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# Theodore the Stoudite: The Most "Original" Iconophile?

Abstract: Theodore the Stoudite's theory of the icon has only recently attracted the attention it deserves, so perhaps it is now that we can make a proper assessment of it. The foundations of his iconology are still unclear, however, as he does not reference the acts of the Second Council of Nicaea of 787, which overturned the first period of iconoclasm in the eighth century. Also, the fact that he is not familiar with the iconophile writings of John of Damascus, probably means that his refutations of the iconoclasts are largely a product of his own thoughts and devising. Unlike his contemporary iconophile Nikephoros, who cites and refutes iconoclast sources firsthand, he uses the rhetorical question-and-answer genre to deliver his message. It is on this basis that we pose the question of Theodore's original contribution to the iconophile cause, while examining some chosen themes he discusses during the course of his polemic.

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

These introductory remarks are written in response to some statements published in 2002. I make them as a means of setting the scene for assessing Theodore's contribution to Byzantine image theory. One of the statements in question suggests that Theodore's works in defence of icon veneration lacks critical analysis, and that he has taken his arguments from "a stockpile of Aristotelian arguments". Furthermore, the author suggests that his arguments do not demonstrate "original creative thinking"[1]. My impression from this is that the author has not made a study of Theodore's writings on icon veneration; if he had, I think he would have thought twice about making such remarks. In fairness, it should be said that the focus of his book is not on Theodore's image theory[2], but on the practical aspects of his monastic teaching and reform. Nevertheless, such statements cannot go unchallenged.

The author is of the opinion Theodore was of a practical temperament and a man of action rather than a speculative theologian[3], suggesting that the two are incompatible and mutually exclusive. Yet it is not difficult to think of other fathers who were speculative theologians as well as men of action; Cyril of Alexandria and Maximos the Confessor spring to mind. The author thinks Theodore's strength lay in the practical application of Christian theology, but one could say that the theology of the icon is practical, in that it justifies the physical act of venerating an icon, so in that sense it may be said have a practical outcome. If nothing else, its purpose is to vindicate a devotional practice, so perhaps it ought to be categorised as liturgical theology. Yet in his polemic against the iconoclasts, Theodore does not discuss the liturgical role of the icon, although we know that from the seventh century icons were being hung on the sanctuary barrier (τέμπλον)[4].

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[1] R. Cholij, Theodore the Stoudite: The Ordering of Holiness. Oxford 2002, 25.

[2] See T. T. Tollefsen, St Theodore the Studite's Defence of Icons: Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium. Oxford 2018; O. Delouis, Expérience de l'icône et preuve par l'image chez Théodore Stoudite, in: Visibilité et présence de l'image dans l'espace ecclésial. Byzance et Moyen Age occidental, ed. S. Brodbeck – A.-O. Poilpre (*Byzantina Sorbonensia* 30). Paris, 2018, 151–170; D. Krausmüller, Adoring Christ's image: The icon theology of Leo of Chalcedon and Theodore of Studios. *GRBS* 58 (2018) 423–444.

[3] Cholij, Theodore the Stoudite, 24. For more on Theodore's life and work, see T. Pratsch, Theodoros Studites (759–826) – zwischen Dogma und Pragma (*Berliner Byzantinische Studien* 4). Frankfurt 1998.

[4] V. Crisafulli – J. Nesbitt, The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium. New York 1997, 181.

The same author quotes a remark of Theodore's that he needed recourse to authority when faced with questions of a speculative nature, saying; "I have no understanding of difficult conceptual matters"[5]. But this should not be taken at face value, when it is clearly an expression of monastic humility and intrinsic to the Greek patristic mindset[6]. We may recall John of Damascus' statement in the preface to his *Fount of Knowledge*; "I shall say nothing of my own, but only what has been said by others"[7]. This was the patristic *modus operandi*, endorsed by Canon 19 of the Quinisext Council of 692[8], whereas "original creative thinking" is a modern concept largely out of place in a ninth-century context.

The author's reference to "a stockpile of Aristotelian arguments" would appear to be taken from Paul Alexander's 1958 study of the patriarch Nikephoros[9]. Alexander discusses two examples he thinks demonstrate the use of Aristotelian terminology prior to the outbreak of second iconoclasm in 815. The first is a letter (*Epistle* 528) of Theodore's to John the Grammarian, the future iconoclast patriarch of Constantinople, in which he uses this terminology to explain an aspect of iconophile theory. He incorporates into this letter an earlier one (*Epistle* 428) to his disciple Athanasios, the contents of which seem to have fallen into the hands of John the Grammarian because Theodore responds to his criticism of it. In his original letter to Athanasios Theodore explains why Christ's image receives a relative worship. He discusses the relation of the prototype to the image by paraphrasing Aristotle's opening remarks in the *Categories*:

> "Furthermore, we are taught according to the definition of philosophy that things are said to be named "homonymously" if, though they have a common name, the definition of being (λόγος τῆς οὐίας) corresponding to the name differs for each, as in Christ himself and his portrait …"[10]

Alexander then goes on to say why this letter is chronologically important because it speaks of Theodore's uncle, Plato, as living. If Plato died on 4 April 814 then the letter must have been written before that date and this would be evidence for the scholastic period of iconophile theory having begun before that time[11]. Unfortunately, the reference to Plato in this letter is not to Theodore's uncle but to a Stoudite monk, a disciple of Theodore's[12]. Consequently it cannot be cited as evidence for the use of Aristotelian terminology before 815.

Alexander's second example suggests that an earlier *terminus ante quem* may be inferred from the anonymous *Commentary on John the Evangelist* written before 812. However, this dating may no longer be tenable as the manuscript has recently been given a revised date in the second half of the ninth century. In addition, it has been proposed that the author of the *Commentary* was Metrophanes, bishop of Smyrna, an opponent of the patriarch Photios, although this attribution is

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[5] Cholij, Theodore the Stoudite, 25, citing Epistula 219 (ed. G. Fatouros, Theodori Studitae Epistulae, 2 vols [*CFHB, Series Berolinensis* 31]. Berlin 1990, 1992, II, 341).

[6] Cholij, Theodore the Stoudite, 25, quotes from I. Hausherr, Saint Théodore Studite: L'homme et l'ascète d'après ses catéchèses (*Orientalia Christiana* 6). Rome 1926, 16, understanding him to mean that Theodore employed a "lazy" method of doing theology which took no account of context, only conclusions and their expression.

[7] John of Damascus, Dialectica, Recensio fusior 2 (ed. B. Kotter, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, I: Institutio elementaris. Capita philosophica [Dialectica] [*Patristische Texte und Studien* 7]. Berlin 1969, 55). See further A. Alexakis, The Modesty Topos and John of Damascus as a Not-so-modest Author. *BZ* 97 (2004) 521–530.

[8] See G. Nedungatt – M. Featherstone, The Council in Trullo Revisited (*Kanonika* 6). Rome 1995, 94–96.

[9] P. Alexander, The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire. Oxford 1958, 190–213.

[10] Epistula 528 (II, 790 Fatouros); Alexander, Patriarch Nicephorus 195.

[11] Alexander, Patriarch Nicephorus 196.

[12] Epistula 528 (II, 788 Fatouros).

not certain[13]. If this is so, then Theodore's "scholastic" contribution may be more worthy of comment, from the point of view of "original creative thinking" than was thought, making him less an imitator and more an initiator. The new dating puts a different complexion on the question regarding when this terminology was first adopted by iconophile authors. In the absence of other evidence, I am inclined to think it was on the curriculum of higher learning in the second half of the eighth century, when the iconophiles of second iconoclasm received their education, and that it became a focus of attention around the time of Nicaea II. In support of this I would cite the epitomes of Aristotelian logic terminology coming through from the sixth and seventh centuries, based mainly on Ammonius of Alexandria and his school[14].

Incidentally, I think Alexander's use of the term "scholastic trend" as well as "scholastic theory of images" in relation to the iconophile use of Aristotelian terminology needs refining[15]. The term "scholastic" has been used primarily in labelling John of Damascus, to whom it has been applied indiscriminately, mainly because of his influence on medieval Latin schoolmen, but it is neither a term appropriate to him nor one Theodore would recognise. An accommodation with Greek philosophical terminology is apparent in the writings of the Cappadocian fathers who bequeathed a long-lasting legacy to the Byzantine intellectual tradition[16]. This was later supplemented to some extent by the work of the Neoplatonic commentators of the Alexandrian school. John of Damascus amply demonstrates this heritage in his *Dialectica*, and although he does not apply his knowledge of Aristotle's *Categories* to the image question, he might easily have done so[17]. The fact that the iconophiles of second iconoclasm, as well as the iconoclast patriarch John the Grammarian[18], chose to make use of this terminology favours the point that it was integral to their thinking and not something extraneous or added on. But let us conclude these opening remarks and turn to Theodore and his iconophile contribution.

## SOME ASPECTS OF THEODORE'S LIFE AND WORK

Theodore was undoubtedly a hardliner when it came to applying canon law to imperial behaviour. This was the case in relation to the stand he took against the second marriage of Constantine VI, as

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[13]  See P. Van Deun, La chasse aux trésors: la découverte de plusieurs oeuvres inconnues de Métrophane de Smyrne (IXe–Xe siècle). *Byz* 78 (2008) 346–367.

[14]  See M. Roueché: Byzantine Philosophical Texts of the Seventh Century. *JÖB* 23 (1974) 61–76; Idem, A Middle Byzantine Handbook of Logic Terminology. *JÖB* 29 (1980) 71–98; Idem, The Definitions of Philosophy and a new fragment of Stephanus the Philosopher. *JÖB* 40 (1990) 107–12. See also K. Parry, Aristotle and the Icon: The use of the Categories by Iconophile writers, in: Aristotle's Categories in the Byzantine, Arabic and Latin Traditions, ed. S. Ebbesen – J. Marenbon – P. Thom. Copenhagen 2013, 34–56; and Idem, Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries. Leiden 1996, 52–63.

[15]  Alexander, Patriarch Nicephorus, 190, 194.

[16]  See, for example, J. Pelikan, Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism. New Haven – London 1993; M. Delcogliano, Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy. Leiden 2010; S. Elm, Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome. Berkeley 2012. For a contrasting position, see A. Kaldellis, Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition. Cambridge 2007.

[17]  John discusses Aristotelian terminology in his *Dialectica*, which was most likely written after his *Orations* in defence of icons, but this need not mean he was unfamiliar with it at the time. In the early ninth century, the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurrah is said to have translated Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* into Arabic, but he does not use Aristotelian terms in his apology for icons, see S. H. Griffith, Theodore Abū Qurrah: A Treatise on the Veneration of the Holy Icons. Leuven 1997, 15–16. See also J. Signes Codoñer, Melkites and Icon Worship during the Iconoclastic Period. *DOP* 67 (2013) 135–187.

[18]  There are fragments discussed by J. Gouillard, Fragments inédits d'un antirrhétique de Jean le Grammairien. *REB* 24 (1966) 171–181, reprinted in his La vie religieuse à Byzance. London 1981, VIII. According to Photios John had been not only an iconophile but an iconographer before becoming an iconoclast, see *Homily* XV in C. Mango, The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople. Harvard 1958, 246.

well as against the reintroduction of iconoclasm by Leo V[19], but he was not the only iconophile to engage in *Kaiserkritik*. John of Damascus had done the same in the eighth century, although he was on safer ground than Theodore, being geographically remote from the sphere of imperial control emanating from Constantinople. He had referred ironically to Leo III's policy of iconoclasm as "the gospel according to Leo", as well as listing those emperors who had previously imposed heresy on the Byzantine Church[20]. For Theodore, on the other hand, the price for opposing imperial authority was imprisonment, corporal punishment and exile from the Queen of Cities.

We do not know exactly when Theodore wrote his most substantial polemical work against the iconoclasts, the *Three Antirrhetici*, but it is assumed it was in the six years of exile from 815 to 821. We learn from his letters (*Epistles* 132, 152) that he complained of not having access to books and writing materials on several occasions during his exile[21]. He tells us that his *Third Antirrheticus* was written as a follow up to the previous two, and it is clearly of a different order from the others, demonstrating his facility with syllogistic reasoning. Unlike his contemporary patriarch Nikephoros in his *Three Antirrhetici*, Theodore does not cite directly from the theological questions (πεύσεις) of Constantine V. His iconoclastic protagonist is a rhetorical mouthpiece who presents arguments for Theodore to knock down. He structures his arguments using the question-and-answer genre (ἐρωταποκρίσεις) and he is known to have written a lost work entitled *Questions and Answers*.

Commentators take for granted the influence of John of Damascus on the iconophiles of second iconoclasm, even though we are in the dark regarding the early reception of John's works in Constantinople[22]. In some manuscripts of his *Book of Heresies* John refers to the iconoclasts as lion-hearted (λεοντόθυμος), deriving the epithet from their heresiarch emperor Leo III. I say in some manuscripts, because we find the patriarch Nikephoros citing *Heresy* 102 on the Iconoclasts[23]. The editor of John's works, Bonifatius Kotter, excludes *Heresy* 102 in his edition of the *Book of Heresies*, stopping at Heresy 100 on the Ishmaelites. Nikephoros' citation of *Heresy* 102 is in fact a later supplement to the *Book of Heresies,* which may have been added by John of Jerusalem and taken with him to Constantinople around 787[24]. This is speculation of course, but it may indicate one channel by which some of John's writings reached the capital. Another might be through the arrival in Constantinople of the Palestinian monks, Michael the Synkellos and the Graptoi brothers, Theodoros and Theophanes, in the early ninth century[25]. It would seem strange if John did not include the iconoclasts in his *Book of*

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[19]  See further P. Karlin-Hayter, A Byzantine Political Monk: St. Theodore Studite. *JÖB* 44 (1994) 217–232; P. Hatlie, The Politics of Salvation: Theodore of Stoudios on Martyrdom (Martyrion) and Speaking out (Parrhesia). *DOP* 50 (1996) 263–287.

[20]  John of Damascus, Oratio II, 16 (ed. B. Kotter, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, III: Contra imaginum calumiatores orationes tres [*Patristische Texte und Studien* 17]. Berlin 1975, 113–114).

[21]  Epistulae 132, 152 (I, 132, 23–26; I, 152, 48–51 Fatouros). On books and scribes at the Stoudios monastery, see K. Parry, Theodore the Stoudite and the Stoudios Scriptorium in Ninth-Century Byzantium, in: Observing the Scribe at Work: Scribal Practice in the Ancient World, ed. M. Choat et al. (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*). Leuven (forthcoming).

[22]  Thomas Cattoi, the most recent translator of Theodore's anti-iconoclast writings, has in fact seen that this influence is far from clear. See T. Cattoi, Theodore the Studite: Writings on Iconoclasm (*Ancient Christian Writers* 69). New York 2015, 5–6. Alexander Alexakis has suggested that John's second oration in defence of icons may have been known before 770, see A. Alexakis, Byzantine Florilegia, in: The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics, ed. K. Parry. Oxford 2015, 15–50.

[23]  Nikephoros, Third Antirrheticus 3, 82 (*PG* 100, 528C–533A). Perhaps we should note that the term "accusers of Christians" (Χριστιανοκατηγόρων) used for the iconoclasts in *Heresy* 102 is not found in John's *Orations*. It is used however by the bishops at Nicaea II and by Theodore in his *Testament*. For the latter see O. Delouis, Le Testament de Théodore Stoudite: édition critique et traduction. *REB* 67 (2009) 95.

[24]  This is suggested by S. Gero, Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III, with particular attention to the oriental sources (*CSCO* 346, *Subsidia* 41). Leuven 1973, 67–69.

[25]  For these iconophiles see M. Cunningham, The Life of Michael the Synkellos (*Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations* 1). Belfast 1991, and C. Sode, Jerusalem – Konstantinopel – Rom: Die Viten des Michael Synkellos und der Brüder Theodoros und Theophanes Graptoi. Stuttgart 2001. See also Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit Online (https://www.degruyter.com/view/db/pmbz): Michael the Synkellos (#5059), Theodoros Graptos (#7526), and Theophanes Graptos (#8093).

*Heresies*, given that he had written his refutation of them prior to compiling this work. Nikephoros' citation of *Heresy* 102 would appear to be evidence for at least some parts of the *Book of Heresies* being known in Constantinople in the early ninth century. Unfortunately, we still lack a study of John's *Nachleben* in Byzantium[26].

As far as Theodore's sources are concerned, it is not surprising that Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus top his list of patristic authorities[27]. A study of the patristic citations included in his *Three Antirrhetici*, shows that some passages were those cited by the Seventh Council of 787, but the impact of the *Acta* of Nicaea II on the iconophiles of second iconoclasm has still to be properly assessed[28]. It is known that there were a number of iconophile florilegia going the rounds in the early ninth century, with the patriarch Nikephoros being an important witness to a major collection. On the whole Theodore uses a more restricted palette of citations than John of Damascus and Nikephoros. In his letter (*Epistle* 499) to Niketas of Medikion (d. 824), Theodore discusses the meaning of a passage from the sixth-century bishop, Hypatios of Ephesus, that Niketas was having trouble understanding[29]. Niketas was a lapsed iconophile who was persuaded to return to the fold by Theodore and who is known to have compiled an iconophile florilegium for his monks[30].

Theodore's uncle Plato was present at Nicaea II, but there is no mention in the *Vitae* by Michael the Monk that Theodore took the opportunity to accompany him, and there is no reference by Theodore himself to being there[31]. Theodore was 28 at the time of the council in 787 and had been living the spiritual life for six years with Plato in Bithynia. At Nicaea his uncle would have heard the *Horos* of the Iconoclast Council of 754 being read out in the sixth session and refuted passage by passage. He would also have heard the bishops lift the anathemas against John of Damascus, imposed by the iconoclasts at their council of 754[32]. In his *Testament* prepared shortly before his death in 826, Theodore confesses his acceptance of the six ecumenical councils as well as the seventh[33], but we know he expressed initial misgivings over the status of Nicaea II[34]. However, with the outbreak of second iconoclasm in 815 he began to use the term holy (ἁγία) when referring to it[35], as well as speaking of it as ecumenical[36]. It was not until the time of Photios, in his encyclical letter to the

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[26] But see V. ADRAHTAS, John of Damascus, in: The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics, ed. Parry, 264–277.

[27] For a list of patristic sources cited by Theodore in his three Antirrhetici see PARRY, Depicting the Word 154. On further iconophile testimonia, see A. ALEXAKIS, Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and Its Archetype (*DOS* 34). Washington, D.C. 1996.

[28] See A. ALEXAKIS, Some remarks on Dogmatic Florilegia based mainly on the Florilegia of the early Ninth Century, in: Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium: Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009, ed. P. van Deun – C. Macé. Leuven 2011, 45–55. For Nicaea II, see now R. PRICE, The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), 2 vols (*Translated Texts for Historians* 68). Liverpool 2018. On Nicaea II and the councils of the period, see H.-G. THÜMMEL, Die Konzilien zur Bilderfrage im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert. Das 7. Ökumenische Konzil in Nikaia 787. Paderborn 2005.

[29] Epistula 499 (II, 737 FATOUROS). For a discussion on the dating of the text attributed to Hypatios, see P. SPECK, On the Fragment of Hypatios of Ephesos on Images, with an Appendix on the Dialogue with a Jew of Leontios of Neapolis, in: P. SPECK, Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources. Aldershot 2003, VIII, first published in German in 1984.

[30] A. ALEXAKIS, A Florilegium in the Life of Nicetas of Medicion and a Letter of Theodore of Studios. *DOP* 48 (1994) 179–197. For a recent archaeological survey of the Medikion site, see M.-F. AUZÉPY – O. DELOUIS – J.-P. GRÉLOIS – M. KAPLAN, À propos des monastères de Médikon et de Sakkoudiôn. *REB* 63 (2005) 183–194.

[31] On the Lives of Theodore, see D. KRAUSMÜLLER, The Vitae B, C and A of Theodore the Stoudite. Their Interrelation, Dates, Authors and Significance for the History of the Stoudios Monastery in the Tenth Century. *AnBoll* 131 (2013) 280–298. A translation of Vita B by Michael the Monk and other texts relating to Theodore by Robert Jordan and Rosemary Morris is forthcoming in the *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* series.

[32] From the perspective of the bishops at Nicaea II these anathemas were hardly authoritative in the first place, irrespective of the claims made by the Council of 754 to be ecumenical. See PRICE, The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea II, 540–542.

[33] DELOUIS, Le Testament 95. See also IDEM, Le Testament de Théodore Stoudite est-il de Théodore? *REB* 66 (2008) 173–190, esp. 175.

[34] Epistula 38 (I, 110 FATOUROS).

[35] Epistula 71 (II, 189 FATOUROS).

[36] Epistula 475 (II, 684 FATOUROS).

Eastern patriarchs of 866, that the Seventh Council was officially promoted as ecumenical by the Byzantine Church[37].

## SOME THEMES ADDRESSED BY THEODORE

### I: The development of doctrine[38]

An important issue raised by the iconoclasts was the authority of scripture and written tradition as a hallmark of orthodox practice and belief. They rightly asked where was it written that Christians should venerate the image of Christ, and went on to argue that if there was no such instruction, then there was no authority on which to base the cult of images. The iconophiles responded with various arguments, one of which was that icon veneration belonged to the unwritten tradition of the church, and that this was as much a source of authority as the written. Another was to limit the Mosaic prohibition against graven images to the time of the old dispensation, and to contextualize it within the Old Testament commandments imposed upon the Israelites[39]. This was contrasted with the new dispensation presented in the Gospels that allowed a different reading of the prohibition. In other words, the iconophiles were selective in their interpretation of the commandments. Presumably other commandments, such as not committing murder or adultery, remained non-negotiable.

On the question of what was explicitly stated and what was implied by scripture, Theodore was able to write:

> "The scriptures do not say anything about the Son being of the same substance as the Father, or that the Holy Spirit is God, or that Christ's mother is Theotokos, but all these doctrines known from the later fathers (πρὸς τῶν Πατέρων ἕστερον) are in fact based on passages from scripture. Even if scripture does not say it in these exact words the necessities of the moment require it to be spelled out that Christ is the prototype of his image."[40]

This finds an echo in earlier authors such as Anastasios of Sinai in the seventh century who states that technical expressions, such as nature and hypostasis, should be understood according to what the prophets and Gospels say[41]. This is further endorsed by John of Damascus in his *Orations* against the iconoclasts:

> "Where can you find in the Old Testament or in the Gospels explicit use of such terms as 'Trinity' or "consubstantial" or "one nature of the Godhead" or "three persons", or anything about Christ as "one person with two natures?" But nevertheless, the meanings of all these things are found, expressed in other phrases which the scriptures do contain, and the holy fathers have interpreted for us."[42]

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[37] Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition, ed. J. Pelikan – V. Hotchkiss. New Haven – London 2003, I, 307.

[38] For discussion of this concept in Eastern Orthodox theology, see D. J. Lattier, The Orthodox Rejection of Doctrinal Development. *Pro Ecclesia* 20, 4 (2011) 389–410.

[39] Parry, Depicting the Word 125–132.

[40] Antirrheticus II, 7 (*PG* 99, 356CD). Theodore uses the term πατροπαραδότως, meaning handed down from the forefathers in the faith, on several occasions, for example, in his *Testament*, see Delouis, Le Testament 97.

[41] Anastasius of Sinai, Hodegos VI, 2 (ed. K.-H. Uthemann, Anastasii Sinaitae Viae dux [*CCSG* 8]. Turnhout – Leuven 1981, 102–103, 40–69).

[42] Oration 3, 11 (III, 122 Kotter).

Like Theodore, John used the idea of the development of doctrine in the context of convincing the iconoclasts that not everything Christians believed and practised was based on written authority. The notion that unwritten tradition was an acceptable means of verifying customs and practices had been promoted by Basil the Great and it was Basil who was cited as an authority by iconophiles on this issue[43].

It is to the exegesis of the fathers that we must turn to find the explanation of doctrines that developed over time. What scripture implied was made explicit by the fathers when the occasion demanded it. This was a well-established procedure in patristic literature and was viewed in relation to other sources of authority, such as church councils with their canons and decrees. The application of non-scriptural terms did not mean innovation in doctrine, especially when the works of the fathers themselves became sources of authority. However, investing in patristic authority had political implications. This can be seen in the way that iconoclasts and iconophiles used patristic texts in their war of words. Furthermore, Theodore was conscious that changes in imperial policy could affect his own authority. In the rules for the *hegoumenos* of the Stoudios contained in his *Testament*, Theodore emphasises the need to maintain the monastery's independence from imperial interference, to the extent that he was expected to lay down his life if required to do so[44]. Such an expectation is understandable given the volatile nature of church-state relations during Theodore's lifetime.

The idea of the development of doctrine was outlined by Gregory of Nazianzus in his discussion on the divinity of the Holy Spirit, where he suggests that doctrine is progressive because divine matters are revealed and understood in stages[45]. It implied that doctrine was opened-ended and had its own dynamic not discernible to the human mind. This was further elaborated by his fellow Cappadocian, Gregory of Nyssa, with his idea of spiritual progress being incremental and perpetual (ἐπέκτασις). This suggested that growth towards perfection occurred gradually, and that this could be understood at a doctrinal level as well as at a personal level. However, in the aftermath of iconoclasm the idea of doctrinal completion became embedded in the so-called Triumph of Orthodoxy of 843[46], along with the subsequent notion that iconoclasm represented the last of the Christological controversies and the end of heterodoxy.

Theodore was aware that the Gospels were written over a span of time and were not contemporary with Christ's ministry. From this he was able to prioritise the image over the word because the apostles had been eyewitnesses to Christ before his words were written down[47]. Here he was following the Greek notion that sight was the first of the senses. This is found in Aristotle's opening remarks in the *Metaphysics* where he says that we rate sight over the other senses because it gives us immediate knowledge by distinguishing between things[48]. Theodore used this idea to emphasise that Christianity was about a person who was seen and touched, not just about someone who could be read about in a book. Words by themselves were not sufficient to comprehend the reality of the incarnation; it was necessary to see Christ in his icon to verify his embodiment in the material world. This had nothing to do with images being the books of the illiterate, but with refuting the iconoclast focus on

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[43] R. P. C. Hanson, Basil's Doctrine of Tradition. *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968) 249–252.

[44] Delouis, Le Testament 107.

[45] Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 31, 26–27 (tr. L. Wickham, St Gregory Nazianzus: On God and Christ. The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius. New York 2002, 137–138).

[46] See J. Gouillard, Le Synodikon de L'Orthodoxie: Édition et Commentaire. *TM* 2 (1967) 1–136.

[47] Antirrheticus III, 1, 2 (*PG* 99, 392A).

[48] Metaphysics A I (980a). The patriarch Tarasios quotes "a certain wise man" to this effect, see S. Efthymiadis, The Life of the Patriarch Tarasios by Ignatios the Deacon (BHG 1698) (*Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs* 4). Aldershot 1998, 194.

finding a text for everything Christians said and did[49]. It is possible to extrapolate from Theodore's position that Christianity could exist without the Gospels because the icon of Christ alone suffices, but generally he stresses the complementary nature of word and image.

## II: Icon and Idol

In countering the accusation of idolatry, as well as justifying their re-reading of the Exodus prohibition against images, the iconophiles drew a distinction between an icon and an idol. They utilised a distinction inherent in philosophical discussions of nominal definitions. In his *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle proposed the compound "goat-stag" (τραγέλαφος) as the name of a non-existent thing[50]. However, Plato had earlier used the example of a goat-stag as painted by an artist who combines two animals in one[51]. These mythological creatures, such as gorgons, sirens and griffins, were to be seen in Greek art. This idea of an imaginary animal was discussed by Origen who gave the example of a centaur because it exists only in the imagination. In doing so, he drew a distinction between an image that is imaginary and an image that is a likeness[52].

A similar distinction is found in Nikephoros, but the patriarch is unlikely to have read Origen's *Homily on Exodus* in which this distinction is found. This is what Nikephoros has to say:

> "An idol is a work of fiction and the representation of a non-existent (ἀνυποστάτων) being, such things as the Hellenes out of their lack of good sense and atheism made into representations, namely tritons, centaurs and other phantasms which do not exist. And in this respect icons and idols are to be distinguished from one another; those not accepting the distinction should rightly be called idolaters."[53]

Here the contrast is between a composite image of the imagination and icon of an existing archetype. In making his distinction Origen explicated Paul's statement that "an idol is nothing in the world" (1 Cor. 8:4), a remark that Celsus in his work *Against the Christians* seems to have known and which Origen criticised him for misappropriating[54]. Origen interprets it to mean that because an idol is without a prototype it must lack historicity and therefore credibility. Paul's statement is discussed by Macarius Magnes in the late fourth century in his *Apocriticus*, in which he draws attention to the difference between an idol and a likeness painted on boards[55]. For Theodore, Christian images deserve to be called icons because the definition of an icon implies a prototype which has a relative and homonymous relationship with its copy[56]. But how does this definition apply to so-called icons

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[49] It is of interest that Irenaeus in the second century was one of the first to suggest that the absence of written documents was no obstacle to believing in Christ, while at the same time condemning the Gnostic Carpocratians for venerating an image of him, see Against the Heresies 3, 4, 1–2; 1, 25, 6.

[50] Posterior Analytics II, 7 (92b4–8).

[51] Republic VI (488a).

[52] Homily on Exodus 8, 3. On this see K. Parry, Image-making, in: The Westminster Handbook to Origen, ed. J. A. McGuckin. Louisville 2004, 128–131. Several centuries later Dionysius the Areopagite discusses biblical descriptions of the cherubim and seraphim as "incongruous images", that is, images that appear out of place which require us to transcend them in order to understand their divine meaning, see Celestial Hierarchy 2.5.

[53] Nikephoros, Antirrheticus I, 29 (*PG* 100, 277B).

[54] Contra Celsum VIII, 24 (tr. H. Chadwick, Origen: Contra Celsum. Cambridge 1986, 469).

[55] J. M. Schott – M. J. Edwards, Macarius, Apocriticus (*Translated Texts for Historians* 62). Liverpool 2015, 194–195. Nikephoros appears to be the earliest witness to the Apocriticus, see J. M. Featherstone, Opening scenes of the Second Iconoclasm: Nicephorus's critique of the citations from Macarius Magnes. *REB* 60 (2002) 65–111.

[56] Antirrheticus II, 16 (*PG* 99, 360D). See further, C. Erismann, Venerating Likeness: Byzantine Iconophile Thinkers on Aristotelian Relatives and their Simultaneity. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24, 3 (2016) 405–425.

not-made-by-hand (ἀχειροποίητος), in which there is no human intermediary between the prototype and the image?

According to Theodore, whatever is artificial imitates something natural, for nothing would be called artificial if it were not preceded by something natural[57]. Although it is not strictly true that whatever is artificial imitates something natural, it may be conceded that a work of the imagination could be said to be natural, in so far as it has been conceived by an artist who is himself part of the natural world. But for Theodore a work of the imagination is not properly speaking an archetypal form; there is no place for abstract or non-representational imagery in his image theory[58]. The mimetic theory that lies behind his iconology seems to preclude the representation of non-natural forms. It is the reality of the archetype that he is keen to emphasise because it legitimises Christian image-making over the images of the non-Christian world.

Although he suggests that mental as well as physical perceptions may be depicted[59], he would want to qualify this by adding that not everything that is depicted is an icon. It is the content and not the form that distinguishes the icon from other types of images. Nowhere does he state that the form of the icon must be two-dimensional or painted on a wooden panel. And because he does not specify what form the icon should take, it must be assumed that he takes the iconographic tradition for granted. This is to be expected, given that it is "who" is depicted rather than "how" they are depicted that defines the icon[60]. From this we might infer that any image of Christ, regardless of whether it is two or three dimensions, constitutes an icon. In fact, it is not until the later period that Byzantine authors censure images in the round and do so largely in response to medieval western art[61]. Yet despite the decline in freestanding sculpture from the sixth century, there was no official church prohibition against three-dimensional images. And there is no evidence that iconoclasts, or iconophiles for that matter, wanted to destroy the ancient statues that adorned the boulevards of Constantinople[62].

We know there is something of a mismatch between what we see in the Byzantine icon and what the Byzantines tell us they saw. Where we see semi-abstract and attenuated figures, which are far from naturalistic in the modern sense of the term, the Byzantines saw hyper-realistic renditions on the verge of speaking or weeping. The literary genre of the *ekphrasis* invariably speaks of the true likeness of the portrait, often blurring the distinction between archetype and image. The granting of a degree of autonomy to the icon is carried over into hagiographical works that discuss miracle-working icons[63]. Theodore does not describe exactly what Christ should look like in his icon (*Epistle* 359); he is not interested in his physical features as such, even though he argues for his hypostatic individuality at the philosophical level[64]. He might have described the types of portraits of Christ familiar to him[65], but for Theodore it was sufficient to claim that his icon (unlike the Gospels) was contemporaneous with his earthly sojourn. Given the absence of a physical description of Christ in the New

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[57]  Antirrheticus III, 2, 1 (*PG* 99, 417A).

[58]  On Theodore's iconographic programme at the Sakkoudion monastery and the Church of St John the Baptist at the Stoudios monastery, see Delouis, Expérience de l'icône 156–169.

[59]  Antirrheticus I, 10 (*PG* 99, 341A).

[60]  Parry, Depicting the Word 27.

[61]  For example, Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1429), see C. Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Era, 312–1453. Toronto 1986, 253–254.

[62]  A compilation of the legendary powers of these statues was recorded in the eighth or ninth century, see A. Cameron – J. Herrin, Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai. Leiden 1984.

[63]  Theodore cites the story of such an icon from Sophronius of Jerusalem's Miracles of Cyrus and John, see Antirrheticus II, 19 (*PG* 99, 364C–365A).

[64]  Antirrheticus III, 1, 34 (*PG* 99, 405B).

[65]  For example, nomismata issued during the reigns of Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) show Christ first with long hair and full beard, then with short curly hair and wispy beard, see J. Herrin, The Formation of Christendom. Oxford 1987, illus. 9.

Testament this descriptive gap was filled by icons not-made-by-hands. These images eliminated the human element regarding differences in style.

Returning for a moment to the depiction of individual physical features in the icon, there is a passage of interest in a work entitled *On the Constitution of Man* by the ninth-century iatrosophist and physician, Meletios the Monk, from the Holy Trinity Monastery at Tiberiopolis in Asia Minor. The title of Meletios' work shows his reliance on the Hippocratic tradition via Galen and Nemesis of Emesa[66], but his ninth-century date is far from certain[67]. In talking about himself he refers to "my friend Meletios", and points out that nobody else may be mistaken for him because of his individual characteristics.

> For the idiosyncrasies of Meletios, since he is an individual (ἄτομον), cannot be perceived in anyone else; such as being a Byzantine, a physician, short, blue-eyed, snub-nosed, suffering from gout, having a certain scar on the forehead, being the son of Gregory. For all these things together have constituted Meletios and they cannot be perceived in anybody else … Meletios when, standing, he reads or bleeds or cauterises somebody, proves himself separate from the rest of the brethren[68].

This emphasis on personal characteristics or accidental properties may be directly related to the question of the nature of the hypostasis represented in icons. We may note John of Damascus on separable and inseparable accidents in his *Institutio elementaris*, where he speaks of the man with a snub nose and the man with the hooked nose, and the impossibility of them being the same person[69].

For Theodore, there is danger of idolatry from the icon as well as the idol[70]. Distinguishing them theoretically is one thing but knowing the intention of the worshipper is another. The intentionality of the worshipper is central to the veneration of the icon because orthopraxis is concomitant with orthodoxy. The problem is that the outward act of veneration appears the same, whether we are offering veneration to the emperor or to Christ, but the intention is different. By understanding this intentional difference we are able to offer the proper worship due to God alone, from the veneration due to the Theotokos as Theotokos and to the saints as saints[71]. Theodore is here operating with the distinction between adoration (λατρεία) and veneration (προσκύνησις), which had been systematised by John of Damascus and taken for granted by the bishops at Nicaea II in 787[72], and which was to some extent recognised by Theodulf of Orleans in the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* of the 790s[73]. Theodore

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[66] M. Morani, La tradizione manoscritta del 'De natura hominis' di Nemesio. Milan 1981, 132–150.

[67] See A.-M. Talbot, Meletios, *ODB* II, 1333. Meletios seems to have been known to John the Exarch in the early tenth century, who translated some works of John of Damascus into Slavonic, see R. Browning, John the Exarch, *ODB* II, 1069. See S. R. Holman, On Phoenix and Eunuchs: Sources for Meletius the Monk's Anatomy of Gender. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, 1 (2008) 79–101, and now C. Erismann, Meletius Monachus on individuality: a ninth-century Byzantine medical reading of Porphyry's Logic', *BZ* 110, 1 (2017) 37–60.

[68] On the Constitution of Man (ed. J. A. Cramer, Anecdota Graeca e codd. manuscriptis Bibliothecarum Oxoniensium, vol. III. Oxford 1836, reprinted Amsterdam 1963, 154–155). Cited by O. Temkin, Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism. *DOP* 16 (1962) 96–115.

[69] Institutio elementaris 5 (I, 23 Kotter). This might not be true of Emperor Justinian II whose reconstructed nose earned him the nickname "Rhinotmetos".

[70] Antirrheticus I, 16 (*PG* 99, 345D–348A).

[71] Antirrheticus I, 19 (*PG* 99, 348D). On the worship given to the hypostasis of the prototype and the image, see Krausmüller, Adoring the Divine Image.

[72] Price, The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, vol. 1, 44–49. See J. Pelikan, Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons. Princeton 1990, 137–140; Parry, Depicting the Word 166–177.

[73] See T. X. Noble, Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians. Philadelphia 2009, 181–183.

goes on to condemn those who do not acknowledge this difference and who refuse to offer the appropriate veneration due to those shown in their icons (*Epistle* 551)[74].

## III. Representing Angels

It may be important to know the correct veneration due to images of Christ, the Theotokos and the saints, but there is one type of image that appears to lie outside the iconophile taxonomy of images, and that is images of intellectual or spiritual beings, notably angels. Christ, his mother, and the saints are circumscribed by time and place and are therefore able to be depicted, but angels, it would appear, being outside of time and place, are uncircumscribed and therefore beyond depiction. Time and place are *a priori* determinants of circumscription and circumscription is a prerequisite of representation. If something cannot be circumscribed it cannot be depicted, at least that is what the iconoclasts argued.

Theodore meets this objection in his *Third Antirrheticus* in the following way. He writes:

"In comparison with a dense body, the nature of angels is incorporeal, but in comparison with the divine nature, angels are neither incorporeal nor uncircumscribable (ἀπερίγραπτος), for what is properly incorporeal is unlimited and uncircumscribed, but this applies only to the divine nature. An angel, however, is limited by place (τόπος) and is thus circumscribable."[75]

The origin of the theory that angels are circumscribed by place, at least within the Greek patristic tradition, is most likely traceable to a passage in Basil the Great's *On the Holy Spirit* where he writes:

"We believe that the Spirit is everywhere while the rest of the bodiless powers are circumscribed by place."[76]

This idea appears to be commonplace by the time of John of Thessalonica in the early seventh century, who is quoted during the fifth session of Nicaea II as saying:

"It is in truth the Godhead alone that is incorporeal and uncircumscribed (ἀπερίγραπτον), while the intellectual creatures are not entirely incorporeal and invisible like the Godhead, and therefore have a location and are circumscribed (ἐμπερίγραφα) … for it is indeed the case that they [angels] are incorporeal compared to us. However, … the fact that they are contained in a place shows them to be not wholly incorporeal in the way that the divine nature is. And so we do not sin in painting and honouring angels—not as gods but as intellectual creatures and ministers of God and not properly incorporeal. Painting them in human form had its origin in the fact that they were constantly seen in this way by those to whom they were sent by the one who alone is God."[77]

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[74] Antirrheticus I, 20 (*PG* 99, 352A). Theodore in his *Letter to the nun Thomais* instructs her on the distinction between προσκύνησις and λατρεία with respect to icons, Epistula 551 (II, 839–840 Fatouros). See K. Demoen, The Philosopher, the Call Girl and the Icon: Theodore the Stoudite's (ab)use of Gregory Nazianzen in the iconoclastic controversy, in: La Spiritualité de L'Univers Byzantin dans le Verbe et L'Image. Hommages offerts à Edmond Voordeckers à l'occasion de son éméritat, ed. K. Demoen – J. Vereecken (*Instrumenta Patristica* 30). Turnhout 1997, 69–83.

[75] Antirrheticus III, 1, 47 (*PG* 99, 412A).

[76] De Spiritu Sancto XXIII, 54 (*PG* 32, 169AB). For Anastasios of Sinai in the seventh century an angel cannot find itself at the same time in different places, only God who is uncircumscribed can do that, see J. Munitiz, Anastasios of Sinai: Questions and Answers. (*Corpus Christianorum in Translation* 7). Turnhout 2011, 92.

[77] Acta Concilii Nicaeni, Actio V (ed. E. Lambertz, Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum. Concilium Actiones IV–V [*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II, 3, 2]. Berlin 2012, 542–545); Price, Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea II, 394,

John is here making the point that because angels are not entirely incorporeal they can appear in human form, and because they can do that, images of them can be painted. If they did not make themselves visible in this way, then they would remain elemental and thus imperceptible to the human eye. I am aware that some texts cited at Nicaea II are problematic[78], among which may be this one attributed to John of Thessalonica.

The passage from Theodore just quoted comes close to what John of Damascus says about angels[79]. For him, an angel is an intellectual substance (οὐσία), and it is by means of this substance that it has an incorporeal nature. It is incorporeal and immaterial in comparison with the density of matter, for only God is properly incorporeal and immaterial. Angels do not appear in their true nature to those who see them, for they do not have a bodily shape *per se*, nor are they extended in three dimensions. John speaks of place being intellectual (νοητός) as well as physical (σωματικός), and he uses the term "σωματικός" in relation to the intellectual place of angels, who, despite their spiritual nature, are circumscribed by several determinants. He writes:

"Although the angel is not contained physically in a place to take on form or shape, he is said to be in a place because of his being spiritually present there and acting according to his nature, and because of his being nowhere else but remaining spiritually circumscribed there where he acts ... Now to be circumscribed means to be determined by place (τόπος), time (χρόνος), and apprehension (κατάληψις), while to be contained by none of these is to be uncircumscribed ... The angel, however, is circumscribed by all three."[80]

This last term apprehension (κατάληψις), is known from Stoic philosophy where it means recognition by the intellect and is of epistemic significance. Time and place are Aristotelian categories necessary for beings and things to be circumscribed and apprehended. For Aristotle, the two categories of time and place belong to the category of quantity, but his inclusion of time and place under this category was disputed in Antiquity[81]. However, Simplicius devoted a special study of them[82].

According to the *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum*, which may be have been composed in preparation for the council of Nicaea in 787[83], Dionysius the Areopagite is a reliable witness to the depiction of angels. The text gives examples from both the Old and New Testaments of those who have seen angels. It says:

"You object that no one has ever seen an angel, but on the contrary, many have seen angels. The Mother of God often saw Gabriel and the myrrh-bearing women saw angels when they came to

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translates ἀπερίγραπτον and ἐμπερίγραφα as "infinite" and "finite", but I think "uncircumscribed" and "circumscribed" is better suited to the context of iconology. John of Thessalonica appears to be the author of the earliest surviving homily on the Dormition, see B. Daley, On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies. New York 1998, 12–13, 47– 70.

[78] On texts associated with Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug at Nicaea II, see Price, Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea II, 406–409, and K. Parry, The Doves of Antioch: Severus, Chalcedonians, Monothelites, and Iconoclasm, in: Severus of Antioch: His Life and Times, ed. J. D'Alton – Y. Youssef. Leiden 2016, 138–159.

[79] Expositio Fidei 2, 3–4 (ed. B. Kotter, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, II: Expositio Fidei [*Patristische Texte und Studien* 12]. Berlin 1973, 45–49).

[80] Expositio Fidei 1, 13 (II, 38–39 Kotter). The same three angelic determinants are found in Nikephoros, Antirrheticus II, 7 (*PG* 100, 345CD).

[81] M. J. Griffin, Aristotle's Categories in the Early Roman Empire. Oxford 2015, 240.

[82] J. O. Urmson, Simplicius, Corollaries on Place and Time. Ithaca 1992.

[83] L. Brubaker – J. F. Haldon, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680–850): An Annotated Survey (*Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs* 7). Aldershot 2001, 250–251. See also M.-F. Auzépy, L'Adversus Constantinum Caballinum et Jean de Jérusalem. *BSl* 56 (1995) 323–338.

the tomb … The prophets … and many saints likewise saw angels, each according to their capacity. It is on this basis that Dionysius the Areopagite described the orders of angels and represents them pictorially; he does not prohibit such representations but even explains why the angels are depicted in a fourfold manner as eagles and other animals."[84]

This last sentence is a reference to symbolic images of the seraphim and cherubim in the form of the four living creatures of the tetramorph. A human face appears among the symbols of the tetramorph and is associated with the evangelist Matthew, while the eagle, the lion, and the ox, are associated with John, Mark, and Luke respectively[85]. The expression "according to their capacity", is often found in conjunction with theophanies and angelic manifestations, stressing that only those who have attained a certain degree of spiritual discernment are worthy of seeing divine things[86].

Theodore does not explicitly cite the *Celestial Hierarchy* in his *Three Antirrhetici*, but there is a passage from the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* which he does reference on at least one occasion[87]. The passage in question reads:

"In the realm of perceptible images, the artist keeps an eye constantly on the original and never allows his attention to be side-tracked, or diverted by any other visible object. If he does this, then one may presume to say that whatever the object which he wishes to depict, he will, in a manner of speaking, produce a second one, so that one entity can be taken for the other, though in essence they are in fact different."[88]

The expression "though in essence they are different" became an iconophile catchphrase. It is used by Theodore and Nikephoros on several occasions, and is found in Ulpius the Roman's so-called painter's handbook dated to the late ninth century, where he writes "the truth is shown by the likeness, the archetype in the image, each in the other, except for the difference in essence"[89]. It approximates to Aristotle's definition of homonymous in the *Categories* (which we quoted at the beginning), where he says that the definition of being differs for things with names in common, and gives as an example a man and his portrait; they both share the same name but not the same essence[90].

During the purported meeting between the emperor Leo V and the patriarch Nikephoros in the *Life* of the latter, there is a discussion regarding the depiction of angels with wings. The emperor asks the patriarch why angels are depicted with wings and Nikephoros replies that they are shown as such to distinguish them from men. In addition, they are fashioned with wings because of their ability to move swiftly between heaven and earth. He refers the emperor to the cherubim described by Moses (Ex. 25:20), and the opinion of Dionysius the Areopagite on their spiritual nature, as well as pointing out that because painted images of angels are created they are not to be thought of as being of the

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[84]  Adversus Constantinum Caballinum 11 (*PG* 95, 328BC). We may note that Photios in his *Epistle* 157 (collated as Question 87 in his Amphilochia) discusses why the faces of the cherubim appear in the form of oxen, lions, eagles and humans. See Epistula 157 (ed. B. Laourdas – L. G. Westerink, Photii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani, Epistulae et Amphilochia. Leipzig 1984, II, 12–13).

[85]  First attested by Irenaeus of Lyons in the second century, Against the Heresies 3.11.8.

[86]  John of Damascus, Oratio III, 24 (III, 131 Kotter); Theodore the Stoudite, Antirrheticus I, 12 (*PG* 99, 344B).

[87]  Antirrheticus II, 11 (*PG* 99, 357C).

[88]  Ecclesiastical Hierarchy 4.3.1 (*PG* 3, 473BC).

[89]  See J. Lowden, Illuminated Prophet Books: A Study of Byzantine Manuscripts of the Major and Minor Prophets. University Park 1988, 51–55.

[90]  Categories 1a. It is worth mentioning that Aristotle in his On Memory and Recollection (450b.20–25), gives the example of a picture painted on a board to differentiate between contemplating something as something in itself, and contemplating it as a representation of something else.

essence of the angels themselves[91]. Macarius Magnes makes a similar point when he says that images of angels are not to be mistaken for their real nature[92].

As far as representing angels is concerned, angelic corporeality exists on a continuum, and depending on their position on that continuum, angels may manifest themselves in bodily form. Thus, the closer they are to divinity the more ethereal they are, while the nearer they are to humanity the more material they become[93]. The relativity of angelic corporeality involves degrees of embodiment determined by the level of density angels acquire in the process of carrying out their mediating tasks. But ultimately it is their anthropomorphic appearance that validates their depiction in images. Even if their nature is fiery and ethereal they need to show themselves in a recognisable form[94], like the anonymous angel who wrestled with Jacob (Gen. 32:22–32). In the time-frame we are dealing with, the line between the physical and the metaphysical, between the sensible and the intelligible, between the corporeal and the incorporeal, was finely drawn, meaning that both angels and demons, good and bad spirits, impinged upon people's everyday lives.

Theodore, like John of Damascus, notes that it is not angels who are on the agenda of salvation; Christ did not become incarnate to save angels, but to save humankind. In other words, human beings are higher on the soteriological scale than angels who, being spiritual creatures and ontologically superior, are not in need of salvation. In a letter (*Epistle* 15) addressed to Theodulos the Stylite, an icon-painter, Theodore castigates him for introducing an innovation into iconography by depicting angels crucified[95]. Interestingly, John of Damascus thinks that because an angel is incorporeal it is not capable of repentance, even though it is rational and free and has the power to make moral choices. Just as there is no repentance for humans after death, he remarks, there is none for angels who are fallen[96], which suggests that he rejected the idea of their final restoration. In the case of fallen angels like Satan, there is no indication that Theodore would accept his restoration in line with the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, especially not as conceived by Origen. He does however discuss the doctrine of *apokatastasis* in one of his letters (*Epistle* 471) and quotes verbatim what Maximos the Confessor has to say regarding Gregory of Nyssa's teaching on the subject[97].

## CONCLUSION

So how original was Theodore's contribution to iconophile thought? The question may be more rhetorical than literal, but Theodore deserves credit for the way he configures his arguments in the light of his sources, at least where these have been identified. However, it is still an open question which texts he consulted for his application of logic terminology. Much depends, of course, on what

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[91] See E. A. Fisher, Life of the Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople, in: Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation, ed. A.-M. Talbot. Washington D.C. 1998, 98–100. For more on winged angels, see G. Peers, Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium. Berkeley 2001, 23–36.

[92] Apocriticus (260 Schott – Edwards).

[93] For Porphyry demons are corporeal with special kinds of bodies, which he understood became visible and tangible in relation to their distance from the Monad, see G. A. Smith, How Thin Is a Demon? *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, 4 (2008) 479–512.

[94] Expositio Fidei 2, 3 (II, 46 Kotter).

[95] Epistula 15 (I, 45 Fatouros).

[96] Expositio Fidei 2, 4 (II, 50 Kotter). The fourth-century author Nemesius of Emesa would appear to be John's source here, see R. W. Sharples – P. J. Van Der Eijk, Nemesius: On the Nature of Man (*Translated Texts for Historians* 49). Liverpool 2008, 44–45. Macarius Magnes maintains the same idea, see note 92.

[97] Epistula 471 (II, 676–678 Fatouros). See K. Parry, Providence, Resurrection, and Restoration in Byzantine Thought, Eighth to Ninth Centuries, in: Studia Patristica 97, vol. 23: From the Fourth Century Onwards (Latin Writers); Nachleben, ed. M. Vincent. Leuven 2017, 295–304, and further I. Ramelli, The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena. Leiden 2013.

we mean by "original", but this has not been a question asked in the past in relation to Byzantine theologians. In a collection of essays on the concept of originality in Byzantium published in 1995 there is no chapter on theology[98]. To some extent scholars have been hoodwinked by the Byzantines themselves, because of their own insistence on their adherence to tradition and their supposed resistance to change and innovation. Yet we do not have to look far beneath the surface to see that their thinking was no less organic and incisive than other Christian theological traditions. Also, too often they have been seen and interpreted through Western eyes when they ought to be viewed *sui generis*. Some of the quotations I gave at the start of this paper indicate this.

The controversy over icons produced an extensive corpus of iconophile literature, some of which has still to be edited and evaluated. It has been said that a balanced assessment of the controversy is impossible because iconoclast texts were destroyed or reconfigured by iconophiles, but I do not think there is much more the iconoclast could have said in addition to what has come down to us. A glance at the arguments against images put forward by the Protestant Reformers in the sixteenth century does not expand the arsenal much, and they were acting without knowledge of the arguments of the Byzantine iconoclasts[99]. The question of Theodore's originality may not be one we are entitled to ask, given that it does not make much sense in a ninth-century context[100]. I have mentioned just a few of the themes he discusses in the course of his refutation of the iconoclasts[101], but it seems to me that he shows himself to be a cogent and effective polemicist who should be recognised for his intellectual acumen, along with his monastic reforms, his poetry, his letters, and his other writings. It may turn out that his special contribution *was* to pioneer the application of Aristotelian logic terminology to the image question. But we await confirmation of that.

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[98] A. R. Littlewood (ed.), Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays. Oxford 1995. The recent paper by A. Spanos, Was Innovation Unwanted in Byzantium? in: Wanted Byzantium: The Desire for a Lost Empire, ed. I. Nilsson – P. Stephenson. Uppsala 2014, 43–56, scratches the surface of the topic of theology.

[99] On Calvin's knowledge of the Libri Caroli, see A. Freeman – P. Meyvaert, Opus Caroli regis contra synodum: An Introduction, in: Theodulf of Orleans: Charlemagne's Spokesman against the Second Council of Nicaea, ed. A. Freeman. Aldershot 2003, I.

[100] Tollefsen remarks: "His doctrine of the icon makes him innovative in the history of Christian doctrine", see St Theodore the Studite's Defence of Icons 149.

[101] For further themes, such as the centrality of the incarnation and use of the term hypostasis, see Parry, Depicting the Word.