seemed to resolve the bemusement inherent
in the pursuit of Christian piety. Every Christian has had
to struggle with the dichotomy of a God at once remote and
unyielding who is at the same time the compassionate father
of His people. The holy man could be approached directly as

God never could be.[44] He was also a professional among

dilettantes. The holy man was different in that his whole

life was opened to pain and sorrow. He also allayed the

anxiety of those who came to him to learn if there was any-

thing they, within themselves, could do. Lastly, he filled

the pivotal role of universal judge. He dispensed all manner

of advice, from practical wisdom to miraculous vaticinations.

For example: Should a Christian take a bath? Should he

consult a doctor? How does he get to heaven?[45]

If the rise of the holy man was a consequence of increased

freedom and better times, his decline can be attributed to a

reversal of these trends. The depredations of the Arabs and

the Bulgars brought chaos and destruction in their wake.

Many of the towns and cities which had, in a way, supported

the holy man were either razed or in enemy hands. To survive,

the Empire needed cohesiveness, a central rallying point. The

iconoclast emperors felt that they themselves should be this

focal point, not a gaggle of itinerent holy men and their

icons. Confusion or dilution of authority could do great

harm to the Empire and the holy men oftentimes siphoned off

manpower and resources needed by the embattled central govern-

ment. The holy man became a luxury that the Empire could no

longer afford, given its diminished territory and straited

pecuniary circumstances. Though he would not disappear com-

pletely, he would never again attain that pinnacle of influ-

ence he once enjoyed.

Demographic Crisis in Byzantium

Extant records reveal that from approximately 541 A.D. and lasting for at least two centuries, there was a serious demographic crisis throughout the Byzantine Empire. This crisis was particularly acute during the reign of Constantine V, when continual wars and widespread plagues significantly reduced the population of the Empire. In an effort to remedy this serious problem, Constantine V settled some 208,000 Slavs in Asia Minor and thousands of Syrians and Armenians, seized by raiding the regions under Moslem rule, in Thrace.[46]

In these trying times, one would not be remiss in stating that economic and social factors played an important part in the Iconoclastic controversy. During this period, thousands of able-bodied citizens were entering monasteries, making celibacy the primary aspiration in their lives. Whether this act was precipitated by fear of military service, the wish to avoid taxation, or by religious scruple, the result was the same--the loss of manpower and money at a time of great peril. It might not be unreasonable to state that Constantine's antipathy of the monks was aroused by what he saw as this treasonable act perpetrated in times of trouble.[47] Seeking to cut off this escape route, Constantine confiscated monasteries and forbade any layman to take refuge in the cowl.[48] The fact that the monasteries were centers of opposition to Constantine's iconoclastic policies was, no doubt, a factor in his decision.[49]

Summary

Iconoclasm was not without political ramifications. The emperors of the Iconoclastic epoch had to contend with invading Arabs and Bulgars and the problems inherent in meeting such a threat with a geographically reduced and financially hard-pressed Empire. Seen in this light, principle and politics coalesced to achieve the same end--a united and more readily defensible realm. The attacks on the monasteries and the holy men and their icons were motivated by principle, to be sure, and by a desire to end the dilution of authority which the monastic opposition and the holy man seemed to represent. During this period of recurring, seemingly endless, crises, the Iconoclast emperors believed the Empire needed a single rallying point, a central focus, and they were determined to be that central focus. It has also been shown that large numbers of men entering the monastic life caused a severe manpower shortage in the embattled Empire and that this fact contributed significantly to anti-monachist attitudes on the part of the Iconoclast emperors.

Having explored the theological and political aspects of Iconoclasm, it will now be necessary to place the movement in its proper chronological perspective and to examine the movement as it developed during the first phase of its existence.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," p. 23.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Henry Percival, tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, XIV, p. 543.

[4]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," p. 24.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[7]Ibid., p. 25.

[8]Ibid., p. 26.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid., p. 28.

[14]Baynes, "The Decline of the Roman Power in Western Europe: Some Modern Explanations," Byzantine Studies, p. 94.

[15]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," p. 28.

[16]Ibid.

[17]André Grabar, L'Iconoclasme Byzantin: Dossier Archéologique (Paris, 1957), p. 108.

[18]Henri Grégoire, "The Byzantine Church," in Norman H. Baynes (ed.), Byzantium (Oxford, 1948), p. 105.

[19]Ibid., p. 106.

[20]Ibid., pp. 107-08.

[21]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," p. 29.

[22]Ibid., p. 30.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., p. 31.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 32.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[30]Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[31]Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," Medieval Studies, II (1940), p. 141.

[32]Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire (Madison, 1958), I, pp. 256 and 262.

[33]Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man," pp. 81-82.

[34]Ibid., p. 82.

[35]Ibid., pp. 82-83.

[36]Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[37]Ibid., p. 87.

[38]Ibid., pp. 89-91.

[39]Ibid., p. 92.

[40]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[41]Ibid., p. 93.

[42]Ibid., p. 95.

[43]Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[44]Ibid., p. 97.

[45]Ibid., pp. 97-98.

[46]Peter Charanis, "The Monk as an Element in Byzantine Society," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, XXV (1971), p. 66.

[47]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[48]Vasiliev, <u>History</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Byzantine</u> <u>Empire</u>, I, p. 262.

[49]Charanis, p. 67.

CHAPTER V

EMERGENCE OF THE ICONOCLAST CONTROVERSY

From what has been presented thus far, it should be evident that religion was an indispensable factor in the collective life of Byzantium. For the typical denizen of Byzantium, religion helped make up the warp and woof of his being and he could no more live without his faith than he could live without eating and sleeping. This is the context in which Iconoclasm must be viewed. As has been demonstrated, it was a religious phenomenon which reached full flower in Byzantium during the eighth and ninth centuries, after slowly germinating in the soil of Christendom for centuries. We have seen that it was a movement which sought to exclude images from Christian worship, first on the basis of scriptural injunctions, then on more sophisticated grounds of what constituted a "true" image of Christ. It was more than a mere disguise or ruse to camouflage an economic or social program or a smokescreen to obscure the naked expropriation of church and monastic property. When the iconoclastic emperors took action against images, they did so out of a sense of "theological propriety," not to increase their already grand prerogatives, nor to maintain caesaropapism (though this was a not unwelcome by-product), nor to further extend their authority over the church.[1]

Thus far, what might be called the intellectual history of Iconoclasm has been stressed. It will now be necessary to place the phenomenon of Iconoclasm in the historical context of the early eighth century when the movement finally attained full philosophical maturity.

If anything is certain, it is that Iconoclasm is in the grip of overexplanation.[2] In the first place, the Christological background of the controversy is by no means certain. We have the Inquiries of the Emperor Constantine V, to be sure, but Christological discussions seem, on the whole, to be quite random throughout most of the eighth century. John of Damascus, the formidable apologist of images, was writing his work On Images from out of the "world" in the desert wastes of Palestine, in an area under Moslem control. There is little evidence that many Byzantine clergy had even heard of it at the time of the Second Council of Nicaea in A.D. 787.[3] At that conclave, the usual smooth touch of authenticity and the marshalling of authorities is noticeably absent.[4]

The problem of eastern influence is not easily solved. Phrygia, a reputed bastion of Iconoclasm, has been called bucolic, when in actuality the area had a deep love of culture and was particularly fond of belles lettres. In attributing the causes of Iconoclasm to the eastern sections of the Empire, the status of Constantinople as the hub and heart of the realm is overlooked. Also, the role of the theme armies is anything but unequivocal. These armies, recruited from the ostensibly iconoclastic eastern provinces, were reputed

to be hotbeds of Iconoclasm but, as one shall see, this was
not always the case. In any event, the old question <u>Orient</u>
<u>oder Rom</u> certainly did not dominate in the emergence of
Iconoclasm.[5]

Iconoclasm was not a parochial issue but one which
affected a large percentage of the population of Byzantium.
It followed a century of travail almost unparalleled in the
annals of Byzantine history. In the first part of the seventh
century, repeated incursions by the Persians netted them the
outlying provinces and a stranglehold on the then strategic
region of Anatolia. Fortunately for the Empire, fate placed
an able sovereign on the throne of Constantine. The Emperor
Heraclius (610-641) was able to check the Persian advances.
He restructured the army by means of the ingenious, enduring
system of the themes, reorganized the beleaguered financial
system, and repressed the contumacious city factions. But
before he could accomplish his grand design, disaster struck.
Antioch fell in 611, followed with disheartening rapidity by
Damascus (613) and Jerusalem (614). In 619 Egypt, then the
granary of the Empire, was invaded and Alexandria captured
along with its supply of corn. Two years before this event,
the Avars, a war-like aggressive people, had ravaged the
provinces and had even besieged Constantinople itself before
being repulsed. Again in 626, Constantinople had to face
the onslaught of the combined armies of the Avars, Slavs,
Bulgars, and Persians. The lack of knowledge concerning
siege tactics hampered the attackers and Byzantine seapower
was the decisive element.[6]

Boldly seizing the initiative, Heraclius advanced into the very heart of Persia and in a series of daring campaigns restored all of the lost territory to the Empire along with the True Cross, carried off at the time of Jerusalem's capture in 614. He returned in triumph to Constantinople in 629. But soon the spectre of Islam began to haunt the Empire. By 640 Palestine and Syria were in Muslim hands; Alexandria met the same fate in 642. With these enormous resources, the Arabs built a powerful fleet with which they captured Cyprus and Rhodes and plundered the Aegean islands, severely disrupting commerce.[7]

Following Heraclius' reign, the Empire entered a period of tribulation which was exacerbated during the years 685-717 when no less than five emperors ruled. The power of the Arabs expanded almost unchecked. Despite some military successes by Constantine IV (668-85), anarchy was rife until 717.[8]

Leo III, the Syrian?

On 25 March 717 Leo III, surnamed the Isaurian,[9] ascended the throne. He was to prove an energetic ruler, militarily skillful, diplomatically sagacious, administratively adept-- in short, a man well suited to the awesome task confronting him.[10]

Leo was born at Germanikia, in Commagene beyond the Taurus Mountains, in the latter part of the seventh century. In 694, Leo's family was forcibly transplanted to Thrace, at

Mesembria on the Bulgarian frontier. In 705, Leo found him-
self on the winning side when the blinded Justinian II
reentered the Empire. Leo evidently attracted favorable
notice and was taken into the Emperor's service where his
bilingual abilities were put to excellent use in the diplo-
matic service.[11] In 710, he was dispatched to the Caucasus,
homeland of the Alans, to try his skill at the hoary Byzantine
game of political duplicity, i.e. playing one enemy off against
the other, a tactic which kept Byzantium a potent force be-
tween the Caucasus and the Adriatic for centuries. Leo pur-
sued this line of work for three years, manifesting his
adroitness and sagacity among such disparate types as the
Alans, Abasgians, Armenians, and Arabs. By the time Leo
returned to Constantinople, Justinian II and Bardanes (Justin-
ian was beheaded in 711 and Bardanes deposed and blinded in
713) were already deposed and Anastasius II occupied the
purple chamber. The office of strategus of the Anatolikon
theme was then vacant and Anastasius, appreciating Leo's
obvious talents, appointed him to the post circa 715. Shortly
thereafter, Anastasius was himself deposed in favor of the
totally inept Theodosius. In 716, the full might of Arab
power was unleashed upon Byzantium.[12]

Under Maslama, the brother of Caliph Suleiman, the
Anatolikon theme was invaded and the city of Amorion besieged.
Leo checked the Arabs at every point and schemed to save
Amorion from occupation. But at this juncture, one of those
piquant theories so often found in the study of history presents

itself. It is entirely possible that Maslama wanted Leo, at this time still Strategus in Anatolia, set up as a puppet ruler; Leo could then be induced to revolt against the worthless Theodosius and the Arabs could take over the Empire, using Leo as a tool. Such a plan was far from novel. Theory or not, at least two Arab sources state that Leo agreed to such a plan. The Arab leaders were to pay dearly for their credulity. Suleiman (not the caliph, but a namesake), Maslama's major domo on this expedition, had Leo crowned Emperor at Amorion; Maslama obtained promises from the legions at Cappadocia, likewise situated in the Anatolikon theme, that they would support Leo's usurpation. The consequences were immediate. During the winter of 716-17, the Arab armies actually withdrew to the east. Perhaps the Arab leaders had obtained definite assurances from Leo that once in power, which could be more easily accomplished without the Arab army hot on his heels, he would collaborate with the enemy.[13]

Whether or not this hypothesis is correct, Leo withdrew with alacrity to the Bosporus. After defeating an imperial force sent against him and not wishing to dissipate his resources in a suicidal attack on the city walls, Leo settled down comfortably for the winter in Nicomedia and opened negotiations with the Patriarch and the Senate. In March, 717 Leo entered Constantinople and was crowned emperor by the Patriarch Germanus I. Theodosius, ineffectual to the last, was deemed no great danger and was permitted to retire to a

monastery in Ephesus. The dynasty founded by Leo at this time would endure 85 years.[14]

In August, 717 the long awaited invasion commenced. Determined to cut out the heart of the Empire, Maslama crossed the straits from Abydus and began to lay siege to Constantinople, after having assembled vast quantities of supplies, an army of 180,000 men, and a huge armada of 2,500 ships.[15] Suleiman and his warships attempted to blockade the city on the east and west but found himself harrassed unmercifully by ships of the Byzantine navy equipped with the dreaded "Greek Fire." The infantry, in its turn, could make no impression on the impregnable city walls. Leo had prepared well for the siege, building on the work of Anastasius in 714.[16] The winter of 717-18 was particularly severe and brought great hardships to the Arab camp. Their supplies ran low and thousands died of disease, starvation, and exposure. In the spring, substantial naval reinforcements arrived from Egypt but the majority of this fleet was manned by Christian slaves who promptly deserted to Leo. The decisive blow was struck by the Bulgarians, whose intervention Leo had shrewdly arranged. True to form, the Bulgars massacred some 20,000 of the hapless besiegers. This terrible defeat broke the spirit of the Arab forces and in August, 718, almost a year to the day after it began, the Arabs lifted the siege and began their arduous catabasis.[17] On the return voyage, the Arab fleet was scattered over the Aegean by a storm; of the ten vessels that survived, five were captured by the Byzan-

tines, leaving only five, out of that great armada, to limp
home to Syria. Arab sources report that as many as 150,000
of the attackers perished in the course of the campaign.
This glorious victory, deservedly called one of the decisive
battles of history, was much more significant than that of
Charles Martel at Tour in 732. Martel faced an Arab force
whose momentum was spent, while Leo faced a Moslem thrust
which was in the full flower of its strength. It can certainly
be said that this conflict protected the nuclei of Hellenic,
Roman, and Christian cultures from extirpation by the Arabs.[18]

With the Arab threat reduced, Leo now turned to other
matters. He built up the theme system by dividing it into
smaller units and paying the theme officials from Constanti-
nople. He also provided for a standing army. In 726, he
published the Ecloga (Selection), a revised Greek edition of
Justinian's monumental Corpus Juris Civilis. This code
stressed greater humanity and was a first attempt to apply
Christian standards to private morals and family life.[19]

The First Phase: A.D. 726/30

Apart from Leo's military and diplomatic achievements,
he is inextricably linked with the phenomenon of Iconoclasm
which, apart from sporadic outbursts against the use of
icons, became part of official imperial policy in 726.[20] This
edict decreed that icons be raised out of reach of the faith-
ful to prevent what was viewed as unseemly display of venera-
tion. This was followed by another decree in 730 which banned

the use or veneration of religious images throughout the Empire.[21]

The Edict Against Images, A.D. 730

The reasons why Leo felt bound to move against images have been much discussed and debated by scholars. Let us briefly touch upon some of the reasons adduced by historians to account for Leo's actions.

The iconoclastic edict of the caliph Yazid, which mandated the destruction of icons in Christian churches, promulgated in 721, has been credited with influencing Byzantine Iconoclasm.[22] The question of why a Byzantine emperor, freshly engaged in a desperate struggle for existence with the Arabs, would deliberately adopt the enemy's attitude toward a doctrine of Christian theology has never been convincingly explained. At any rate, other explanations range from agitation by two iconoclastic bishops from Phrygia (Constantine of Nacoleia and Thomas of Claudiopolis) to a great volcanic explosion at Thera (Santorini) which was viewed by Leo as God's judgment against the sin of idolatry.[23]

As is often the case, the apparent explanation is also the logical one; Leo was constrained to condemn images because he viewed them as idols which are expressly forbidden by Scripture. It is also probable that Leo's iconoclasm was further exercised by the 82nd canon of the Council in Trullo (692) which stipulated that Christ be represented as a man and not as a lamb in order to better emphasize his humanity

and his propitiatory death. This ruling, no doubt, greatly increased the number of life-like representations of Christ.[24]

Reaction Within the Empire

Causes aside, the reaction to Leo's decrees was immediate and violent. The destruction of the great Icon of Christ over the Chalce (bronze) Gate caused a riot.[25] The Helladic theme, composed of Greece and the Cyclades, revolted against the edicts and a pitched battle between rebels and loyalists in the Byzantine fleet took place near Constantinople in 726. Leo's iconoclastic stance also precipitated a split with Rome and the papacy which was never really repaired.[26] In 730, Leo issued an ultimatum to the pope concerning images which fomented rebellion in Italy. Also, in 730, Leo convoked a Silention which deposed the stridently orthodox and pro-image Patriarch Germanus I and replaced him with Anastasius, a man more amenable to the Emperor's desires.[27] When Pope Gregory III proved contumacious in the face of Leo's ultimatum, he dispatched a large fleet under Manes, a general of the Cibyrraeot maritime theme. When this expedition was literally destroyed by a great storm in the Adriatic, Leo increased the capitation tax in Sicily and Calabria by a third, ordered the patrimonies of the apostles Peter and Paul, amounting to the tidy sum of three and a half talents of gold, previously paid to the Roman see to be transferred to the imperial treasury, and required the taxation of new-born males.[28]

Death of Leo III and the Accession

of Constantine V

After Leo's death on 18 June 741, his son Constantine V
(surnamed Copronymous or "called from dung") acceded to the
throne. He was a militarist of the first rank and, despite
the scurrilities heaped upon him by his monastic traducers,
possessed great intellectual energy, firmness of purpose,
and a well-developed aesthetic sense. He was quite fond of
music and art (representational as long as it was not of a
religious nature) and was certainly not puritanical by dis-
position.[29] He executed the policies of his father with
increased thoroughness and ardor and was given to compromise
even less than was Leo III. Indeed, there were no traces of
compromise discernable in him.[30]

Constantine's reign began on a rather inauspicious note.
He had resumed his father's campaign against the Arabs and
had set out to intercept an invading force that had penetrated
into Phrygia in June of 742.[31] He was then forced to turn
back to deal with the revolt of his brother-in-law, Artavas-
dus, who seized power with the aid of troops from the Asian
Opsikion and Armeniakon themes and who set himself up as a
champion of images. It is interesting that this strategy of
restoring the icons brought him the support of Armenian
troops who were, ostensibly, rabid iconoclasts and Monophy-
sites. At any rate, in less than a year Constantine V had
three times routed the forces sent against him by his adver-
sary. He was supported by the troops of the Anatolikon theme,

who remembered fondly his father, Leo III, and rallied to
him. On 2 November 742, Constantine V entered his capital
at the head of troops from the Thracesion, Anatolikon, and
Cibyrraeot themes. The usurper Artavasdus and his two sons
were blinded; all three were exhibited in the Hippodrome,
along with the Patriarch Anastasius, who had imprudently
taken an active part in the rebellion. Though publically
flogged and humiliated by being forced to ride backwards on
a donkey, Anastasius was permitted to keep the Patriarchal
throne. Other proponents of Artavasdus were dealt with in a
variety of ways, ranging from execution to mutilation and
blinding.[32]

Policies of Constantine V

Taking warning from the revolt, Constantine instituted
new policies and reforms, mostly in the military sphere. He
split off the eastern portion of the Opsikion theme, which
had supported the usurper Artavasdus, and established there
the theme of the Bucellarii. He took great care in his
choice of generals and succeeded in finding men of almost
fanatical loyalty who accomplished great deeds with limited
manpower. In an effort to promote greater national unity,
he ended the practice of using regiments from separate themes
as distinct military units, and utilized instead forces made
up of troops from a number of themes merged together under a
unified command. In a similar vein, by prudent resettlement
of populations, he not only gained greater security for his

northern and eastern frontiers but also helped bring about a diminution of the penchant of the Thracians for icons, since the prisoners he settled there in the years 746 to 755 were iconoclasts from Syria and Paulicians from Armenia. Similarly, he repopulated Constantinople after the disastrous plague of 746-47 with people from Greece and the Aegean islands, probably iconodules whom he wished to keep in or near the capital under the vigilant eyes of his army.[33]

Constantine V knew the value of a prudent defense, after years of fighting the Bulgars and Arabs. It can be stated with confidence that in the three hundred years between the seventh and tenth centuries no Roman general took the measure of his enemies as he did. His seemingly inexhaustible energy enabled him to be constantly in the field. A man of iron discipline, favored with a perspicacious mind, he seemed everywhere victorious. Small wonder, then, that after his death his subjects, witnessing the military reverses cascading upon the Empire due to a succession of incompetent rulers, came en masse to his tomb and implored him to rise and lead them once more to victory.[34] He became a legendary hero and even his adversaries had to wonder if he really was a monstrous heretic.[35]

Iconoclastic Council of A.D. 754

Constantine is most widely remembered for his assiduous efforts to advance the cause of Iconoclasm throughout the Empire. After the loyalty of the people and the army had

been assured by the popularity of his great victories over the Arabs and Bulgars, Constantine used the death of the Patriarch Anastasius as a pretext and convoked, in 754, a church council in the Palace of Hieria, south of Chalcedon, on the Asian coast of the Sea of Marmora. The Council of 754 was attended by three hundred thirty-eight bishops and, though no cleric of patriarchal rank was present, they regarded themselves as the Seventh Ecumenical Council although they were forced to give up that title to the Second Council of Nicaea (787). For six months, February to July, 754, the bishops conducted an exhaustive study of the propriety of the use of images and summarized their conclusions in the Horos (Definition), the only extant document from 754, the others having been destroyed by the iconodules. It was preserved almost verbatim by the orthodox clergy of the Council of Nicaea in 787.[36]

According to the Horos, the Emperors are likened to the apostles, and God "endowed them with the same wisdom of the Holy Spirit."[37] The emperors also bade the bishops to undertake "a scriptural examination"[38] into the "deceitful coloring of the pictures which draws down the spirit of man from the lofty adoration of God to the low and material adoration of the creature" and that they also "under divine guidance might express their view on the subject."[39] Constantine was, of course, the guiding hand on the tiller of the Council and the results coincided neatly with his views. Nevertheless, the Council seemed to reject the arguments of the Emperor

concerning intercession by the Virgin and by the saints.[40]

The iconoclasts objected to icons for a number of reasons. They cited scriptural and patristic denunciations of graven images;[41] they saw veneration of physical matter as not only improper but un-Christian and idolatrous.[42] They made much of the ethical theory of images according to which the virtues of the saints are the living images that the pious should reproduce in themselves.[43] Finally, they attacked the icons on Christological grounds. Up to this time, official iconoclastic doctrine had depended almost entirely on scriptural prohibitions of idols and their uses and was aimed at pagans or at what were deemed to be idolatrous practices. Constantine and his fellow iconoclasts at the Council of 754 took this a step further and gave Iconoclasm a theological foundation. They assumed as their first article of faith that the divine nature is "unsearchable, unspeakable, and incomprehensible"[44] and so cannot be portrayed in any manner whatsoever. They argued that

> the name of Christ signifies God and man. Consequently, it is an image of God and man, and consequently he has in his foolish mind, in his representation of the created flesh, depicted the Godhead which cannot be represented, and thus mingled what should not be mingled.[45]

Those persons, then, who espouse such blasphemy are twice damned; they are either making an image of the Godhead or they are confusing the Godhead and the manhood. The Horos affirms unequivocally that

> whoever . . . makes an image of Christ, either depicts the Godhead which cannot be depicted, and mingles it with the manhood (like the

Monophysites), or he represents the body of Christ
as not made divine and separate and as a person
apart, like the Nestorians.[46]

Having neatly disposed of conventional images, Constantine
V and his fellow iconoclasts presented what was to prove the
most interesting and controversial tenet of the Council, a
doctrine that would cause the spilling of much ink and blood
in the years to come. This theory stated that the image one
makes is, in a manner of speaking, transubstantiated. By
this line of reasoning, only the Eucharist can be a true
material icon of the Godhead, as Christ had ordained. Jesus
had stated that the Sacrament was to be of his substance, his
own flesh and blood. He had not stated that wood or clay
could partake of his divine essence.[47] The Horos preserves
the beliefs of Constantine and the bishops in lapidary fashion:

> The only admissable figure of the humanity of
> Christ, however, is bread and wine in the holy
> Supper. This and no other form, this and no
> other type, has to be chosen to represent his
> incarnation. Bread he ordered to be brought, but
> not a representation of the human form, so that
> idolatry might not arise. And as the body of Christ
> is made divine, so also this figure of the body of
> Christ, the bread, is made divine by the descent of
> the Holy Spirit; it becomes the divine body of
> Christ by the mediation of the priest who, separ-
> ating the oblation from that which is common,
> sanctifies it.[48]

Lastly, they sternly prohibited the production, veneration,
possession or concealment of icons under penalty of deposition
for bishops, elders, or deacons, and anathematization and
prosecution by the civil authorities for laymen and monks.[49]

End of the Initial Phase

On 14 September 775, Constantine died suddenly while on a campaign against the Bulgars. He left his son and successor Leo IV the Khazar a prosperous Empire, a full treasury, and a system of defense which had broken the power of both Bulgar and Arab. With his death, the first era of Iconoclasm came to an end. His son Leo IV was a fervent iconoclast[50] but his short reign did little to promote the cause that the two great Isaurian emperors strove so assiduously to implement. Perhaps it might be well to summarize the impact of the glorious and tumultuous reigns of Leo III and Constantine V.

Summary of the Reigns of Leo III
and Constantine V

The doctrinal disputes which the Iconoclast Controversy aroused during the first period of Iconoclasm are of two different kinds, the first rather simplistic, the second complex. The first was pursued by Leo III, the second by Constantine V. Neither one was asserting a caesaropapistic conception when he re-established the imperial cult in all its fullness. This was simply an acquiescence to reality. Leo's victory over the Arabs (717-18) and the seeming impregnability of Constantinople reawakened the belief in the divinely mandated victory of the Ruler. It was not a matter of state-over-church but a recrudescence of the traditional view of the Emperor in the Christian consciousness. In his iconoclasm, Leo was a traditionalist not an innovator; he was

concerned with the rightful place of the ruler within the Empire and the Church.[51] He saw idolatry as a major cause of the Empire's military weakness. In returning to Constantine the Great's viewpoint, he adopted Iconoclasm in an attempt, in part at least, to re-establish the traditional view of the uniqueness of the Christian Emperor.[52] Thus, theology remained his greatest concern. He was Emperor and priest divinely appointed by God to keep the church and his subjects free of the taint of heresy. He viewed images in exactly this light.

If Leo was forthright in his views, such was not the case of Constantine V. During his reign, the iconoclastic battle was fought out on the lofty plane of philosophical exegesis. The rival arguments were of great importance as was the practical reality which lurked behind the polemical aegis, i.e. the clash of two Weltanschauungen of two intransigeant, implacable points of view.[53] Constantine V was an ardent and subtle theologian, though his later excesses directed against iconodules and the secularization of monastic property and the brutalization and humiliation of monks would seem to belie this estimation. He realized that his opponents, to be efficaciously met, had to be confronted on their own ground of Christian apologetics and not by repeated references to the Mosaic law. At the Council of Hieria which he convoked in 754, he drew up a schedule of some thirteen articles or Inquiries and presented them in the form of an imperial rescript. They dealt with the nature of Christ and put forth

the rather ingenious argument that to depict Christ in an
image was to do one of two things: (a) to represent that
which could not be represented, i.e. His divinity, or (b) to
represent His humanity only, thus adding a fourth member to
the Triune Godhead.[54]

Though a devotee of metaphysical speculation, Constantine
V was not one for half measures in the immanent realm. For
this, he has suffered at the hands of iconodule historians.
His moral stature was denigrated; he was called a homosexual,
a pervert, a demon worshipper. Much of this is iconophile
hysteria, but Constantine was a determined persecutor.[55] After
the Council of 754 had announced its decisions, he bided his
time before putting its decrees into effect.[56] But when he
did, he went to work with a will. Six monachist confessors
were executed and one, St. Stephen the Younger, was lynched
by a Constantinopolitan mob. This would indicate that the
iconoclast position did not lack adherents. In the 760's,
the thrust of his persecution was not directed at individuals
but at monasticism, the implacable foe of his policies, which
he dreamed of extirpating root and branch.[57]

Much can be said about these two great iconoclastic
emperors. They can be accused of many crimes, including
cupidity, social bias, political ambition, and nationalistic
chauvinism. If viewed objectively, however, it is clear that
Leo III and Constantine V were not mere religious positivists,
to whom one view was as good as another. Rather, their
policies sprang from settled, reasoned religious convictions,

not their convictions from practical policies.[58] Indeed, it
is a tribute to these giants that even the bitter enemies of
their policies should still pay tribute to them. Such a
tribute is to be found in the Acts of the Second Nicene
Council of 787. This particular passage, spoken in council
by one Epiphanius, while animadverting on what was considered
blasphemous and excessively adulatory language addressed to
Leo and Constantine by overzealous iconoclast churchmen,
could still praise them in these words:

> Though these clerics might rather have extolled
> their courage, their victories, their overthrow
> of the barbarian, exploits which many have com-
> memorated in pictures and on walls, and have
> thus drawn the beholders to loyalty and affection:
> aye, and their care for their subjects, their
> counsels, their trophies, their secular reforms
> and their civil administration, and the cities
> they rebuilt.[59]

Leo IV had high hopes for his reign. He even entertained
expectations of restoring Byzantine suzerainty over northern
Italy, effectively nipping papal independence in the bud.
Unfortunately, the reigns of Pepin and Charlemagne, with the
consequent rise of a strong Frankish kingdom, effectively
forestalled this ambition. His dreams of emulating his father
came to nothing for his reign was a short one. He died at 30
(8 September 780) and brought his widow Irene together with
their ten year old son Constantine VI to the throne as joint
sovereigns.[60]

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Empress Irene and the Second Nicaean

Council of A.D. 787

</div>

Irene was born at Athens which was then a rather idyllic

provincial town where the Pantheon had been turned into a
church and Pallas Athena driven into exile by a new age's
version of the apotheosis of feminine perfection, St. Sophia.
She was seemingly devout and pious and hailed from a province
ardently devoted to images. When she became a member of the
imperial family in 768, iconoclast "persecution" was at its
height. Discretion being the better part of valor, Irene
pretended to adhere to these policies. Her piety did not go
unrewarded. She probably was responsible for relaxing, to
some extent, the penalties in force against iconodules at the
outset of Leo IV's reign. She harbored women in the palace
who practiced image worship. She found herself compromised
when Leo discovered the nature of her activities and her
influence over him waned. Fortunately for her, Leo died soon
after this (780) leaving a young son, Constantine VI, as heir
and Irene as empress regent.[61]

The encomiums of her apologists notwithstanding, Irene
was no paragon of virtue. She possessed an overweening ambi-
tion and an obsession with power. She harbored little maternal
or connubial affection and stooped to unconscionable acts to
attain absolute power: dissimulation, intrigue, duplicity,
treachery, and, as we shall see, unbridled cruelty. The
throne was her entire life.[62]

Her vaunted piety was in reality narrow and superstitious.
She believed herself to be God's chosen instrument and proved
herself perservering, opportunistic, and insidious. The
lofty qualities ascribed to Irene by her proponents were, for

the most part, without real foundation. She could be weak in defeat and pitiless in victory. In 797, on the eve of her long planned coup d'Etat against her son, Constantine VI, she lost courage at the critical moment; she thought of humiliating herself, feared the whole project had miscarried, and wanted to abandon the plan. The blinding of her own son removes any doubts about her lack of compassion.[63]

When Irene assumed the regency after the death of Leo IV, there is evidence that Irene dismissed experienced military governors almost at once and replaced them with inexperienced orthodox parvenues.[64] She managed by dint of tireless intrigue, and, at times, force majeur to overcome her various rivals. The five half-brothers of Leo were tonsured, made monks, and forced to distribute the elements of the Eucharist in St. Sophia on Christmas Day, 780. In 781 a revolt in Sicily led by a general named Elpidius broke out. He could not be dealt with at once, owing to an operation against the Arabs in Asia Minor. Later, an expedition of Byzantine troops to Sicily routed Elpidius, who fled to North Africa where he was crowned Emperor of the Romans by the Arabs. Later a crushing defeat at the hands of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid forced Irene to conclude a humiliating peace and pay a tribute of 70,000 gold pieces annually in return for a three year's truce.[65]

Irene began packing the government of the Empire with her personal favorites, mostly palace eunuchs, though this was not an innovation by any means. It was to these individ-

uals that she entrusted the most prestigious of imperial offices. Her prime minister, Stauracius, was elevated to the patrician order, made master of the palace, and became the most powerful man in Constantinople. As a diplomat, he negotiated peace with the Arabs and as a general crushed the Slavs. He demonstrated great ability, but the army hated him as an interloper.[66]

In 748, Irene forced the iconoclast Patriarch Paul to resign and appointed in his place Tarasius, an adroit, pliable politician, and a layman, who would be a valuable asset to the Empress. He refused to accept the appointment until he delivered a lengthy disquisition on the state of the church, launching the idea of a new ecumenical council and repudiating the Council of 754 as having no canonical authority. This opened the way for the Second Council of Nicaea to be con-voked. The first attempt came in the spring of 786 but the proceedings were disrupted when soldiers of distinctly icono-clastic outlook broke into the chamber where the bishops were meeting and threatened to make short work of them if they did not disband. Irene was forced to retrace her steps and begin anew.

Irene won over the Asiatic troops with bribes and then announced a spurious campaign against the Arabs. The icono-clastic city guards regiments were sent to the ostensible front and more loyal troops took their places. The families and property of the guards were seized to insure their obedi-ence and the government was then able to disband or furlough the intractable army units.[67]

In the spring of the following year, the carefully
orchestrated Second Council of Nicaea was formally convened.
With the Emperor and Empress watching from the gallery, the
bishops did their work well. After several weeks of hurling
anathemas at "the columinators of the Christians," that is,
to the image breakers; at "those who apply the words of Holy
Scripture which were spoken against idols to the venerable
images"; at "those who do not salute the holy and venerable
images"; at "those who call the sacred images idols"; and at
"those who say that Christians have recourse to the images as
to gods,"[68] their task was completed. The Horos or Defini-
tion states their views well:

> Wherefore we define with all strictness and care
> that the venerable and holy icons be set up, just
> as is the image of the venerable and life-giving
> Cross, inasmuch as matter consisting of paint and
> pebbles and other materials is suitable to the
> holy church of God, on sacred vessels and vest-
> ments, on walls and panel, in house and streets:
> both the images of our Lord and God and Saviour
> Jesus Christ and our undefiled Lady the Holy
> Mother of God, and of the honorable angels and
> of all the Saints. For the more continuously
> these are seen by means of pictorial representa-
> tion, the more their beholders are led to remember
> and love the originals [emphasis added], and to
> give them respect and honorable obeisance: not
> that we should worship them with the true worship
> which is appropriate only to the Divine; yet still
> with offering of candle and of incense, in the
> same way as we do to the form of the life-giving
> and venerable Cross and to the holy Gospel-Book,
> and to other sacred objects; even as was the pious
> custom in ancient days also.[69]

In Canon IX of the Council, the prelates undertook to
insure that no trace of iconoclast literature would remain
to corrupt the souls of the unwary. The Canon reads as
follows:

> That none of the books containing the heresy of the
> traducer of the Christians are to be hid . . . All
> the childish devices and mad ravings which have been
> falsely written against the venerable images must be
> delivered up to the Episcopium[70] of Constantinople,
> that they may be locked away with other heretical
> books. And if anyone is found hiding such books, if
> he be bishop or presbyter or deacon, let him be
> deposed; but if he be monk or layman, let him be
> anathema.[71]

Though unity should have been a highly prized commodity
at these proceedings, there were still signs of conflict.
The first disagreement centered upon the question of icono-
clast bishops who would recant and return to the orthodox
fold. Patriarch Tarasius favored the action while the fanat-
ical Studite monks, led by their abbot Theodore, adamantly
and vehemently opposed it. Because Iconoclasm was still a
real and present danger, Tarasius' view prevailed. But on
another issue, that of iconoclastic prelates charged with
simony, Tarasius, who argued that a period of repentance
followed by a pardon was sufficient punishment, was forced
to back down in the face of Studite intransigeance.[72]

Irene continued to treat Constantine VI like a helpless
child. At the time of the Second Nicene Council, he was
seventeen years of age and eager to rule in his own right.
He was, after all, the Emperor. His mother manipulated his
life and used him as a pawn to further her own ambitions.
She forced him into an unwanted marriage with Mary of Amnia
in 788 after breaking his engagement to Rotrude, the daughter
of Charlemagne. At the same time, a conspiracy against the
Empress' minister Stauracius, involving Constantine and
several of his supporters, was uncovered. Those involved

with the Emperor were tortured, exiled, or imprisoned. The Emperor was beaten with rods and kept under close house arrest for several days. After this incident, Irene's name appeared before that of the Emperor.[73]

Convinced of the security of her position, Irene again moved too precipitously. In 790, the Asiatic themes (the Armeniakon and Anatolikon) rebelled in favor of the Emperor. The revolt soon spread to Armenia and from thence to the other themes. The troops demanded that Constantine VI be named the one and only Basileus. Faced with a potentially explosive situation, Irene acquiesced to their ultimatum and agreed to abdicate. Stauracius, the chief minister, was tonsured and exiled to Armenia and Aetius, his companion in and rival for power, also fell from favor. Irene retired to the Eleutherian Palace while many of her old adversaries were restored to power, most notably Michael Lachonodracon, former Strategus of the Thracian theme and known as the scourge of the monks.[74]

Unfortunately for Constantine, he seemed incapable of taking resolute action against his mother. In January of 792, he granted her petition to return to Constantinople, restored her title of Empress, and brought her back into the government. He also reinstated Stauracius. Almost immediately, Irene began to work toward her goal of supreme power.[75]

Constantine VI possessed many noteworthy qualities including intelligence, energy, and administrative aptitude, and unquestioned orthodoxy. He was popular with the lower classes

and with the army, but he squandered the goodwill of the
latter group by the senseless imprisonment and blinding of
one Alexius Musele, a general who had issued a manifesto
against him in 790. This act caused unrest within the ranks
of his heretofore staunch supporters, the Armenian troops.
Coincidentally, the iconoclast party was plotting on behalf
of the caesars, the five sons of Constantine V. Acting on
his mother's advice, Constantine blinded the eldest son and
had the tongues of the other four cut out. This senseless
cruelty only exacerbated the resentment of the iconoclasts.
Irene also callously encouraged Constantine's infatuation
with Theodote, one of her maids of honor. Theodote was of
high birth and related to men of power in the orthodox party.
Irene urged Constantine to divorce his wife, Mary, and marry
the girl. In September 795, Constantine placed his wife in
a convent and married Theodote.[76]

A storm of protest insued at this adulterous marriage.
Torrents of invective and righteous wrath poured down upon
the hapless Emperor. The Studites and other hard liners,
notably Plato of Saccoudion, expostulated angrily when news
of the marriage was revealed. Constantine was disposed to
debate the matter but his opponents refused to meet with him.
Imprudently, he lost patience and ordered his commander of
the guards to arrest the refractory monks and bring them to
the capital. Plato was imprisoned in a palace chapel and
Theodore and his cronies were exiled to Thessalonica.[77]

The Empress took no public position and coolly awaited

the propitious moment to act. Constantine's public position
grew steadily weaker. On 17 July, 797, Irene's agent attempted
to take Constantine prisoner but he managed to escape by boat
to the Asiatic side of the Bosporus. When apprised of this,
Irene almost lost courage, but, threatening to compromise
all of her followers by implicating them in the plot, she
doggedly continued on. Her henchmen took the Emperor prisoner
and a few days later he was blinded and Irene assumed sole
power.[78] Theophanes, in his Chronographia, eloquently expressed
the shock and revulsion experienced by the people upon hearing
of this heinous act. He wrote:

> And the sun was darkened during seventeen days,
> and gave not his light, so that ships ran off
> course and drifted, and all men said and confessed
> that because the Emperor was blinded, the sun had
> put away his rays. And in this way power came
> into the hands of Irene, his mother.[79]

Irene, having realized her ultimate dream, took the
unprecedented action of proclaiming herself Emperor. On
Easter Monday 799, she returned to the Church of the Holy
Apostles, caparizoned with all the trappings of sovereign mag-
nificence, seated in a gilded carriage, drawn by four matched
white horses, liberally dispensing money by the handful to
the gawking multitudes. Irene was at the zenith of her power,
but at the same time those around her, knowing the throne
would be vacant when she died, schemed and plotted for this
favorite or that relative. Constantine had only two daughters
by his first wife, the eldest son of his second, adulterous
marriage had died in infancy, and the second son, born after
his father's downfall, was considered a bastard. The two

eunuchs Stauracius and Aetius plotted one against the other while Irene clung jealously to her power.[80]

Constantine's removal brought a variety of problems to Charlemagne, who was crowned Emperor of the West in Rome on Christmas Day, 800, three years after Irene's monstrous act. Even though the coronation had been inspired by Pope Leo III and not the Franks, Charles still had to face the consequences. He had to secure the recognition of Byzantium to make his title valid. Though the West adhered to the Salic Law, which prevented a woman from claiming the crown, and though this made the Byzantine throne technically vacant, it was largely an empty claim and would not do. In 802, papal and Frankish ambassadors were dispatched to Constantinople, allegedly to offer the now aged empress a proposal of marriage in hopes of reuniting the East and West. Shortly after their arrival, a palace coup deposed Irene in favor of the former Logothete of the Treasury Nicephorus (October 31, 802). The situation thus resolved itself and there was now, properly speaking, an Eastern and Western empire.[81]

By means of forged orders, the supporters of Nicephorus gained control of the Sacred Palace. The orders were alleged to have come from Irene, urging that Nicephorus be crowned without delay to help her defeat the intrigue of her eunuch minister Aetius. Irene, in the midst of a holiday at the Eleutherian Palace, was taken prisoner and returned to Constantinople. There, despite her vaunted ambition and courage, she yielded her position without a struggle and

Nicephorus became Emperor. Despite promises that Irene could remain at the Eleutherian Palace, Nicephorus had the aged empress moved first to a monastery she had founded on the island of Prinkipo, then, because even that was considered too close, to the isle of Lesbos where she died in August, 803. Her remains were returned to Constantinople and she was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles. The church forgave the reprehensible acts she committed because of her orthodox piety, but her intrigues reopened the festering sore of palace revolutions which would rock the monarchy for another eighty years and which had been ended by her predecessors, the great iconoclast emperors.[82]

Tribulation Under the Iconodules

In Nicephorus (802-811), the Empire had, once again, a competent, if weakened, ruler at the helm of state.[83] He was confronted with the chaos left by the inept Irene, disruption of the rural economy due to Moslem depredations, fiscal disarray owing to imprudent slashing of taxes and import duties by Irene, and also the ruinous exactions resulting from the humiliating tributes forced upon the Empire by the Muslims and the Bulgars.[84]

The claim of Theophanes that Nicephorus' accession caused widespread shame and confusion only reflected the views of the fanatical elements of the monastic party.[85] In reality, Nicephorus was an excellent choice in many ways. He had been finance minister and was knowledgeable concerning the laby-

rinthine nature of the imperial finances. Initially, he
cancelled the tax remissions granted by Irene and ordered a
general reassessment of his subjects. In comparison with the
former levels, taxes were raised and a surcharge of two
keratia was levied for being entered on the tax roll. The
peasant tenants (paroikoi) of the monasteries, churches, and
other charitable institutions throughout the Empire were made
liable for payment of the hearth tax. A poll tax based on
the family unit was also introduced. With the land tax,
these ancillary taxes provided the main sources of revenue
in the middle period of Byzantium. In reality, all this
was simply a revival of old regulations. In the 820's the
hearth tax was two milesaria and was payable by the entire
rural population liable for taxation. Collective responsi-
bility was utilized by Nicephorus, making each person
responsible for the actions of his compatriots. If one per-
son defaulted on his obligation, the rest had to make good
his share. This also was not new but it certainly proved
effective.[86] Nicephorus was cursed to his face by the church
for his actions, which included keeping the church under
imperial control. He retained Tarasius as Patriarch and
later appointed Nicephorus. Both men rejected the position
of the extreme monachists.[87]

The genesis of Nicephorus' monarchy provides us with an
interesting anecdote. The early months of Nicephorus' reign
were marred by insurrection. Bardanes Turcus, an Armenian
and a capable officer, was appointed by the Emperor to command

a large area encompassing the Anatolikon and Armeniakon themes. With the support of three capable subordinates, Michael the Amorion, Leo the Armenian, and Thomas the Slav, he began to revolt against the Emperor. All of the troops except those in Armenia supported him and on 19 July 803 he was proclaimed emperor. The story contained not a few dramatic elements. Bardanes, accompanied by his three lieutenants, rode to consult a hermit of Philomelion, a monk renowned for his prophetic powers. The hermit sternly warned Bardanes to desist or suffer the loss of his position, his property, and his eyes. Bardanes felt that his enterprise would come to grief and was about to ride dolefully off when the prophet spied the three henchmen of the usurper. The old hermit then foretold how two of the three would ascent the imperial throne while a third would attempt it but fail. Bardanes set off toward Nicomedia with his troops but was cut off and out-maneuvered by the Emperor. Leo and Michael, in the time-honored Byzantine tradition, promptly deserted Bardanes for Nicephorus, who duly rewarded them. Bardanes soon gave up the struggle (which had lasted but seven weeks) and escaped to the monastery of Heraclius at Kios. There he entered monastic life, tonsured and dressed as a monk. The Emperor had a ship take him to the island of Prôtê where he was allowed to build a monastery for his retirement. As if to fulfill the old prophet's prediction, the Emperor secretly had the exiled monk blinded.[88] So ended this curious episode, rather humorous really except for the blinding of the banished Bardanes.

The Emperor set about putting his house in order. The so-called "Ten Misdeeds" imputed to the Emperor by Theophanes are of importance here. Two of these concerned the reoccupation of Hellas and the coast of Asia Minor by means of compulsory purchase of small holdings and the forcible transfer of the peasantry. The third "misdeed" covered the enrollment of impecunious peasant farmers into the regular army at the expense of their neighbors who had to pay 18½ nomismata to equip each of these recruits. Other actions besides those already cited included laws on tax avoidance, death duties, and customs duties on slaves. The last decree prohibited citizens from accepting interest and authorized the state alone to draw interest from rich shipbuilders at the rate of 16.66 per cent on loans of 12 lb. of gold. These measures were harsh but necessary in light of the precarious pecuniary situation of the Empire.[89]

Nicephorus also furthered the work, begun under Irene, of converting and civilizing the Slavs in the Peloponnese, winning a great victory over them at Patras, in 805. The Chronicle of Monemvasia, dating from the ninth century, relates that the Peloponnese had been occupied by Slavic peoples since the end of the sixth century, a period of 218 years. In the ensuing years, the Peloponnese made important economic gains, especially in grain exports, parchment manufacturing, and textile manufacturing. Byzantine influence was great and the area was subject not just to Byzantine sovereignty but direct civil administration.[90]

Emperor Nicephorus also had his quarrels with the
monachist zealots. In February, 806, the Patriarch Tarasius,
died and the Emperor appointed his namesake Nicephorus to
the chair. As was the case with Tarasius, Nicephorus was a
layman and a civil servant. Following the announcement of
his appointment, Nicephorus' rise in the ecclesiastical
hierarchy was nothing if not meteoric. On April 5, he was
tonsured, on April 9, he became a deacon, on the 10th, he
was made a presbyter, and on the 12th he was simultaneously
ordained bishop and Patriarch. This is proof-positive that
bureaucratic red tape is never a problem if it conflicts with
expediency. Of course, these machinations were invidious to
the members of the monastic party who viewed it as seculari-
zation of the church and, worse, a blatant slap in the face
concerning their aspirations toward ecclesiastical autonomy.
As if to add insult to injury, the interdict placed upon the
abbot Joseph, who had had the misfortune of officiating at
Constantine VI's adulterous second marriage, was removed.
These actions brought about a revival of the supposedly
moribund moechian scandal of 797. Once again, the monachist
fanatics, led by old Plato of Saccoudion and his nephew
Theodore the Studite, took to the barricades. They inveighed
against Constantine VI's second marriage, calling it an impre-
scriptable infringement of canon law and categorically denying
Nicephorus' power to grant dispensation from this sin. They
denigrated the Patriarch as a lackey of the Emperor and
refused to associate with the abbot Joseph. The haughty,

obdurate spirit of the monks exaspirated the Emperor and, in a monumental display of pique, ordered Theodore the Studite exiled, his monks dispersed, and the archbishop of Thessalonica removed from his see. Now one might well ask why was it deemed necessary to exhume all this acrimony. Quite simply, the Patriarch Nicephorus viewed the matter as a test case. He did not approve of Constantine's second marriage; indeed the opposite was the case. But he felt that it was imperative, indeed vital, to vindicate the right of the church to grant dispensation in special cases where the Emperor so wished. This was the heart of the matter. In January, 809, the legality of Constantine VI's marriage to Theodote was upheld.[91]

The Emperor himself was not formally unorthodox, as he maintained the settlement of the Second Nicene Council and image worship, but he was not an enthusiastic iconodule. His reign is notable in that freedom of opinion was permitted, itself a heresy to the ultramontanists of the orthodox faction. His benign treatment of the iconoclasts and the Paulicians convinced the monachists of his sub rosa heterodoxy. Some accused the Emperor of being areligious or atheistic.[92] It is devoutly to be wished that the inhabitants of the Empire enjoyed this tolerant atmosphere while it lasted. This lenient policy was soon reversed.

On 26 July 811, Emperor Nicephorus was killed in battle against Krum and his Bulgarians. The Bulgars trapped the Byzantine army in a blockaded mountain pass and cut the imperial troops to pieces. The Emperor was killed in his tent

and the victorious Krum ordered the Emperor's skull to be
lined with silver and made into a goblet out of which he
toasted his boyars at his numerous revels.[93] Stauracius,
the Emperor's son and heir, was wounded, mortally as events
were to prove, but managed to escape with a few followers to
Adrianople where, in conformity with the requirements of
legitimacy, he was proclaimed Emperor. This act was largely
pro forma because the seriousness of Stauracius' wound pre-
cluded the possibility of his surviving for an extended
period. The final settlement was to take place at Constan-
tinople where Stauracius was conveyed to crown his successor.
Unfortunately, Stauracius was childless, but his sister
Procopia was married to a high-ranking nobleman named
Michael Rangabé, whose candidature was supported by the
Patriarch Nicephorus as well as the Emperor's generals. The
wife of the dying Emperor Stauracius, Theophano, coveted the
power and opposed Michael while Stauracius, fearing a possible
civil war, procrastinated. These delays, particularly at a
time of imminent disaster in foreign affairs, made prompt,
decisive action imperative. On 2 October 811, a coup d'Etat
brought Michael to power and he was proclaimed Emperor in the
Hippodrome by the Senate and the army. Within hours, he was
formally crowned by the Patriarch Nicephorus. Faced with a
fait accompli, Stauracius retired to a monastery where he
lingered several agonizing months before dying on 11 January
812.[94]

Michael Rangabé[95] was a feeble ruler and reigned only a

short time (October 811-July 813). He was totally influenced by the strong personalities around him. Theodore the Studite, whom he recalled from exile, had the last word on practically every facet of imperial policy. Michael was devoted to icons, and ended the economies of his predecessor by giving lavish emoluments to the clergy and the army. Needless to say, Orthodoxy prospered.[96]

Michael's short reign is remembered largely for the conclusion of negotiations by which Charlemagne was recognized by the Byzantine authorities as Basileus. From this time on, there would be two empires in theory as well as in fact. But aside from that, the rest of Michael's reign was an unmitigated disaster. The redoubtable Krum, khan of the Bulgars, irrupted into Thrace and seized the city of Develtus. Michael marched to meet him but the troops mutinied and Michael was forced to retreat, leaving Thrace and Macedonia to their fate. At this point, Krum peremptorily offered humiliating terms. The Patriarch Nicephorus counselled acceptance but the Studite monks were stridently opposed to treating with the enemy. While Byzantium vacillated, Krum seized Mesembria and captured a large cache of gold and quantities of "Greek fire." The war then resumed in earnest and on 22 June 813, a large Byzantine army composed of troops from Asia, Armenia, and Anatolia engaged the Bulgars at Versinikia near Adrianople in Thrace. As the two armies faced each other in indecision, troops from Asia Minor, commanded by Leo the Armenian, Strategus of the Anatolikon theme,

refused to join the battle and took to flight. As a result, the Byzantine absorbed a savage beating and Michael's prestige as an orthodox emperor was irreparably damaged. A change of rulers seemed inevitable and two weeks after the defeat, Leo the Armenian was proclaimed Emperor by the army. On 11 July, Leo entered the capital and Michael ignominiously capitulated. He and his family were exiled and his male offspring castrated. On 12 July, after giving unofficial and worthless assurances of his orthodoxy, Leo was crowned Emperor by the Patriarch Nicephorus. The way was now open for a revival of Iconoclasm.[97]

[1]M. V. Anastos, "Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule, 717 to 842," <u>Cambridge Medieval History</u>, ed. J. M. Hussey, 2nd ed., vol. I (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 61-62.

[2]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," p. 3.

[3]Ibid.

[4]P. Van den Ven, "La Patristique et L'Hagiographie du Concile Nice," <u>Byzantion</u>, XXV-XXVII (1955-57), pp. 332-38.

[5]Brown, "Dark Age Crisis," pp. 3-4.

[6]Barnard, pp. 2-3.

[7]Ibid., p. 3.

[8]Ibid., p. 4.

[9]Constance Head, "Who was the real 'Leo, the Isaurian?'" <u>Byzantion</u>, XLI (1971), pp. 105-08, writes that Leo III was not Isaurian but Syrian. Even Theophanes in his <u>Chronographia</u> states that Leo was born in Germanikia, in Syria. She cites as evidence the fact of Leo's knowledge of Greek and Arabic, likely in a Syrian but not an Isaurian. Also, a ninth century Latin translator styles Leo as <u>genere Syrius</u>. Head maintains that Theophanes was confused as to geography, mistaking Germanikia in Syria for Germanikapolis, a city in Isaurian Asia Minor. Also, there was an emperor from Isauria, Leontios, who reigned from 695 to 698. There is numismatic evidence that Leontios changed his name to Leo. Both emperors were called Leon, as the coins of their respective reigns attest. Perhaps Theophanes remembered there had been an emperor Leo from Isauria but was confused as to which emperor it was. He affixed the epithet to Leo III and the name stuck.

[10]Anastos, p. 62.

[11]Romilly H. Jenkins, <u>Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, A.D. 610-1071</u> (London, 1966), p. 61.

[12]Ibid., p. 62.

[13]Bury, <u>History of the Later Roman Empire</u>, II, pp. 374-86.

[14]Jenkins, p. 63.

[15]Anastos, p. 63.

[16]Jenkins, p. 60.

[17]Jenkins, pp. 63-64.

[18]Anastos, p. 63.

[19]Barnard, p. 4.

[20]Most modern historians (Brown, Barnard, Anastos, etc.) hold that there were two edicts concerning icons, one in 726, the other in 730.

[21]Barnard, p. 5.

[22]Bréhier, Le Monde Byzantin: Vie et Mort de Byzance (Paris, 1947), I, pp. 78-79.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Anastos, pp. 66-67.

[25]Bréhier, Le Monde Byzantin, pp. 79-80.

[26]Barnard, p. 5.

[27]Bréhier, Le Monde Byzantin, pp. 79-80.

[28]Anastos, p. 71.

[29]Barnard, p. 68.

[30]Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, II, pp. 461-62.

[31]Anastos, p. 73.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State (New Brunswick, N.J., 1957), p. 155 and Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, II, pp. 470-75.

[35]Barnard, pp. 5-6.

[36]Anastos, p. 78.

[37]Henry Percival, tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, XIV, p. 543.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 546.

[41]Chief texts cited were: Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8; John 1:18; 4:24; 5:37; 20:29; Romans 1:23, 25; 10:17; II Corinthians 5:7, 16.

[42]Percival, tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils, p. 543.

[43]Ibid., p. 546.

[44]Ibid., p. 543.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., p. 544.

[47]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p. 152.

[48]Percival, tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils, p. 544.

[49]Ibid., p. 545.

[50]Barnard, p. 7.

[51]Ibid., p. 79.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Jenkins, p. 88.

[54]Ibid., p. 86.

[55]Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, II, pp. 460-68.

[56]Anastos, p. 80.

[57]Ibid.; also see Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, I, pp. 251-63.

[58]Jenkins, pp. 75-76.

[59]Percival, tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils, p. 574.

[60]Anastos, p. 82.

[61]Charles Diehl, Byzantine Empresses (New York, 1963), pp. 66-69.

[62]Ibid., p. 71.

[63] Ibid., pp. 71-73.

[64] Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, II, pp. 485-86.

[65] Anastos, pp. 82-83.

[66] Diehl, pp. 74-75.

[67] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[68] Percival, tr., The Seven Ecumenical Councils, p. 534.

[69] Ibid., p. 541.

[70] Ibid., p. 561. The Episcopium was the palace of the Patriarch.

[71] Ibid. A more ancient rendering states: "If anyone is found to have concealed a book written against the venerable images, if he be on the clergy list let him be deposed; if layman or monk let him be cut off."

[72] Bréhier, Le Monde Byzantin, p. 90.

[73] Diehl, pp. 79-81.

[74] Ibid., p. 81.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., pp. 81-84.

[77] Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, II, p. 483 ff.

[78] Diehl, pp. 84-87.

[79] Quoted in Jenkins, p. 101.

[80] Diehl, pp. 87-90.

[81] Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p. 165; also, Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, II, pp. 506-07. See also F. Dolger, "Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der fränkisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9 Jahrhundert," in Byzance und die europäische Staatenwelt (Munich, 1964), pp. 297-98.

[82] Diehl, pp. 90-93.

[83] Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p. 106.

[84] Jenkins, p. 117.

[85]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p. 166.

[86]Ibid., p. 167.

[87]Jenkins, p. 118.

[88]Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I, A.D. 802-867 (New York, 1965), pp. 11-13.

[89]Ibid., pp. 213-17; also Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, pp. 167-70.

[90]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, pp. 170-73. For a more detailed discussion of the Chronicle of Monemvasia, see Peter Charanis, "The Chronicle of Monemvasia and the Question of Slav Settlement in Greece," Dumbarton Oaks Papers, V (1950), especially p. 141.

[91]Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, pp. 34-36.

[92]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[93]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p. 174.

[94]Ibid., pp. 174-75.

[95]Ibid., p. 175 footnote #1. Michael Rangabé was the first Byzantine ruler to have a family name.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Ibid., pp. 175-78. See also Bréhier, Le Monde Byzantine, pp. 99-102 and Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, pp. 350-52.

CHAPTER VI

ICONOCLASM'S SECOND PHASE - A.D. 813-843

Leo V was now master of the Byzantine Empire but his
position was anything but secure. Once again a grave crisis
threatened the realm. Krum and his Bulgars besieged the city
and ravaged the suburbs of the capital and its environs. It
is alleged that they even performed human sacrifices at the
Golden Horn. Faced with such a dire predicament, Leo feigned
orthodoxy at first and even adored the great icon of Christ
which hung in the massive audience hall at the palace of
Chalcedon.[1] But ineptitude in conducting siege warfare was
again the Bulgar's undoing, and they were forced to be content
with the plunder they had already amassed. As soon as the
danger had passed, Leo V began manifesting his true colors.
He demanded to know why Christians should emulate pagans and
prostrate themselves before images. With the assistance of
John the Grammarian, he began reversing the imperial policy
concerning images. With the aid of two bishops, John began
searching the archives for information relevant to Iconoclasm
and the Council of 754. Leo declared that image worship was
a blight on the whole Empire.[2]

Renasence of Iconoclasm Under Leo V,

the Armenian

In December 814, the Emperor invited an envoy from the
iconoclast theologians to come to the palace and enlighten
him on some fine points of dogma. The iconodules held a
colloquy to beseech God to change the Emperor's mind. This
was to no avail. Leo ordered the Great Crucifix affixed to
the main gateway of the city removed on the pretext of saving
it from profanations. Many "closet iconoclasts" took the cue
and openly declared themselves. Not long after this, soldiers
invaded the patriarchal palace and carried off the erstwhile
Nicephorus to Chrysopolis. Leo professed shock at such an
offense to the Patriarch's dignity and avowed that it was a
spontaneous act not in accordance with his wishes. Never-
theless, Leo summoned a _silention_ and proclaimed that such an
abandonment of the patriarchal throne was tantamount to
abdication; he forthwith declared Nicephorus deposed. At
the behest of John the Grammarian, a palace dignitary,
Theodotus, a member of a family allied to Constantine V, was
named Patriarch. On 1 April, 815, a council assembled at
St. Sophia in the presence of the Emperor and solemnly reversed
the doctrinal position concerning images; they also repudiated
the memory of Irene and reinstituted the canons of the Council
of 754.[3]

Iconoclast Council of A.D. 815

The second period of Iconoclasm ushered in by the Icono-

clastic Council of 815 has not received sufficient credit for the originality it manifested. In fact, the entire period has suffered greatly at the hands of certain historians. No less an authority than George Ostrogorsky, in his usually perceptive History of the Byzantine State, has said that the era bears the "stamp of impotence" while another scholar characterizes the period by stating that "in these later stages of the Controversy the philosophical and theological arguments were subsidiary to the appeal to authority."[4] Both of these statements miss the mark. It can, indeed, be said that the Council of 815 and the whole of the second Iconoclastic period formed the philosophical climax of the entire Iconoclast movement. Only in the ninth century did the contending parties come to grips with the real issue of what was an acceptable image of Christ. The theologians of the period manifested originality in the manner in which they plumbed the depths of the controversy.[5]

One of the most able detractors of the Council of 815 was the deposed Patriarch Nicephorus, who contributed more than his share of scathing denunciations. He was born in Constantinople during the reign of Constantine V. His father was an ardent iconodule and was exiled by Constantine for his beliefs, thus making Iconoclasm a great issue in Nicephorus' life from his earliest days. He was given a thorough, careful education and upon reaching maturity received an appointment to the imperial secretariat. In this position, he was a subordinate to the Patriarch Tarasius when he succeeded to

the patriarchal throne. He attended the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 as a mandator or spokesman for the palace. Several years after the Council he retired from court life, founded a monastery across the Straits and devoted himself to ascetic exercises. Sometime later, the Patriarch Tarasius appointed him chief administrator of one of the church's largest charitable institutions.[6]

In 806, he became Patriarch, due largely to pressure applied by the Emperor Nicephorus. He clashed frequently with the monastic faction led by Theodore the Studite who harbored an abiding mistrust of the official hierarchy. But in 813, when Leo V the Armenian ascended the imperial throne and manifested iconoclastic tendencies, Nicephorus and Theodore formed a united front to fight the common foe. Nicephorus was deposed and exiled to the monastery which he had founded. The exiled Patriarch then took up the pen as his weapon and, from the outbreak of the controversy until his demise in 828, wrote reams of treatises, all of which attacked specific views and documents adduced to support the iconoclastic position. His most important work in this regard bears the rather prolix title of "Detectio et Eversio," or Criticism and Refutation of the unlawful, undefined, and truly spurious Definition set forth by men who seceded from the Catholic and Apostolic Church and adhered to a foreign way of thinking, to the destruction of the saving dispensation granted by God to the world. The treatise is in two parts. The first quotes long sections of the Definition of 815 and

refutes it line by line. The second is longer and is a refutation of the florilegium of patristic quotations compiled by iconoclastic bishops.[7]

For its part, the <u>Definition</u> of the Council of 815 praised the Isaurian emperors and the Council of 754 for its valiant struggle against images, and unanimously reenacted the canonical legislation of that Council. The Council of 754, according to the bishops at the Council of 815, gave a long period of peace to the church until Irene and the Council of 787 undid its noble work.[8] The Lord then took pity on a world sinking in a bog of sin and sent a second Noah (i.e. Leo V) to aid it in its distress. The iconodules, imitating the heresies condemned by the six ecumenical councils, either circumscribed the divine nature together with the human nature by painting the image of Christ, or they separated the two. The bishops at the Council of 815 concluded by condemning the worship of spurious images, invalidated the decisions of the Council of 787, accepted without reservation those of 754, and declared the making of images to be utterly devoid of worship and useless--but with a gesture of brotherly compromise, refrained from calling them idols.[9]

The <u>Definition</u> put forth by the Bishops was surprisingly tame. Actually, the bishops did little on their own authority. Their pronouncements are mainly recapitulations of old arguments with only a few sentences giving any intimations of their main thesis; for example, the Saints are called "sharers in the form [of Christ]," while icons are termed "soulless."

In one instance in the Definition, the prelates did speak on
their own authority: "Embracing the straight doctrine, we
banish from the Catholic Church the invalid production pre-
sumptuously proclaimed [by the Council of 787] of the spurious
images." This was their main objection to images--they are
spurious.[10]

It is very probable that a ninth century Byzantine who
took the trouble to study the Definition (and not the
florilegium) of 815 would view the charge of spuriousness
as a tautology of the old argument of Constantine V and the
Council of 754 that pictorial images of Christ were false and
that the true image was the Eucharist.[11] However, this was
not the real doctrine of the Council of 815. The bishops
were merely hiding behind conciliar authority. They abstained
from calling their opponents by specific heresies. By so
doing, they hoped to have an easier time proselytizing them.
In the florilegium, they utilized passages from patristic
writers in much the same manner as the Council of Hieria.
Many passages do not seem to contain any idea which was not
included in the passages used by the Council of 754. There
were some newer, fresher thoughts in evidence, the most impor-
tant and elaborate of which were lifted from Epiphanius'
"Treatise against Those Who are Engaged in Making, after the
Fashion of Idols, Images in the Likeness of Christ, the Mother
of God, Martyrs, Angels, and Prophets."[12] Here is the claim
that images of saints do not honor but rather dishonor them.
Here, as in the Definition, images are called spurious. Here

is a request to set up the Apostles' commandments as their
images through virtue, i.e. to acquire the virtues and obey
the commandments of the Apostles. There is also the asser-
tion that the Apostles never instructed man to look at the
Apostles' images in memory of their form.

For Epiphanius, pictorial representations of Christ and
the saints are spurious images and in reality are not images
at all. He quotes I John 3:2 which states that, "When he
appears, we are to be like him," and Romans 8:29 (slightly
altered by Epiphanius to suit his polemical thrust)[13] which
he has affirming that the saints "would share in the shape
of the Son of God." If this is so, argues Epiphanius, if
the saints are like Christ, then pictorial representation of
the saints is only possible if it is possible for Christ; yet
this is unthinkable for He is incomprehensible and uncircum-
scribable. If it were otherwise, how could He be as the
Father, raising the dead, performing other miracles? Christ
must be worshipped in spirit and in truth and any picture of
Him is a pseudonymous image, a spurious image. The same
dictum pertains to the saints whose true images are the
imitations of their virtues by man.[14]

Other writers mentioned in the florilegium echo the same
theme. Asterius of Amaseia exhorted the believer to renounce
images and "carry Christ in his soul and to carry the incor-
poreal word about in his mind."[15] "A certain Leontius"
averred the likeness of Christ could be acquired only in the
heart.[16] Basil of Seleucia affirmed that the only proper way

to commemorate the saints was to read about them and not through "the evil art of these figures."[17] Basil the Great made a distinction between the image and the likeness. The painters' image is "lying, vain, and idle," whereas being created in His likeness gave man the power to become like God. The fact that God created man in His image is signifi-cant, but even more important is the dignity which is derived from the power given to man through the grace of God to become like Him through his own efforts. This is similar to the iconoclastic view that the true image of God is a virtu-ous man.[18]

This patristic florilegium is an elaboration of the Definition, the thesis of which is that images are spurious. This was not a duplicate of the Council of 754 which held that the Eucharist (i.e. the bread and the wine) was the only true image of Christ. Technically speaking, this inter-pretation was on thin ice theologically and doctrinally and presented a fat target for the iconodules who attacked what they saw as the Manichaean implications of this exposition. The doctrine of spuriousness was clearly a departure from the older view. The Eucharist was no longer the true image of Christ; instead, man endowed with Christian virtues became the model.[19] This was not a repetition of the Council of 754. The bishops were concentrating as clearly as possible on what had been the central theme all along, i.e. the nature of the true image.[20]

To Constantine V, a true image had to be consubstantial

with the original. In the opinion of the Council of 815, the true image was not any kind of pictorial representation; rather, this true image was man who, by the grace of God, made himself resemble God.[21] This seems more profound than the work of Constantine V although his basic premise of consubstantiality was still utilized. Constantine's Christology was of a more basic type theologically but it applied only to Christ. The Council of 815 struck much deeper and developed a philosophy of religious representation out of whole cloth. They used Constantine V's work and patois but at the same time spelled out the implications of his philosophy without specifically referring to it. Christ and/or the saints could only be represented by something consubstantial with His personality, i.e. the virtuous person, so images became spurious and hence inadmissable.[22]

It has been demonstrated that the second period of Iconoclasm was not one characterized by spiritual exhaustion. This onus has been placed upon it because of the genuinely conciliatory efforts put forth by the Council of 815. In its Definition, the Council did repeat to a large extent what had been said by the Council of Hieria in 754.[23] But the real thesis was developed in the florilegium wherein the old "image is spurious" formula was given a positive meaning. The true image was now to be man endowed with Christian virtues. Yet this point was not original, in the sense that it had never been argued before. Origen, writing in the third century, sounded like an iconoclast of 815 when he declared:

> Our cult-statues and fitting offerings to God are
> the works of no common mechanics but are wrought and
> fashioned in us by the Word of God: the virtues
> which we imitate [are those of] 'the firstborn of
> all creation' (Col. 1:15) who has set us an example
> of justice, temperance, courage, wisdom, piety, and
> of the other virtues . . . And everyone who imitates
> him according to his ability, does by this very
> endeavor raise a statue according to the image of
> the Creator (Col. 3:10) for in the contemplation of
> God with a pure heart they become imitators of Him
> (Ephesians 4:1) and, in general, we see that all
> Christians strive to raise altars and statues as we
> have described them and these not of a lifeless and
> senseless kind [emphasis added], and not to receive
> greedy spirits intent upon lifeless things, but to
> be filled with the Spirit of God who dwells in the
> image of virtue of which we have spoken, and takes
> His abode in the soul which is conformed to the
> image of its Creator. Thus the Spirit of Christ
> dwells in those who bear, so to say, a resemblance
> in form and feature to Himself.[24]

The Iconoclasts of 815 possessed a distinct Origenist
flavor and inspiration largely because of the letter of
Eusebius to Constantia, the sister of Constantine the Great,
concerning her desire for a picture of Christ.[25] In this
sense, the iconoclasts of the second period were not indebted
to the initial phase of the controversy for their principal
thesis.[26] Origenism and Iconoclasm emanate leaf and branch
from the Hellenic mentality which made piety a concern for
the inner man. The bishops of the Council of 815 used Origen's
doctrine of the true Christian cult-statue as a basis for an
elaborate attack on images.[27]

If the Council of 815 is any evidence at all, it is
patently obvious that Leo V the Armenian was a convinced
iconoclast whose actions were motivated largely by religious
scruples. Though he lacked the theological insight of Con-
stantine V, it cannot be said that the Council of 815 was a

cheap imitation, content to repeat the old arguments adduced by the Council of 754. Instead, this Council took those arguments, refined them, and went beyond them, breaking new ground and producing a novel, noteworthy, dogmatically significant interpretation.

Iconoclast Emperors of the
Second Phase

Putting theological matters aside for the moment, Leo now faced the urgent task of eliminating Krum and his Bulgars who, after their overwhelming defeat of the Byzantines at Versinikia, had swept on to the capital itself and had laid siege to it. Of course, the Bulgars, inexperienced in siege warfare, could make no dent in that impervious fortress and Krum, eager to make off with his mountain of booty, again proposed peace. The Emperor agreed and proposed a personal meeting outside the walls near Blachernae, on the Golden Horn. Krum, accompanied by his treasurer, a Greek deserter named Constantine Patzikos, and the son of this Constantine, arrived by horse while Leo made his appearance in the imperial barge. Krum's brother-in-law (Patzikos) acted as official interpreter. While the two leaders conversed a certain John Herabulios, a member of Leo's entourage, hid his face in his hands. This was the signal for three men who had secreted themselves in a nearby house to assassinate the Bulgar leader. Krum was saved by his presence of mind and the celerity of his flight.[28]

The very next day the enraged Krum laid waste to the

whole of the countryside from Hebdomon to Pera and from thence up the coast of the Bosporus. Adrianople, weakened by siege and starvation, capitulated and its inhabitants were driven north of the Danube. Much else in the surrounding area was put to the torch or sword, animate and inanimate, man, beast, and building. Finally, Leo was stirred to action and in the autumn of 813 won a notable victory over the Khan's minions at Mesembria, perpetrating a great slaughter of the Bulgar forces. But the following spring saw the insatiable Bulgar once again preparing to march on Constantinople. Fortunately, a merciful providence decreed otherwise. Krum was stricken by a cerebral hemorrhage and died on 13 April 814. His successor, after two brief reigns by nonentities, Omurtag, more concerned with internal domestic policy, most notably the consolidation of his own kingdom and expansion of power in the northwest, concluded a thirty year peace. New boundaries were defined and Slav refugees were repatriated to Bulgaria. Despite minimal losses of territory, Byzantium's Balkan frontier was to experience an unprecedented era of peace.[29]

It has often been said that "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." This shibboleth is certainly relevant to the position of Leo V, who feared constantly for his throne. Michael of Amoria, long Leo's companion in arms, resented the Emperor's success and lacked the prudence to hold his tongue. He became notorious for his sometimes mordant criticisms of the Emperor. Though he could not speak polite Greek, he was

continually insolent. Perhaps he believed Leo was afraid of
him. At any rate, his murmurings were made known to Leo who,
unwilling to act precipitously on hearsay, set eavesdroppers
to ferret out the truth and also relayed private admonitions
to Michael, adjuring him to control his improprieties. This
matter was entrusted to John Herabulios (of the botched Krum
assassination plot), Logothete of the Course. The crisis
soon came to a head and solid evidence of Michael's conspir-
atorial machinations was unearthed. On Christmas Eve 820,
Michael was arrested and interrogated by the Emperor himself.
The peril to the throne was obvious. An official inquiry
was held that same evening with Leo again presiding. The
evidence against Michael was overwhelming and incontrovert-
ible.

Leo's sentence was terrible in its rage and vindictive-
ness. Michael was sentenced to be fastened to a pole and
burned alive in the furnace used to heat the Palace baths.
To compound the ignominy, an ape was to be tied to the
condemned man, redolent of the old Roman punishment of
parricides. Before the sentence could be carried out, the
Empress Theodosia had heard of it and came running, shoeless
and in her nightgown, to implore Leo to be merciful or at
least grant a reprieve. She beseeched the Emperor to post-
pone the sentence until after Christmas, since Leo could not
easily receive the sacrament with such a beastial execution
on his mind. These entreaties moved the Emperor but, though
he consented, he was full of forebodings. The prisoner was

manacled and handed over to the palace steward.

That night Leo arose and made his way through corridors and barred passages (he was an extremely vigorous man) to the room where Michael was incarcerated. Both the jailer and Michael were asleep. The Emperor silently execrated the sleeping pair, shook his fist at them, and went silently out. But a boy (actually a eunuch) who belonged to Michael had observed the incident and had recognized Leo by his purple boots, worn only by the Emperor. He aroused Michael and related the occurrence. Michael and his warden knew prompt action was essential if they were to escape with their lives. The jailer informed Michael's compatriots that if they did not strike now, Michael would divulge all of their identities to Leo. The Christmas Day Mass was to begin at 4 A.M. in the palace chapel of St. Stephen. The conspirators, dressed as priests, entered with the celebrants. In the cold dawn Leo arrived, muffled against the cold. The assassins attacked the wrong man at first, aiming their swords at a priest, who saved himself by exposing his tonsure. The momentary confusion enabled Leo to seize an object from the altar and make a stout defense. When his makeshift weapon was broken, a giant named "one-and-a-half" severed Leo's arm at the shoulder with a single blow. The unlucky Emperor's head was cut off and his body was dragged naked to the Hippodrome where it was exposed to the insults of the mob. Meanwhile, Michael, still in irons, had been seated on the throne by his supporters. Later, he was taken to the cathedral and crowned by the

Patriarch Theodotus, who had replaced the deposed Nicephorus.[30]

Michael II was born at Amorium in Phrygia, capital of the Anatolikon theme, the son of a farming family. Amorium had a large Jewish population and he early grew accustomed to heterodox views and was inclined to tolerate them. He had early married a certain Thecla, the daughter of a military governor, by whom he had his son Theophilus who was sixteen when his father ascended the throne in 820. Michael wisely had the boy crowned co-emperor in 821.[31] He felt himself to be out of place in cosmopolitan Constantinople and harbored a half-suppressed contempt for Greek learning, Roman pride, and ecclesiastical tradition which piqued the enmity of the intellectuals, nobles, and orthodox of the capital.[32] After the death of his first wife, he strengthened his position by marrying Euphrosyne, then a nun, the daughter of Constantine VI by his first wife, Mary of Amnia.[33]

Despite his distaste for Constantinopolitan sophistication and his undoubted iconoclastic propensities, Michael adopted a reserved policy concerning this issue. He recognized neither the Second Nicaean Council nor the Council of 754 and forbade all debate on the question of icons.[34] Some historians, especially Ostrogorsky, feel that he assumed this posture because of some flash of intuitive insight that told him Iconoclasm was moribund. They have missed the mark. It is probable that he held his peace on the issue because he simply did not feel secure on the throne, given the method used to acquire it. They seem to ignore this even while

stating that Michael manifested his iconoclastic proclivities clearly enough in letters to Louis the Pious, by entrusting the education of his son to the iconoclastic theologian John the Grammarian, and by appointing an iconoclast bishop, Anthony of Sylaion, to occupy the patriarchal throne after the death of Theodotus Melessenus rather than recalling the deposed Nicephorus. Both John and Anthony were instrumental in developing the acta of the Council of 815.[35]

The central event of Michael's reign was the civil war which lasted from 821 to 823, in which Thomas the Slav made a bid for supreme power. He was an old comrade of Michael's who had been with him and Leo the Armenian when the three of them accompanied the usurper Bardanes on his visit to the old seer of Philomelion in 803. He had remained loyal to Bardanes and had spent the next ten years in exile among the Moslems with whom he had lived before.[36] After his return in 813, he was given a command by Leo V. He had planned and may have begun his revolt before Leo's murder. Asia Minor, with its heterogeneous population, was a fertile ground for such movements and Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Iberians, and other Caucasian peoples followed his standard.

At the outset of the rebellion, Thomas had it rumored that he was Constantine VI, certainly a curious element in the affair. He did not come forward as himself[37] but felt it necessary to claim to be a blinded former emperor. He claimed himself champion of the iconodules, although the social make-up of his forces would indicate that this would

be no great rallying point and plunder was most likely the
chief attraction. Ostrogorsky sees in the movement a strong
undercurrent of racial, social, and religious antagonisms
fomented by ruinous taxes and economic want. But whatever
the motivation, the rebellion proliferated. Of the six Asian
themes, only the Opsikion and Armenian themes remained loyal
to the Emperor. With the active cooperation of Caliph Al-
Mamun, Thomas was crowned Emperor at Antioch by the patriarch
of that city. The maritime Cibyrraeot theme supported him,
giving the pretender control of a fleet which he used to
cross to Europe and lay siege to Constantinople itself. The
siege began in December of 821 and lasted some fifteen months.
Essentially, it resembled the Arab siege of 717-18 and its
results were much the same. The besieging forces could not
crack the city's massive defenses and the Byzantine navy did
bloody work among the ships of Thomas' fleet. As had been
the case in 718, Bulgarian intervention ultimately decided
matters. Omurtag, son of Byzantium's most implacable enemy,
scattered the rebel forces in the spring of 823. Thomas
lifted the siege and the rebellion collapsed. Thomas with-
drew his forces--by now a bare remnant--to the Plain of
Diabasis and entrenched himself at Arcadiopolis. In October,
823, Thomas was given over to the Emperor and, after enduring
unspeakable tortures, executed.[38] One consequence of the
civil war was that it precipitated the rise of the great
landed estates, consequent with the devastation of the small
farms brought on by the rebellion, which was to be a thorn

in the flesh of Byzantine emperors in future years.[39] These

great landed barons commanded great wealth and exerted a

diremptive influence in later years, draining away power from

the emperor much as the icons had done prior to the icono-

clastic controversy.

In ecclesiastical matters, Michael retained the icono-

clastic reforms of Leo V. As was stated earlier, Michael

refrained from active persecution because of the circumstances

surrounding his accession and sought to mollify, or at least

disarm, the opposition of substantial numbers of his subjects.[40]

His policy was to permit the people to believe what they liked

in private but to prohibit image worship in public. Theodore

the Studite, lately released from exile at Smyrna, and the

former Patriarch Nicephorus entertained hopes that the new

government would restore image worship. Theodore wrote the

Emperor expressing this expectation, repeating all the hoary

iconodule arguments. Although moved by the eloquence of the

letter, Michael remained adamant. He replied:

> Those who have gone before us will have to answer
> for their doctrines to God; but we intend to keep
> the Church in the same way in which we found her
> walking. Therefore, we rule and confirm that no
> one shall venture to open his mouth either for or
> against images. But let the Synod of Tarasius be
> put out of mind and memory, and likewise that of
> Constantine the elder (i.e. V), and that which was
> lately held in Leo's reign; and let complete silence
> in regard to images be the order of the day . . .[41]

Michael was unable to stifle the controversy. He attempted

a reconciliation by summoning a conference of the contending

parties. The iconodules decided to have no truck with heretics

and Theodore, empowered to speak for the bishops and abbots,

wrote to the Emperor suggesting that the only recourse was
to appeal the case to Rome, queen of all the churches.
Michael then received Theodore and his adherents at an
audience. After permitting them to state their position, he
answered succinctly and firmly:

> Your words are good and excellent. But, as I have
> never yet till this hour worshipped an image in my
> life, I have determined to leave the church as I
> have found it. To you, however, I allow the liberty
> of adhering with impunity to what you allege to be
> the orthodox faith; live where you choose, only it
> must be outside the city, and you need not apprehend
> that any danger will befall you from my government.[42]

Michael was deeply suspicious of Theodore's appeal to
Roman ecclesiastical primacy. This cut at the heart of Byzan-
tine constitutional theory, i.e. imperial supremacy in politi-
cal and spiritual matters. In fact, the only persecutions of
Michael's reign was visited upon a certain Methodius, abbot
of Chamlakkas, who was an active promoter of image worship
and a spokesman for Rome. He was treated harsly, scourged
and then imprisoned for more than eight years[43] until after
Michael's death in October, 829.

The parvenu Michael, while possessing common sense and
a sort of rough-hewn ability, could scarcely read or write.
His son Theophilus benefited from a liberal education and
evinced a genuine interest in art and learning.[44] Theophilus
was an aesthete and a romantic,[45] his romanticism manifesting
itself in his attachment to the art and culture of the Arab
world which was already on the wane.[46] It would seem that
romanticism, in that era, meant not a rejection but an
enthusiastic embracing of Hellenic classicism. What was not

a product of romanticism was his ecclesiastical policy which
he pursued with conviction and considerable vigor, although
his achievements were undone after his death.[47] He desired
to be an ideal ruler and was motivated by a strong sense of
justice which he displayed in a rather melodramatic manner.
It is said that he used to prowl the city talking to the
meaner sort, visiting bazaars and markets, hearing the
grievances of the people.[48] Perhaps he fancied himself a
Haroun al-Theophilus but he was highly respected by his
subjects as a just and brilliant sovereign.[49] He seemed to
be content with the efficient administration of existing laws
and his government was not distinguished by new legislation
or reforms, except one law which permitted marriage between
Moslems and Romans. Earlier laws forbade marriage between
all but orthodox Christians. Theophilus was known as some-
thing of a Xenophile.[50]

Despite Theophilus' recurring conflicts with the Moslems
and the wars forced upon him by the aggressive policies of
Caliphs Al-Mamun and Mutasim, he had a warm admiration for
Islamic art and culture. Indeed, many of his buildings were
obviously inspired by Arab originals. The splendid palace at
Brigas on the Bithynian coast was modelled after an Abbasid
palace in Baghdad. Within the Great Palace itself, he built
the Triionchos, a two story ediface with three apses patterned
after an Arab model. In the Magnaura Palace were to be found
Theophilus' mechanical wonders, the roaring gilded lions, the
singing birds in golden trees, the great gold organ--all

intended to overawe the Emperor's visitors and all imitating the marvels of Baghdad. Theophilus' admiration for foreign culture was rare, indeed. Only the example of Manuel Comnenus is as striking.[51]

Theophilus fought the Moslems throughout his entire reign. The Caliph Mamun (813-833) was occupied with internal problems until the latter part of his reign. Once these were resolved, he was able to take advantage of the Byzantine preoccupation with the Muslim corsairs in Sicily, who were able to capture Palermo in 831. Despite several vigorous Arab campaigns, the fighting on the eastern frontier was not altogether decisive. The Byzantine positions deteriorated rapidly following the assumption of the caliphate by Mamun's brother, the able Mutasim. In 838, this resourceful leader undertook a great expedition directed at the heart of Asia Minor. Part of Mutasim's army veered northwest and defeated the Byzantine army, commanded by Theophilus himself, at the sanguinary battle of Dazimon on 22 July and occupied Ancyra. Meanwhile, Mutasim and the rest of his army stormed Amorium on 12 August. This event made a profound impression on the Byzantines. Amorium was, after all, the largest city of the Anatolikon theme and the home city of the reigning dynasty. So distressing was this defeat that the Emperor even sought assistance from the Franks and from Venice.[52]

Theophilus was an intellectually convinced and pious iconoclast.[53] It was not in his nature to adopt the passive attitude of his father Michael, but he appears to have followed

this policy for several years (at least until 834). Perhaps

the elevation of his friend and tutor, John the Grammarion,

to the patriarchal throne was in some measure responsible

for his decision to move against the icons.[54]

Once his decision was made, Theophilus moved purposefully

and even resorted to some persecution. The most authentic

instance of this is the punishment of the two Palestinian

brothers, Theodore and Theophanes. These two zealots had

tasted persecution under Leo, the Armenian. After his death,

they returned to Constantinople and labored indefatigably

for this cause of image worship--Theodore by writing books,

Theophanes by composing hymns and psalms. They were not per-

mitted to reside in the city during Michael II's reign and

under Theophilus they were imprisoned, scourged, and exiled.

Theophilus sought to win them over but they remained contu-

macious. Theophilus offered to release them if they would

simply agree to commune with the iconoclasts, but they

rejected his proposal. In exasperation, Theophilus ordered

their faces to be branded with twelve iambic lines, thus:

> In that fair town whose sacred streets were trod
> Once by the pure feet of the Word of God--
> The city all men's hearts desire to see--
> These evil vessels of perversity
> And superstition, working foul deeds there
> Were driven forth to this our city, where
> Persisting in their wicked lawless ways,
> They are condemned and branded on the face
> As scoundrels, hunted to their native place.[55]

The two monks had agitated vehemently against the Emper-

or's policies and were also strangers from Palestine. Theoph-

ilus resented interlopers fomenting discord in his lands.

Disputes with the oriental patriarchs and "synodic letters" in support of images offended both the Emperor and the Patriarch. The fact that the two brothers were outsiders from Palestine greatly magnified their transgressions in the eyes of the Emperor, hence the nature of the verses he ordered to be branded on their faces. One cannot let this episode pass without a word of praise for the fiendish artistry of the torturer who could so deftly brand twelve lines of verse on a human face.[56]

Most iconodules got no worse than banishment though some, like Euthymias of Sardis, died as a result of a severe scourging. Theophilus attempted to cut off the supply of holy images and he forbade their production and persecuted the monks who were the chief creators of them. This is where most monastic persecution occurred. Theophilus was not, in any case, anti-monachist. In assessing the extent of Theophilus' persecutions, it must be concluded that they were not severe, especially in comparison with those of other emperors, and the list of cruel maltreatments short.[57]

Final Triumph of the Iconodules, A.D. 843

Theophilus died of dysentery on 20 January 842.[58] His wife Theodora was to be regent during the minority of her son, Michael III. Theodora was an ardent iconodule (the reasons why iconoclast emperors married iconodule wives has never been explained adequately), yet she waited more than a

year before moving to reinstate image worship. Many theories
can be adduced to account for this. There was the problem of
securing the Amorion throne against intrigue and rebellion.
There was also the fact that Theodora loved her late husband
dearly, believed in his sagacity, and shrank from altering a
successful system. Moreover, if Iconoclasm was once for all
condemned, the soul of her husband would be anathematized, a
possibility which horrified the pious Empress.[59]

What this all suggests is that Iconoclasm was far from
a dead issue at the end of Theophilus' reign. There could
have been another outburst at any time. This was the reason
for Theodora's procrastination.[60] The Patriarch John was an
iconoclast and remained in office for more than a year after
the start of Theodora's regency and he continued to defend
his iconoclastic views.[61] When Theodora moved to reestab-
lish orthodoxy, she did so according to canonical procedure.
Public discussions were held, a local council was convoked,
and the Patriarch John was invited to attend. He refused to
recant or abandon his position, whereupon the council deposed
him and elected in his place the monk Methodius. John was
not banished or exiled but was permitted to live quietly on
his own property near a monastery in Kleidon, a suburb of
Constantinople on the European side of the Bosporus.[62]

Theodora laid down certain conditions before consenting
to the reinstitution of Orthodoxy. She insisted that the
memory of Theophilus would not be condemned. Connubial
affection would seem to be the obvious motivation but other

weighty considerations may have influenced the Empress as profoundly. Theodora may have feared that a public repudiation and anathematization would cause an uproar among the numerous iconoclasts who revered the late Emperor greatly; it was well known that even many iconodules esteemed him highly. Thus, any rash act could only endanger Theodora's position.[63] Theodora's policy was to lessen the danger of a new round of iconoclastic reaction by means of lenient treatment.[64] This would suggest that Iconoclasm was not slowly dying, moribund, or liquidated in 843.

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The Two Phases of Iconoclasm -

A Comparison

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How do the two phases of Iconoclasm compare when they are juxtaposed? We see there are many similarities and any differences which become apparent are those of emphasis and in no way affect basic iconoclastic dogma. As I have tried to demonstrate, the initial phase possessed a sound foundation in early patristic literature and was not just a hastily concocted formulation which sprang from the imagination of Constantine V.

The views of Iconoclasm's first phase, exemplified by the Council of 754, reflect the centralizing efforts of Leo III and Constantine V. They believed that icons were an abomination (borne out by Scripture and patristic polemics) and they viewed the problem as, predominantly, a religious one. But they were pragmatic, as well, and perceived the

destabilizing influence of the icons during a period of extreme peril in the Byzantine realm. Icons also became an alternative source of power, impinging upon the imperial role as both ruler and priest. Therefore, all icons were spurious. The sole exceptions were the bread and wine of the Eucharist (after its consecration by a properly ordained priest), the Christian basilica (after its consecration by a bishop), and, of course, the cross, the centuries old true symbol of Christianity.

Constantine V went further. He adduced the interesting view that the only true image was of the same substance as the original. This certainly precluded icons as an alternative. That left only the elements of the Eucharist as true images because at the time of consecration, these mundane entities were transformed into the actual body and blood of the Savior. It was all eminently logical but, in formulating this doctrine, Constantine V left himself open to the twin charges of Monophysitism and blasphemy--Monophysitism because in denying the propriety and efficacy of images he seemed to be denying the reality of Christ's saving incarnation and death--blasphemy because he seemed to be calling the elements of the Eucharist images and not the real thing. Yet, Constantine's iconoclasm was soundly based in past patristic attacks on icons and he brought to the problem of icons a philosophical subtlety and depth of insight that commands considerable admiration.

The second phase of Iconoclasm, as embodied in the Iconoclastic Council of 815, has been dismissed by many historians

as a mere recapitulation of a more red-blooded period in the
history of Iconoclasm. As I have tried to show, this was
certainly not the case. To be sure, the Council of 815
accepted the views of the Council of 754 and incorporated
them into their final Definition. But the prelates who made
up the Council of 815 did not stop there but went on to place
the question of images in a whole new context. The bishops
were quick to perceive the thorny theological problem inher-
ent in Constantine V's Eucharist-as-the-true image-of-Christ
argument. The Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ, not
an image.

Following the format of the Council of 754, the bishops
of the 815 convocation drew much of their material from
earlier Christian sources. In this case, the bishops used
the pronouncements of such luminaries as St. Basil and
Eusebius and, with a healthy boost from the writings of
Origen, devised a new formulation of images. Images were,
of course, still viewed as spurious and on this point the
iconoclasts of 815 remained adamant, though they de-emphasized
the strident denunciations which characterized the earlier
period. As Origen had affirmed, the worship of Christ belongs
in the heart and is not to be offered in any way, no matter
how indirectly, to dumb dead matter. Basil had stated that
man had an innate dignity instilled in him by God. This
dignity is given to man through the grace of God so that
through that grace and by his own efforts man can become like
Him. The iconoclasts of 815 combined these two views and

created a unique synthesis. Henceforth, Christ and his saints could only be represented by something consubstantial with His personality, that being the truly virtuous person. In other words, the true image of God is the Christian man. It will be seen that the Council of 815 broke new ground, producing a novel, significant interpretation.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Bréhier, La Querelle des Images, p. 31.

[2]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[3]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[4]Martin, A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy, p. 190.

[5]Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and its Definition (Horos)," pp. 37-38.

[6]Ibid., p. 38.

[7]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[8]Ibid., p. 40.

[9]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., p. 41.

[12]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[13]The portion of this verse quoted by Epiphanius actually reads: ". . . he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . " KJV [emphasis added]

[14]Alexander, p. 43.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., p. 44.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ostrogorsky, Studien, pp. 40-45.

[21]Alexander, p. 45.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., p. 50.

[24]Origen, Contra Celsus, tr. Frederick Crombie, The Ante Nicene Fathers, IV, pp. 645-46.

[25]For a more in depth discussion, see George Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius, and the Iconoclastic Controversy," Church History, XIX (1950), pp. 77-96, especially p. 86.

[26]Alexander, p. 51.

[27]Ibid., pp. 51-52.

[28]Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, pp. 354-55.

[29]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, pp. 178-79; also Jenkins, pp. 131-32.

[30]Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, pp. 48-55.

[31]Jenkins, pp. 140-41.

[32]George Finlay, A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time, 7 vols. (New York, 1970), II, pp. 128-29.

[33]Jenkins, pp. 140-41.

[34]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p. 181.

[35]Ibid. Also see Bury, History of Eastern Roman Empire, pp. 111-12, footnote 4.

[36]Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, p. 84, footnote 2.

[37]Ibid., p. 85.

[38]Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, pp. 181-82; see also Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, I, pp. 274-76; also Jenkins, pp. 141-43.

[39]Jenkins, pp. 143-44.

[40]Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, p. 112.

[41]Ibid., p. 113.

[42]Ibid., p. 114.

[43]Ibid., pp. 115-16.

[44]Ostrogorsky, <u>History of the Byzantine State</u>, p. 183.

[45]Jenkins, p. 147.

[46]Ostrogorsky, <u>History of the Byzantine State</u>, p. 183.

[47]Bury, <u>History of the Eastern Roman Empire</u>, p. 121.

[48]Ibid., pp. 122-23.

[49]Ibid., p. 121.

[50]Ibid., p. 124.

[51]Ibid., pp. 129-35; also Vasiliev, <u>History of the Byzantine Empire</u>, I, p. 298; also Bréhier, <u>Le Monde Byzantine</u>, p. 108.

[52]Ostrogorsky, <u>History of the Byzantine State</u>, p. 185.

[53]Jenkins, p. 150.

[54]Bury, <u>History of the Eastern Roman Empire</u>, p. 135.

[55]Ibid., p. 139, footnote 2.

[56]Ibid., pp. 136-39.

[57]Ibid., pp. 139-40.

[58]Ibid., p. 141.

[59]Ibid., p. 145.

[60]Francis Dvornik, "The Patriarch Photius and Iconoclasm," <u>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</u>, VII (1953), p. 71.

[61]Ibid., p. 72.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[64]Ibid., p. 73.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Iconoclasm Was Not an Anomaly

The main thrust of this paper has been the examination
of the background and history of the iconoclast imbroglio in
a Byzantine setting. The history of this movement was
exceedingly complex, but, whatever its precise origins,
Iconoclasm was no anomaly, no lacuna in the continuum of
Christianity in the Byzantine state. Neither was it an
irruption of some half-civilized oriental strain into the
hermetically sealed environment of Orthodox Christianity.
As has been demonstrated, the roots of Iconoclasm reach back
to the earliest days of Christianity and iconoclastic senti-
ments abound not only in the Old Testament but in the Gospels,
in apostolic writings, and in the works of other Christian
leaders from earliest times to the first formal outbreak of
Iconoclasm in the reign of Leo III.

Many historians have postulated an eastern origin for
Iconoclasm, but this is not really the case. The area,
including Armenia and Syria, reputed to be a hotbed of Icono-
clasm, has been shown to be not nearly as heterodox as some
historians have theorized. Furthermore, a study of the
attitude of the Byzantine armies regarding Iconoclasm[1] has

shown that there was nothing remotely resembling unanimity
on this issue in the Asia Minor themes, ostensibly fanatical
adherents to iconoclast dogma. Rather, the allegiance seems
to have been divided between iconoclast and iconodule. It
seems, then, that Iconoclasm, far from being a localized
phenomenon confined largely to one area, was a movement of
wide currency (though within certain geographical limits)
reaching deep into the consciousness of Byzantium.

Iconoclasm as a Pivotal Event in
Eastern Christendom

The rise of Iconoclasm can be seen as a pivotal event
in the history of the Byzantine state. It emerged at a time
of imminent peril for the Empire, when it faced possible
annihilation at the hands of first Arab then Bulgarian invad-
ers. Icons were a by-product of a more easy-going age, a
period of increased civic patriotism and municipal independ-
ence. The numbing onslaught of the Arab phalanx destroyed
the morale of the towns and cities and made icons, with their
particularist connotations, a luxury the embattled Empire
could ill afford. The imperial apologists of Iconoclasm
created a new patriotism around a more purified church purged
of symbols--a church more in keeping with the new nature of
the ship of state--sails trimmed, hatches battened down to
weather the impending storm. The highly centralized nature
of the Empire, admirably suited for a defensive struggle, was
perfectly complemented by a revived Iconoclasm--austere, devoid
of superfluous ornamentation, streamlined.

Reasons for the Iconodule Triumph

Yet, Iconodulism triumphed, though it was not the unequivocal victory often ascribed to it by many historians. Iconoclasm was supported by a series of strong, able emperors and advocated by many other elements in Byzantine society, yet its influence did not endure. Two explanations for this failure present themselves. In the first place, Iconoclasm, because its roots were in the Old Testament and primitive Christianity, involved a break with classical Graeco-Roman tradition. Secondly, Leo III and Constantine V wished to revive the imperial cult; they wished to be emperors (albeit Christian emperors) rather than play second fiddle to a super-natural power working through a gaggle of images. This line of attack failed because it impinged on the belief that this power was, in fact, to be found in a variety of local entities. The iconoclast emperors underestimated, I believe, the hold of the icons on the common people, whose attitudes often reflect traditional culture. In the final analysis, this was probably stronger than the carefully ratiocinated postulations of the iconodules, buttressed by pagan Neoplatonism and Aristotelian philosophy. On a visceral level, what was at stake was the reality of the Incarnation within the historical continuum.[2]

The Nature of Eastern Christianity in the

Wake of the Controversy

Greek paganism preserved the tradition of image worship until it could hand over its defense to the Christian church.

Indeed, the triumph of the iconodules was a triumph of tradition. Images, the hymn of praise, the token of those who have fought and conquered, and of demons routed--these remained. Greek loyalty to a Greek iconography was what was involved here and representational art held the field. A progressive revelation freed the church from the Old Testament prohibition. Unfortunately, tradition so long gripped the soul of the Greek church that after the iconodule triumph, it ceased to believe in a progressive revelation, in a tradition capable of adapting to present needs, to meet fresh crises. Instead, it became a custodian trustee of the faith. It became merely the Church of the Seven Councils and, as such, a case of arrested development.[3]

Overriding Importance of Theology

Whatever can be said about its political or economic origins, Iconoclasm was, first and foremost, a movement fraught with deep religious meaning. Perhaps a key to the beginnings of Iconoclasm can be found in the Ecloga, promulgated by Leo III in 726. In the preamble to this judicial code, the ruler's dependence on the biblical prophetic standards of righteousness are repeatedly enunciated. The preface reflects Leo's sentiments:

> He handed the power of sovereignty to us . . .
> commanded us . . . to lead the faithful flock . . .
> We are occupied with such cares, directing our ever
> vigilant concern to those matters which please God.[4]

The Leo of the Ecloga is an individual serenely confident of divine guidance in his task, needing no ecclesiastical hier-

archy to interpret the divine instructions for him, instructions which could include forced baptism of Jews as well as icon smashing.[5]

It may be that the influence of iconoclastic prelates was and is overrated. Iconodule propaganda to the contrary notwithstanding, there is little or no conclusive evidence for contact between them and Leo prior to 726. Ecclesiastical disputes played their part in Iconoclasm, but the movement grew, to a large extent, out of the imperial will. Theosterictus states:

> The other heresies had their origin from bishops
> and lower clergy, but this one from the rulers
> themselves . . . The other heresies were strengthened
> little by little but this one gained strength at once
> from the imperial power.[6]

Christian opposition to images is well documented before the eighth century. But without the support of the secular arm, conservatives like Eusebius and Epiphanius could do little but inveigh against images and destroy an occasional icon. In the eighth century, opponents of images could count the autocratic rulers among their number. These men did, unlike others, put into execution drastic measures against the icon cult.[7]

The deep religious fervor which was the hallmark of the era must be taken seriously as must the great power possessed by the soldier-emperor. Leo saw himself as a new Moses, appointed to bring about the repristinization of Christian worship, acting out the drama on the stage of empire.

Ramifications of the Iconophile Victory

When economic power becomes more and more concentrated in the hands of those who possess ultimate political authority, there is a great temptation to use it for some selfish purpose. It can lead to a situation where the only art that is tolerated is that "directed" from above to the exclusion of all else. This exclusiveness can become absolute if the direction is concerned with religious art, the more so if a great many people do not share the tastes of those in authority.[8]

The initiative in art lay with religious rather than secular art because ecclesiastical communities could often undertake artistic enterprises on a vaster scale than was possible for individuals. But the price of entrusting art and its traditions to the church was high. To a great degree, only those forms which redounded to the glory of the Christian religion were maintained and promoted. All else forgotten or left to languish.[9] This was one consequence of the iconodule victory.

This can be contrasted somewhat with the iconoclast emperors who, though they were hostile to religious imagery, continued to employ artists, founded churches, built palaces, and had, in general, a positive program of art.[10] Indeed, the belief that the iconoclastic period was artistically barren must be rejected. Many naturalistic works continued to be executed, as well as much decorative art. The severe, restrained religious art of the period, depicted in mosaics,

the nonrepresentational decorations in churches, and the fine
line drawings in book illustrations, give, in the few exist-
ing remains, some idea of the flourishing state of the arts
under Iconoclasm.[11]

Secular art could still portray human figures and pictures
of horse races and victories at the Hippodrome recalled the
triumphant valor of the Emperor. Images of this type multi-
plied at the time of the iconoclast emperors and their enemies
accused them of arrogating to themselves the honor and the
glory which rightfully belonged to Christ. The truth is that
this art was intimately connected with the cycle of secular
art which was de rigueur in late antiquity and the early
middle ages.[12]

But in the final accounting, the influence of Iconoclasm
on Byzantine art was rather decisive. In the doctrine laid
down by the Council of 843, no distinction was drawn between
sculptured and painted representations. Before Iconoclasm,
religious art utilized both forms but after 843, sculptured
works were discarded and icons came to mean pictures only.
This silent surrender to Iconoclasm was never admitted by the
Orthodox Church. The iconoclasts had induced their adversaries
to abandon graven images.[13]

In Byzantium, art became inseparable from theology.
Incarnation art could not remain neutral but had to express
faith. Through style, composition, and the elaborate fres-
coes covering the walls of Byzantine churches, icons became
an expression and source of divine knowledge.

Concluding Statement

The aim of this thesis has been to shed light on the
true nature of Iconoclasm. An attempt has been made to demon-
strate that Iconoclasm was, first and foremost, a religious
phenomenon, though ancillary factors contributed to its
emergence. Iconoclasm was a movement with origins in the
early Christian church. Indeed, it was a <u>Christian</u> problem,
one which touched virtually the whole Christian church, east
and west, at one time or another during its history. It was
a <u>Christian dilemma</u> which was only incidentally Byzantine.
The struggle which we know as the Byzantine Iconoclastic
Controversy was, in truth, the culmination, not the genesis,
of the movement. Iconoclasm had been germinating in the
soil of Christendom for centuries and reached full flower
only when the Isaurian emperors brought the full weight of
imperial authority to bear on its behalf. Yet in reality,
the Isaurians were only instruments in the implementation of
a refined Iconoclasm and not the innovators of the movement.

In studying the true nature of Iconoclasm, one also can
discern the true nature of Christianity during this period.
Religious disputes were not simply intellectual exercises
indulged in to pass the time of day. They could be and often
were searing controversies which brought suffering, and some-
times martyrdom, to many. They were factors in the formula-
tion of foreign and domestic policy and contributed to the
toppling of dynasties and the elevation of emperors.

The depth of religious fervor so characteristic of that

time helps to explain the problems many historians have encountered in attempting to present an accurate picture of the Iconoclastic Controversy. Whether the difficulty is their own religious bias or cultural materialistic/relativistic blindness, they seem incapable of perceiving Iconoclasm as a religious struggle. They interpret it as a social, economic, or political phenomenon, relegating religion to a place of secondary importance at best, imposed on a wholly unwilling populace by interlopers from the East, legatees of an oriental fanaticism.

Admittedly, we are all products of our respective times and our views are colored, often unconsciously, by the prevailing philosophies of contemporary society. But the greatest insights are often achieved when one goes beyond cultural tendentiousness, sets aside societal strictures, thus attaining a fresh perspective on an old question. Granted, this is not an easy thing to do, but the risk is well worth taking. The more recent studies of Iconoclasm have attempted to do this and the results have been most gratifying. One can only hope that such welcome progress will continue.

FOOTNOTES

[1] For a fuller discussion of this topic, see: W. Kaegi, "The Byzantine Armies and Iconoclasm," Byzantinoslavica, XXVII (1966), pp. 48-70.

[2] Barnard, pp. 103 and 145.

[3] Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church, Byzantine Studies, pp. 141-42.

[4] Gero, "Notes on Byzantine Iconoclasm," Byzantion, XLIV (1974), pp. 40-41.

[5] Ibid., p. 41.

[6] Quoted in Gero, p. 42.

[7] Ibid.

[8] André Grabar, "Byzantine Architecture and Art," Cambridge Medieval History, part 2, ed. J. M. Hussey (Cambridge, England, 1967), p. 306.

[9] Ibid., p. 307.

[10] Ibid., p. 326.

[11] D. Talbot Rice, Byzantine Art (London, 1968), pp. 183-84 and pp. 338-39.

[12] Grabar, "Byzantine Architecture and Art." p. 326.

[13] Bury, History of the Eastern Roman Empire, p. 153.

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APPENDIX

The _Libri Carolini_, or the Caroline Books, occupy a
rather significant niche in the literature dealing with the
era of Iconoclasm. These works, published by the authority
and in the name of Charlemagne and with the consent of his
bishops in 790,[1] indicate that Iconoclasm was not a parochial
movement confined solely to Eastern Christianity. The author
of the work, most likely Alcuin,[2] introduces the work by
stating: "We have undertaken this work with the priests who
are prelates of the Catholic flock in the kingdom which has
been granted to us by God."[3] The fact that the prelates
herein mentioned are called priests and not bishops is of
no great importance for if the work was commissioned by
Charlemagne, given his tremendous prestige within the church,
it is certain that his bishops would acquiesce in any decision
he might make.

The foundation of the Caroline Books is the authority
of the Roman See. This is clearly proven by a portion of
Chapter VI, Book I, which reads, in part: "That the Holy
Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church is placed above all other
churches, and is to be consulted at every turn when any con-
troversy arises with regard to the faith."[4] In the same vein
the author continues:

> Before entering upon a discussion of the witnesses
> which the Easterns have absurdly brought forward

> in their Synod, we think well to set forth how
> greatly the holy Roman Church has been exalted by
> the Lord above the other Churches, and how she is
> to be consulted by the faithful . . . For as the
> Apostolic sees in general are to be preferred to all
> other dioceses of the world, much more is that see
> to be preferred which is placed over all the other
> Apostolic sees . . .
>
> This church, therefore, fortified with the
> spiritual arms of the holy faith, and satiated
> with the health-giving fountains which flow from
> the well of light and from the source of divine
> goodness, resists the horrible and atrocious mon-
> sters of heresies and ministers the honey-sweet cups
> of teaching to the Catholic Churches of the whole
> world . . . ; and are careful to follow the see of
> the blessed Peter in all things, as they desire
> thither to arrive where he sits as keeper of the
> keys . . .[5]

Such is the doctrinal foundation of the Caroline Books, the

absolute authority of the Roman See in matters pertaining to

the faith of the Church.

In examining the Caroline Books, we discover the reasons

for the rejection of Nicaea II by the Frankish bishops. In

Book II, Chapter XXVII, the Council of 787 is castigated for

saying,

> just as the Lord's body and blood pass over from
> the fruits of the earth to a notable mystery, so
> also the images, made by the skill of the artifi-
> cers, pass over to the veneration of those persons
> whose images they bear.[6]

In Book III, Chapter V, Theodore of Jerusalem is execrated

for stating "that the Holy Spirit was the companion of the

Father and of the Son."[7] This, however, was not an original

statement of Theodore's but a copy of a similar declaration

by Sophronius of Jerusalem.[7]

In Chapter XVII of the same book, Constantine, a bishop

from Cyprus, is taken to task in these words:

> How rashly and (so to speak) like a fool, Constan-
> tine, bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, spoke when
> he said, with the approval of the rest of the
> bishops, that he would receive and honorably embrace
> the images; and babbled that the service of adoration
> which is due to the consubstantial and life-giving
> Trinity should be given images, we need not here dis-
> cuss, since to all who either read or hear this it
> will be clear that he was swamped in no small error,
> to wit, to confess that he exhibited to creatures the
> service due to the Creator alone, and through his
> desire to favor the pictures overturned all the Holy
> Scriptures. For what sane man ever either said or
> thought of saying such an absurdity, as that differ-
> ent pictures should be held in the same honor as the
> holy, victorious Trinity, the Creator of all things,
> etc.[8]

In Book IV, the third chapter states that while lights
and incense were used in the Frankish churches, neither one
was placed before images. This would seem to fix the custom
of the Franks at that time.[9]

Finally, in the twenty-eighth chapter of Book IV, the
ecumenical character of Nicaea II is rejected on the ground
that it did not preserve the faith of the church Fathers and
was not ecumenical in its constitution. The chapter reads,
in part:

> Among all the inanities said and done by this synod,
> this would not seem by any means to be the least,
> that they styled it ecumenical, for it neither pre-
> served the purity of the ecumenical faith, nor did
> it obtain authority through the ecumenical power of
> the Churches . . . If this synod had kept clear of
> novelties and had rested content with the teachings
> of the ancient Fathers, it might have been styled
> ecumenical. Because it was not contented with the
> teachings of the ancient Fathers, it cannot be styled
> ecumenical . . . [10]

Several historians have essayed to impute culpable negli-
gence, ignorance, intellectual dishonesty, or a combination of
the three to the authors of the _Libri Carolini_. This seems to

be an attempt to evade the iconoclastic implications of the work.

To sum up briefly, the Frankish bishops and Charlemagne rejected the Second Nicaean Council of 787. The Franks were not pure iconoclasts; they had images and wanted to keep them. However, they felt that the Fathers of Nicaea II had gone too far in encouraging what the Frankish bishops termed idolatry. This feeling persisted at the Synod of Frankfurt in 794, which also repudiated Nicaea II. The dispute continued after Charlemagne's death and under Louis the Pious, the Synod of Paris, convoked in 825, adhered to the decisions of the Synod of Frankfurt. At this synod, the bishops tried to find a middle ground, but leaned heavily on Iconoclasm when they declared that images were to be tolerated only as ornaments.[11]

APPENDIX FOOTNOTES

[1]William Palmer, _Treatise on the Church_ (Oxford, 1887), II, p. 205.

[2]Henry Percival, tr., "Extracts of the Caroline Books," in _The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers_, XIV, p. 578.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 580.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 581.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 582.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II," p. 36.

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