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# RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND RESISTANCE IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE OF THE EIGHTH AND NINTH CENTURIES: METHODS AND JUSTIFICATIONS\*

BY PAUL J. ALEXANDER

IN the history of the Byzantine church the eighth and ninth centuries were a period of frequent, probing, and vigorous debate on a variety of issues. In keeping with the inveterate Byzantine tendency to theological controversy, even problems that to modern eyes may not seem to touch on the fundamentals of faith — the questions of the use and worship of pictorial images of biblical personages or scenes, of Emperor Constantine VI's (780–797) divorce from his first wife and second marriage, or of Emperor Michael III's (842–867) deposition of Patriarch Ignatius and appointment of Photius — were apt to develop into basic theological issues and to lead to acts of violence on one side and of resistance on the other. By way of introduction to the subject matter of this paper, I shall begin with a discussion of three episodes illustrating the consequences resulting from the implementation of specific religious policies.

## 1. THE PROBLEMS

During the reign of the great persecutor of religious images and of Iconophiles, the Byzantine emperor Constantine V (741–775), there lived in Cilicia an iconophile monk, George. One of his associates named Theosebes, after he had escaped to Syria which was then in Arab hands, described some of George's experiences. The most dramatic episode in his life was his appearance, shortly prior to 754, before a local council summoned and presided over by an iconoclastic bishop Cosmas. On this occasion Cosmas and George held a lengthy disputation on image worship in the course of which the following exchange took place:

Cosmas said: "Indeed, you acted impiously, therefore this wrath (persecution) descended upon you. Therefore our pious Emperor, great among emperors, knowing the will of God, ordained as follows. He ordered those who worship them (icons), because they set themselves directly against our (imperial) power, to be 'utterly laid waste' (*ἐρημιά ἐρημωθήναι*, Is. 60.12) and to be despoiled because their hope is vain." The old man (George) said: "So the words of the Holy Spirit spoken by the prophet Daniel will be fulfilled: His power shall be great and strong and destroy a saintly people and those who do not obey 'he will utterly lay waste' (*ἐρημιά αὐτοὺς ἐρημώσει*, Daniel 8.24 and Is. 60.12), but the people will become foolish and perish." Cosmas: "You blasphemed against the Emperor and should be executed according to imperial law."<sup>1</sup>

\* In an abbreviated form, this paper was presented at the Second International Colloquium in Ecclesiastical History held at Oxford, England, 22–29 September 1974. I am indebted for

Two points are worth noting in this episode. The author has both persecutor and victim speak in language borrowed from the prophet Isaiah, with the result that the persecution decreed by Emperor Constantine V appears as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Furthermore, the iconoclastic bishop Cosmas explicitly justifies his threat of execution by the claim that George, in relating the emperor's order to Isaiah's prophecy, violated the provisions of Roman law on "blasphemy" against the imperial person.

Half a century later, the chronicler Theophanes recorded and commented on a series of measures regarding two heretical groups: the Paulicians and the Athinganoi. In 811/2 the pious emperor Michael I (811–813), acting on the advice of the patriarch of Constantinople, Nicephorus, and others, decreed the death penalty against them, but was later induced to countermand this measure "by other evil-minded advisers." According to Theophanes, the opponents of the death penalty based their objection on the consideration that execution deprived the victims of the possibility of repentance. Furthermore, they denied that churchmen had the right of imposing the death penalty on persons deemed impious. The chronicler vigorously rejects this argumentation as being contrary to Scripture. He points to St. Peter's role in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) who, according to him, had uttered "a mere lie" and to St. Paul's remark "that those who do such things deserve to die" (Rom. 1.32). In fact, Theophanes notes with satisfaction that under Michael I "not a few" of the heretics were executed, obviously before the revocation of the original decree reached the authorities charged with its implementation. It will be seen later that the "evil-minded advisers" opposing the death penalty were the monks of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Studios led by their famous abbot Theodore (759–826).<sup>2</sup>

Theophanes' account is valuable because it gives details on a memorable debate over the question whether there were limitations to the punitive power of state and church. The case is somewhat atypical as the state, here represented by the pious but ineffective emperor Michael I, acts merely as the umpire in an essentially ecclesiastical conflict. Neither side has the slightest sympathy for the doctrines of the victims. The proponents of the death penalty rest their case on references to actions of St. Peter and an opinion of St. Paul while its opponents refuse to deprive even a heretic of his opportunity for repentance.

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helpful observations and criticism to several members of that gathering, especially to the Very Rev. Dr. Henry Chadwick, dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and to two anonymous readers of my article.

<sup>1</sup> B. M. Melioranski, *Georgii Kipriianin i Ioann Ierusalimlianin* etc., *Zapiski Istoriko-Filologicheskago Fakulteta Imp. S.-Peterburgskago Universiteta* 59 (St. Petersburg, 1901), p. xxiv. On the identification of the orthodox disputant George in this disputation with a certain George of Cyprus mentioned in iconophile sources, see pp. 72–74.

<sup>2</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 1 (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 494, l. 33–495, l. 15. Cf. V. Grumel, *Les registres des actes des patriarches de Constantinople*, 1, fasc. 2 (Chalcedon, 1936), no. 384.

A final example will be drawn from that inexhaustible treasure house, the correspondence of Theodore of Studios. In 815 the Emperor Leo V had embarked on a new persecution of religious images and their worshippers. Theodore was exiled and in one of his letters written in 819 he described in detail his behavior during meetings with the iconoclastic bishop of Chonae (in Phrygia) and with an "exarch," a title that in this instance designates a powerful imperial official who combined in his hands the administration of five of the "themes" of Asia Minor.<sup>3</sup> Theodore writes to his favorite disciple (and future successor as abbot), Naucratius, that when he met the bishop, he bent his knee, kissed him, accepted a drink but did not eat with him, in spite of the fact that the bishop "had entreated him earnestly to do so and had whispered fraudulent words." This was the yardstick (*μέτρον*), Theodore writes, that he applied. Later he had been summoned by the exarch. This official again raised "the matter" (*ὑπόθεσις*), presumably the demand that Theodore eat with him or another Iconoclast by claiming that it was an insignificant concession (*οὐδέν ἐστι . . . καὶ σμικρόν*), but Theodore replied that it was a matter of the highest importance. Having reached an impasse, the two men then decided to talk of other things. The exarch mentioned that he might mitigate the harshness of Theodore's exile and they then discussed the affairs of the five "themes" administered by the exarch and mentioned the emperor. Again, Theodore accepted a drink, which he was careful to mark thrice with the sign of the cross. Gradually, the exarch steered the conversation to the subject of icons and the two men "shot at each other with citations," clearly from Scripture and the Church Fathers for and against religious images. Theodore writes that he was on his guard as the discussion involved the emperor, perhaps in a way similar to the conversation between Bishop Cosmas and the monk George (p. 238 above). No agreement was reached, but Theodore explains his objective during the exchange: "to abandon my (previous) dissembling (*ὑπόκρισις*) and to show a different countenance as is appropriate towards an impious official." He concludes by saying that as a consequence of his behavior he is now strictly guarded and kept incommunicado.

This third episode is revealing inasmuch as it shows both sides exploring the limits of persuasion and resistance. The bishop and exarch test Theodore's attitude and attempt, through social courtesies and promises, to win over the iconophile abbot by gradual procedures: by inducing him to associate with them in ever more intimate fashion, as long as feasible without raising the issue of the images. Theodore, on the other hand, is anxious not

<sup>3</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.63 (PG 99:1281D–1284C). Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I (A.D. 802–867)* (London, 1912), pp. 10, n. 4; 221 f. All further references to Theodore's works are to vol. 99 of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, except for those of the letters edited by I. Cozza (-Luzi) in *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca*, vol. 8, pt. 1 (Rome, 1871) (henceforth abbreviated: ed. CL and cited by number and page).

to provoke a conflict with ecclesiastical and particularly with imperial power. He goes as far as he deems permissible in his dealings with the bishop: gestures of respect, of Christian love, of politeness, but somewhat surprisingly he draws the line at eating with the iconoclastic bishop. He exhibits extreme caution in his conversation with the exarch, in order not to be charged with "blasphemy" against the throne, at the same time unflinching firmness in religious matters, hence his insistence that the matter of eating with men whom he considers heretics is of utmost importance, as well as his fervent defense of the icons.

The episodes just discussed raise a number of questions. What means were used and considered permissible by the persecutors of the eighth and ninth centuries? How did they justify the use of coercion in attempting to win the assent of their victims? What procedures were employed by the resisters and in what terms did they see the conflict?

A survey of some of the relevant literature, of necessity partial and incomplete, will make it clear that the three scenes discussed hitherto may serve as an introduction to the problems faced by religious persecutors and resisters during the eighth and ninth centuries. For the first half of the eighth century the historian depends largely upon the chronicles of a later age: in addition to that of Theophanes, already mentioned (p. 239 above) and completed between 810 and 814, principally the *Breviarium* of Patriarch Nicephorus (†829) based partially on sources common to both chronicles.<sup>4</sup> Strictly contemporary sources are rare, primarily because from 650 to 750 foreign invasions and internal upheavals were unfavorable to literary production. Beginning in the middle of the eighth century literary activity begins to develop, with the result that for the ninth century in particular the historian disposes of a wide variety of extensive and detailed writings of high quality. Among them, saints' lives and other hagiographic documents, as well as the works of Theodore of Studios, are the most informative, but works of theological polemics, biblical commentaries and other types of literature also are helpful. Furthermore the treatise of Peter of Sicily (and documents probably dependent upon it), now available in an excellent edition, is of special value because alone of other sources to be mentioned, it is written from the point of view of the persecuting authorities.<sup>5</sup> It is worth stressing again that the following observations do not aim at completeness of documentation or of issues. Examples will be chosen primarily from the persecutions of Iconophiles, anti-Moechians (i.e., opponents of Emperor Constantine VI's second "adulterous" marriage) and Paulicians and are meant to illustrate some of the problems raised by religious persecutions and resistance during the eighth and ninth centuries.

<sup>4</sup> *Nicephori . . . Opuscula Historica*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1880), pp. 3-77.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. Astruc and others, "Les Sources grecques pour l'histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure," Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines, *Travaux et Mémoires* 4 (1970), 1-227.

## 2. MEASURES OF PERSECUTION

Theophanes mentions attempts in 721/2 on the part of Emperor Leo III (717–741) to bring about the conversion of Jews and “Montanists.”<sup>6</sup> Under the year 725/6 he records mass unrest at Constantinople over the iconoclastic doctrines favored by the emperor and the punishment of many persons, especially men from noble families and men of learning, by mutilation, whipping, exile or fines, and for 728/9 (or the following year) he and Nicephorus note the first punishments and mutilations of image worshippers.<sup>7</sup> For the reasons just indicated, information on the persecution of image worshippers is more copious for the reign of Leo III’s son and successor, the emperor Constantine V. It is indicative, however, of the unsatisfactory character of the sources even for this reign that one iconophile martyr of the period, the monk Andreas Kalybites, publicly flogged to death in 760/1 in the hippodrome of the Constantinopolitan quarter of Mangana after he had censured the emperor for his Iconoclasm and compared him to two earlier persecuting emperors, Julian and Valens, is known to posterity only from a brief entry in Theophanes’ chronicle.<sup>8</sup> He found no biographer and his name does not even appear in the liturgical book containing short notices of the saints commemorated in services at the capital, the *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*. Another iconophile martyr of the reign of Constantine V, St. Stephen the Younger (†764), did become the subject of an important saint’s life by the deacon Stephen, frequently to be drawn upon in this paper, but it is significant that this work was composed as late as 808, more than a generation after the death of the saint.<sup>9</sup>

Late though they are, the sources allow a fairly detailed reconstruction of the means employed by Constantine V in the implementation of his policies and of the decisions of the iconoclastic council of Hiereia-Blachernae (754).

<sup>6</sup> Theophanes, p. 401, l. 21. See Andrew Sharf, “The Jews, the Montanists and the Emperor Leo III,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 59 (1966), 37–46, and *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (New York, 1971), pp. 61–67.

<sup>7</sup> Theophanes, pp. 405, l. 5; 409, l. 19; cf. Nicephorus, p. 58, l. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Theophanes, p. 432, l. 16. Another reference to the same earlier persecutors, Julian and Valens, in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, *BHG* 1666, PG 100:1172A. — Saints’ lives will henceforth be referred to by their numbers in F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (=BHG), 3rd ed., Subsidia Hagiographica 8a (Brussels, 1957). The *Auctarium* of this reference work (Subsidia Hagiographica 47 [Brussels, 1969]) will be designated as follows: BHG<sup>a</sup>. — The *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1902), col. 62 f., further records the executions at Constantinople under Leo III of a bishop Hypatius and a priest Andrew, both from Lydia.

<sup>9</sup> It is surprising that the *Life of St. Philaretus* (BHG 1511z, ed. M.-H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, “La Vie de S. Philarète,” *Byzantion* 9 [1934], 85–170), composed by his grandson Nicetas in 821/2, makes no allusion to the Iconoclastic Controversy. The saint died in 792 and was a contemporary of Leo III’s and Constantine V’s persecutions and of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, yet none of these events is mentioned. The explanation of the author’s silence is probably related to the political situation under Michael II when Nicetas wrote the biography of his grandfather and when the Emperor discouraged discussion of the issue.

The emperor took personal charge of iconoclastic propaganda by composing thirteen short addresses on the subject which he delivered in the course of two weeks and subsequently published.<sup>10</sup> The chroniclers also describe a scene in the main Hippodrome at Constantinople where on 21 August 765 Constantine forced monks to parade, each leading a nun by the hand.<sup>11</sup> On one occasion, during the celebration of the festival called the Brumalia, he supposedly had all relatives and friends of monks beaten and banished from the capital.<sup>12</sup> According to the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, the Emperor “declared war upon the monastic garb, called it the garb of darkness . . . and called those wearing this garb (the monks) Unmentionables (ἀμνημόνευτοι) and idol worshippers.”<sup>13</sup> He gave orders that his subjects shave their beards, probably so that the monks, who were likely to resist this break with their tradition, would be distinguishable from the rest of the population and thus could be put under additional pressure to conform.<sup>14</sup> To isolate them further he obtained from a public gathering a solemn oath that those present would not worship icons, would not receive communion from a monk or even greet him, but rather would curse him and throw stones at him.<sup>15</sup> He infiltrated his agents into monasteries and stirred up popular feeling against monks.<sup>16</sup> The persecution of monks was carried out with particular cruelty by Michael Lachanodrakon, commander of the Thracian “theme” in Western Asia Minor. He had monasteries destroyed, beards of monks shaved or singed off, their noses slit.<sup>17</sup> Thirty-eight monks of the monastery of Pelekete in Bithynia were buried alive, others given the choice, in a public scene at Ephesus, either of marrying nuns or of being blinded and exiled to Cyprus.<sup>18</sup> Theodore of Studios further implies that under Constantine V men were forbidden or prevented from entering monasteries.<sup>19</sup> Theosteric-

<sup>10</sup> *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, BHG 1341, Acta Sanctorum April. 1, pp. xxii–xxxii, esp. ch. 29, p. xxiv. Fragments of Constantine’s pamphlets ed. H. Hennepf, *Textus Byzantinos ad Iconomachiam pertinentes* etc. (Leiden, 1969), pp. 52–57.

<sup>11</sup> Theophanes, p. 437, l. 26; Nicephorus, p. 74, l. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1169D.

<sup>13</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1112A. The term “Unmentionable” occurs frequently as the equivalent of “monk” in words attributed by the hagiographer to Iconoclasts, e.g. cols. 1133A, 1136B, 1140A, 1156B, D, etc. Also *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, ch. 29, p. xxiv, and Theophanes, p. 443, l. 1, but according to the chronicler the word was used for any pious person. De Boor suggests, in his index to Theophanes (2:728), the meaning: *cuius mentio non fit in ecclesia, excommunicatus*.

<sup>14</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1133C: “μέχρι τῆς δορᾶς τῆς ὄψεως τὴν σίμωσιν ποιῆσθαι τῆς γενειάδος.” In Migne the words τὴν σίμωσιν ποιῆσθαι are translated by *radere* ‘to shave,’ but the expression is not clear. Cf. Nicephorus, p. 72, ll. 3 f.: “κομῆται . . . ἀντὶ κεκαρμένων.”

<sup>15</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1112B. Cf. Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden* etc. (Munich and Berlin, 1924 ff.), no. 324.

<sup>16</sup> See the incident involving George Synkletus, *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1132D ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1165A; Theophanes, pp. 445, ll. 3 and 28.

<sup>18</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1165A, B.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Laudatio Platonis*, BHG 1553, ch. 21, PG 99:824B.

tus, author of a *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, characterizes the objective of Constantine's policy in the following way: "Ever since he became emperor, his entire purpose and desire was to wipe out the entire monastic garb."<sup>20</sup> When the emperor received the news that because of Michael Lachanodrakon's persecution no monk was left in the Thracasian "theme," he wrote to him: "I found you a man after my heart, you are carrying out my every wish."<sup>21</sup> One of the critical moments in St. Stephen's career occurred in a debate with the emperor when he trampled on a coin carrying the imperial portraits. Constantine could only with great difficulty restrain his entourage from hurling the saint down headlong from the sun parlor in which the confrontation took place.<sup>22</sup>

During the interval of almost thirty years between the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) and the new outbreak of Iconoclasm (815), the sources make no mention of a persecution of Iconoclasts. One might be tempted to surmise that during this period or later during the Second Iconoclasm (715–843) lives of iconoclastic saints were in fact composed but were destroyed after the restoration of orthodoxy in 843. Yet on reflection it seems highly unlikely that if the post-Nicene governments had launched a persecution of Iconoclasts, the rich iconophile literature of the ninth century should not have preserved a single refutation of the claims of such supposed iconoclastic confessors or martyrs. Moreover, an attitude of forgiveness towards Iconoclasts is entirely in keeping with the decisions and spirit of the leadership and majority of the Seventh Council.

While the post-Nicene emperors thus seem to have considered it impolitic to use coercion against Iconoclasts, they had no such hesitations in their relations with other groups. In 795 Emperor Constantine V (780–797) divorced his wife and married one of her ladies-in-waiting, Theodote, a cousin of Theodore, the abbot of Sakkudion (near Prusa), later of Studios in Constantinople. Theodore's biographer narrates how the young emperor tried to win over Theodore and his adherents, for example by sending them gold. He even decided to visit the warm springs of Prusa, in the vicinity of Theodore's monastery, in the hope that the abbot would avail himself of the vicinity of the court to pay his respects to the emperor.<sup>23</sup> But the monks of Sakkudion did not take the hint. Several years later, in his funeral oration for his mother, Theodore told of the subsequent harsh treatment meted out by the emperor to him and his monks. They were expelled from their monastery, beaten and exiled to Thessalonica.<sup>24</sup> The monks were recalled after Empress Irene (797–802) blinded and deposed her son and Patriarch

<sup>20</sup> *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, ch. 29, p. xxiv; cf. Theophanes, p. 443, l. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Theophanes, p. 446, l. 12. Cf. Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 332 (A.D. 771).

<sup>22</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1160A. One of Constantine V's gold coins carries indeed the portrait of his father on the obverse and his own and his son Leo's portraits on the reverse, cf. André Grabar, *L'Iconoclasm byzantin, Dossier Archéologique* (Paris, 1957), p. 116 and fig. 27.

<sup>23</sup> *Life of St. Theodore of Studios* (by the monk Michael), *BHG* 1754, PG 99:253B.

<sup>24</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Laudatio funebris in matrem*, *BHG* 2422, PG 99:893–896.



Tarasius was even forced to apologize for his tolerant attitude towards the adulterous union. In 808 the controversy flared up anew, over the restoration to the priesthood of Joseph of Kathara who had officiated at Constantine's second wedding. On this occasion, it involved a larger circle of persons and was once more accompanied by violence. A number of abbots and even two bishops sided with Theodore, were exiled and suffered for their cause until after the accession of Michael I in 811 a reconciliation of the two warring factions was arranged.<sup>25</sup>

During the same interval between Seventh Council and Second Iconoclasm there occurred an even more violent though brief persecution of three other religious groups: Paulicians, Athinganoi and Jews. Upon the request of Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople, Emperor Michael I imposed in 811/2 the death penalty upon them. The passage from Theophanes' chronicle mentioned at the beginning of this paper (p. 239, above) shows that a considerable number of executions of Paulicians took place as a consequence of the emperor's decree, but it was eventually withdrawn because of the objections of the Studite party. Peter of Sicily recounts, in his treatise against the Paulicians, how in accordance with the imperial decree Paulicians were executed in the Armeniac "theme."<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, the decision to persecute the Paulicians was related, on the one hand, to Byzantium's defeats during the war against the Bulgars and, on the other hand, to the highly effective missionary work carried out by the Paulician movement under one of its greatest "teachers," Sergios.

Persecution of the Iconophiles resumed during the reign of Leo V (813–820), was interrupted under his successor Michael II (820–829) and was renewed by Theophilus (829–842). Theodore of Studios never tires of repeating that Patriarch Nicephorus, several archbishops, bishops, priests, monks and nuns were exiled, jailed, tortured or even executed and churches destroyed or confiscated.<sup>27</sup> Theodore's descriptions of the persecution can be corroborated by many saints' lives. The experience of one of the abbots, St. Nicetas of Medikion, may serve to illustrate the fate of Iconophiles under Leo V. Several abbots, including St. Nicetas, were summoned to Constantinople and subjected to flattery and then to threats. When they did not yield, they were sent to separate jails. In prison St. Nicetas was visited by emissaries of the emperor and harassed. After several days the emperor

<sup>25</sup> On the Moechian Controversy, see Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople. Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 82–101.

<sup>26</sup> Peter of Sicily, ed. Astruc, § 175 ff., p. 65; cf. Nina G. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy* (The Hague, 1967), p. 124, and Paul Lemerle, "L'Histoire des Pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques," *Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines, Travaux et Mémoires* 5 (1973), 81 f. As to the implementation of Michael I's decree with regard to the Athinganoi, it is probable that a portion of the sect transferred, or was transferred, to the western provinces; see Joshua Starr, "An Eastern Christian Sect: The Athinganoi," *Harvard Theological Review* 29 (1936), 93–106, esp. pp. 94, 97.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Théodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.12 (to Pope Paschal), col. 1152D.

banished him to Asia Minor and St. Nicetas was forced to walk, in the company of a guard, at great speed for seven days in bitter winter weather until he reached his destination. The other abbots were given similar treatment. After only five days, when St. Nicetas showed no sign of yielding, the emperor recalled him and had him jailed again at Constantinople. He and his colleagues were then handed over to the notorious John (Morocharzanos), the future iconoclastic patriarch, and subjected by him to punishment and harassment "such as not even the pagans inflicted upon the martyrs." The hagiographer describes St. Nicetas's sufferings in jail in somber colors. When all proved unsuccessful, the authorities promised the abbots release from prison and safe return to their monasteries if they would just once take communion from the iconoclastic patriarch Theodotus (815–821). The other abbots agreed, visited St. Nicetas in his prison and argued as follows: "what they require of us is nothing, let us make a small concession (*οἰκονομίσωμεν μικρόν*) lest we lose all." Under this prodding, St. Nicetas finally gave in, against his will, not, so the hagiographer adds, because he wanted to escape from the harassment but "because he respected the appeal of the fathers (abbots)." The abbots then went to "the so-called Chapels," adorned as before with images, and took communion from Theodotus who said: "Anathema to those who do not worship the image of Christ." St. Nicetas was to regret his hour of weakness to the end of his life.<sup>28</sup>

When the Iconoclastic Controversy came to an end in 843, the government of Empress Theodora did not adopt, towards the iconoclastic clergy, the tolerant attitude taken in 787 by Irene, but under pressure from the monastic party carried out a thorough purge of the clergy. This is the more remarkable as because of the surviving strength of iconoclastic sentiment among the laity the government proceeded in a most circumspect and gradual fashion in the matter of the restoration of religious images.<sup>29</sup> Beyond the purge of the clergy, there is no evidence that after the "restoration of orthodoxy" the victorious Iconophiles embarked on a persecution of their opponents.

### 3. MEANS OF RESISTANCE

How did the victims react to persecution? The defensive measures adopted by the various groups ran the gamut from passive resistance to

<sup>28</sup> *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, chs. 38–41, pp. xxv f. The Patriarch Theodotus's saying is surprising. Was he totally insincere? Or did he interpret "the image of Christ" to mean, as Emperor Constantine V had done before him, the Eucharist?

<sup>29</sup> V. Grumel, "La Politique religieuse du patriarche saint Méthode," *Echos d'Orient* 34 (1935), 389–401; F. Dvornik, "The Patriarch Photius and Iconoclasm," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953), 68–97, esp. p. 82; Grabar, *L'Iconoclasme byzantin*, pp. 208–214. I do not know the source of Jean Gouillard's statement ("Le synodikon de l'orthodoxie," *Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines, Travaux et Mémoires* 2 [1967], 127 f.) that between two and three thousand members of the clergy lost their positions. The text that he cites (*Life of Methodius*, BHG 1278, PG 100:1257AB) does not say so.

military secession and to the use of armed force. Thus after Constantine VI's second marriage to Theodote the abbot Theodore and his adherents failed to appear at the emperor's court (p. 244 above) and after the restoration of Joseph to the priesthood they avoided for two years communion with him and with other members of the clergy who officiated with him.<sup>30</sup> Theodore was also aware of large numbers of people who sympathized with him secretly although they did not dare formally to join him in his passive resistance.<sup>31</sup> When Emperor Leo V began to implement his iconoclastic policies and many Iconophiles were banished or jailed, the confessors were received hospitably in homes, supplied with food and other necessities and otherwise comforted by members of the clergy as well as by laymen, despite imperial prohibitions and the danger of harassment or punishment by agents of the government. A large number of Theodore's letters contain expressions of gratitude to good Samaritans of this kind.<sup>32</sup>

The banishment of the ecclesiastical leadership and the breaking up of monastic communities were intended to isolate members of the iconophile resistance movement. It was one of the principal achievements of Theodore that he organized a Studite community-in-exile which towards the end of his life expanded into a church-in-exile. The principal surviving monument of this organization is Theodore's massive correspondence. During his exiles in the Moechian Controversy and especially after the second outbreak of Iconoclasm he wrote letters not only to the dispersed members of his own monastery but also to monks and abbots of other institutions, to bishops, archbishops and patriarchs (including the pope), to imperial officials and other laymen. Other clerical victims of the persecution such as the "Graptoi" brothers, Theodore and Theophanes, Michael Syncellus and the future Patriarch Methodius also maintained a wide correspondence.<sup>33</sup> In Theodore of Studios's case, the vast network of his communications was made possible as well as supplemented by an elaborate and where possible regular courier service. Indeed, Theodore's messengers often transmitted information and advice that the abbot did not wish to write down.<sup>34</sup> During the Moechian Controversy he even set up a system of ciphers in which the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet signified the more important members of the

<sup>30</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.21, col. 972C; 1.24, col. 984A.

<sup>31</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.48, col. 1081A.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, nos. 31, p. 25; 72, p. 58 f.; 129, p. 114 f.; 182, p. 155 f.

<sup>33</sup> *Life of St. Michael Syncellus*, BHG 1296, ed. Th. N. Schmit, *Kahrie-dzhami*, *Izvestiia Russkago Arkheologicheskago Instituta v Konstantinopolie* 11 (1906), 227–259, esp. pp. 237, l. 25; 239, l. 6; 243, l. 29; 246, l. 36 ff. (text of a letter by Michael to the "Graptoi" brothers), see p. 232, l. 8 (letters to orthodox Sicilian monks); p. 247, l. 27 (letters of Methodius). For a stimulating and thorough historical analysis of a section of this fascinating saint's life, see Vittorio Peri, "Leone III e il 'Filioque.' Echi del Caso nell' Agiografia Greca," *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 25 (1971), 3–58.

<sup>34</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 104, p. 93.

Studite community and the three obsolete letters (digamma, etc.) certain deviant Studite monks as well as Patriarch Nicephorus and the emperor of the same name, a system that Theodore continued to use during the iconoclastic period.<sup>35</sup> Theodore realized that these communications were apt to endanger both messenger and recipient (he was indifferent to his own danger) but considered it his duty to speak out for the truth during a persecution. In his eyes the principal function of the correspondence was to preserve the cohesion of the scattered Studite community — “the letters are like diaries in that they tie us together in love,” he wrote — just as St. Paul’s letters had served to join the early Christian churches in the Roman Empire.<sup>36</sup> Above all, according to him, the persecuted Christian had an obligation to speak freely (*παρρησιάζεσθαι*) and to teach others in a period of persecution.<sup>37</sup> He advised disciples such as the monk Naucratus, who succeeded him as abbot, “to correspond, visit, support, exhort, comfort, awaken, teach and encourage” and expressed his determination “to write to all the fathers in exile,” in spite of an imperial order to be silent.<sup>38</sup> He emphasized the duty of speaking freely during a persecution, without however provoking martyrdom:

For if the Lord’s enemies (the Iconoclasts) who have the support of Caesar speak freely their impiety, lead astray the people of God and set every church on fire, what shall we suffer who have the King of all men (as our helper) if we do not even secretly speak to our companions? . . . And yet we have been told to avoid temptation. So we must choose the mean, as the saying goes.<sup>39</sup>

When the murder of Emperor Leo V and the accession of Michael brought the persecution to a halt, Theodore noted with satisfaction that “the door of free speech (*παρρησία*)” had been opened.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the correspondence maintained by Theodore of Studios and others, several members of the ecclesiastical resistance, including Theodore himself and Patriarch Nicephorus, wrote learned works of theological polemics refuting the theses of the Iconoclasts, others composed saints’ lives celebrating heroic members of their own group. Iconophile circles were also responsible for less pretentious literary works directed against their persecutors. Thus the chronicler Theophanes knows of an exchange between Patriarch Germanos and Emperor Leo III in which the patriarch referred to a prophecy according to which the images would be destroyed “under Conon.” Leo then informed the emperor that Conon was his given name.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.41, col. 1057 ff. This letter must have been written prior to 814 as Theodore’s uncle Plato (*ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν*) is mentioned together with the living Studites.

<sup>36</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.39, col. 1233C; cf. 2.208, col. 1629A.

<sup>37</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.2, col. 1120B; 2.46, col. 1249C.

<sup>38</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 46, p. 39; cf. nos. 48, p. 41; 109, p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 63, p. 52 f. Cf. 2.44, col. 1248B (one should not provoke martyrdom as St. Gordios did).

<sup>40</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.90, col. 1340A.

<sup>41</sup> Theophanes, p. 407, l. 17. On the diffusion of the name Conon and on this name’s possible

Of this prophecy it is impossible to say whether or when it circulated in written form, but a century later there is evidence that Iconophiles, allegedly the future patriarch Methodius, published successively three pamphlets predicting, more or less correctly, the date of death for Emperors Leo V, Michael II and Theophilus.<sup>42</sup>

Among the topics most frequently discussed in Theodore's correspondence were the permissible limits of association with Iconoclasts, the attitude to be taken towards persons who transgressed these limits and cooperated with the persecutors and above all the subject of martyrdom. The incident of Theodore's meeting with the bishop of Chonae related at the beginning of this paper (p. 238f. above) shows that Theodore was, for example, willing to accept a drink from Iconoclasts but refused to eat with them. He had followed this practice with regard to his earlier opponents at the time of the Moechian Controversy and had further laid down the rule not to share a meal with persons who had eaten with Moechians. He based these precepts, which he continued to apply during the Iconoclastic Controversy, on 1 Cor. 5.11 or Ps. 140(141).5, but on the other hand warned against overzealous enquiries as this would be an act of self-appointed censorship (ἐθελόγνωμον) and produce complete isolation.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, St. Michael Syncellus and his companions while in jail at Constantinople under Leo V went on a hunger strike and refused to eat the "ascetics' diet" of dates and figs sent them by the emperor, referring to the passage from the Psalms (140.5) also cited by Theodore.<sup>44</sup> The latter exhorted one of his lay correspondents to observe three rules: not to accept a blessing from a heretic, not to sing psalms or eat bread with him. In a reply to another layman, however, he implies that while strict practice (ἀκρίβεια) forbade association with heretics by eating, drinking and (other kinds of) sharing, exceptions might be made in dangerous situations.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the taking of communion, Theodore advises that the only question to be considered is the orthodoxy and innocence of the celebrant himself. If one were to investigate in addition the credentials of the bishop who had ordained the priest in question, "the gift of the priesthood, by virtue of which we have the right to be called Christians, would cease to

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implication for the problem of Leo III's origin see ch. 2 ("Leo — alias Conon") of Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 346, Subsidia Tomus 41 (Louvain, 1973), pp. 13–24.

<sup>42</sup> *Life of Euthymius of Sardis*, BHG<sup>a</sup> 2145, unpublished; cf. Jean Gouillard, "Une oeuvre inédite du patriarche Méthode: la Vie d'Euthyme de Sardes," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 53 (1960), 38. Compare also the passage in the *Life of Sts. David, Symeon and George*, BHG 494 *Analecta Bollandiana* 18 (1899), 211–259, §16, where one of the Saints comforts his audience by referring to a local saying, twelve days prior to Leo V's murder: "αἱ . . . τῶν χοίρων φωναὶ [read φωναὶ] περὶ τὰς καλάνδας." D. Michailidis has shown (*Analecta Bollandiana* 89 [1971], 147) that pigs were customarily slaughtered on Christmas eve.

<sup>43</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.49, col. 1089B; 2.119, col. 1393A; cf. 2.32, col. 1205A.

<sup>44</sup> *Life of St. Michael Syncellus*, p. 236, l. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.172, col. 1541B; 2.174, col. 1544D.

such an extent that we should lapse back into pagan worship.”<sup>46</sup> Priests ordained overseas, at Rome, at Naples, in “Longibardia” and Sicily are to be accepted.<sup>47</sup>

In the matter of association with heretics, the practice of the Iconophiles was not uniform and some of them were considerably more rigorous than Theodore. For example, during the persecution of Leo V St. Peter of Atroa admonished his monks not to join Iconoclasts in eating, drinking, praying, and singing of psalms, and even forbade them to greet them, “for he who greets them partakes in their fruitless works.”<sup>48</sup> St. Peter practiced what he preached, for, according to his biographer, when one day on a road leading from Lydia to Phrygia he saw from afar two bishops, he made himself invisible, “for he did not wish to be seen by the bishops because the heresy of the lawless Iconoclasts was then prevailing.” It is noteworthy that both the saint and the hagiographer, the monk Sabas, take it for granted that during the reign of Leo V bishops are Iconoclasts.<sup>49</sup> On a later occasion, St. Peter and his brother Paul were imprisoned in a chapel controlled by iconoclastic clergy. When the time came for the two brothers to say their morning devotions, they passed their guards unseen, prayed in the open air and then returned to the chapel. The hagiographer explains their behavior by referring to one of the apostolic canons: “a pious man must not enter or pray in the church of the impious.”<sup>50</sup>

Theodore of Studios’s letters are full of advice on the treatment of persons, especially of clergy, who under the pressure of the persecutors had made concessions to the Iconoclasts and later wished to be forgiven by the Iconophiles. What for example was to be done with an abbot who had accepted the decisions of the iconoclastic council of St. Sophia (815) in writing but with mental reservations (*ὑποκριτικὴ ὑπογραφή*) and later claimed, as did others, that he had done so in order to protect a church building and the images therein from destruction? In this case the abbot referred for support of his views to an otherwise unknown report (*ἀναφορά*) of the ex-patriarch Nicephorus. Under what conditions and penalties was a priest who had done the same thing to be reinstated in his priestly functions?<sup>51</sup> Should a plea from a priest that he had been forced to accept communion from an Iconoclast be accepted? And did “compulsion” in the taking of communion, if that was indeed a valid excuse, require that the recipient’s jaw was forcefully held open? Were beatings, threats, torture, or mere fear legitimate excuses? What type of repentance was required in cases

<sup>46</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.53, col. 1105C.

<sup>47</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.215, col. 1645D f.

<sup>48</sup> *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, BHG 2364, ed. V. Laurent, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 29 (Brussels, 1956), pp. 65–225, esp. ch. 14.20, p. 103; cf. ch. 83.28, p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, ch. 19.11, p. 110 f.

<sup>50</sup> *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, ch. 26.33, p. 127.

<sup>51</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.106, col. 1365A; 2.6, col. 1128A.

where concessions were made to Iconoclasm and for what length of time? What penalties were to be imposed?<sup>52</sup>

Theodore deals with these and other practical matters in many of his letters, but he invariably insists that his replies be considered advisory and that the final and authoritative disposal of these cases was to be reserved for a future church council which, he fervently hoped, would liquidate the Iconoclastic Controversy.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, since the ex-patriarch Nicephorus in his exile abstained from all public activity, Theodore's authority, during the last years of his life, far transcended the Studite community. He was consulted widely by members of the persecuted church. Thus during the reign of Michael II St. Peter of Atroa visited Theodore at a time when his miracles were questioned by his detractors, told him about his life as an ascetic and his creed and received from him a letter certifying his holiness and threatening his critics with anathema.<sup>54</sup> The author of the *Vita Retractata* of this saint knows even of a second meeting of the two abbots in the course of which Theodore "advised" his colleague to regroup his monks scattered by the persecution of Leo V in new communities (*κατὰ συστήματα*).<sup>55</sup>

Theodore's activity as a "doctor of souls" did not go unchallenged. A monk, also called Theodore, issued an "encyclical letter" in which he criticized the practice of the persecuted clergy of imposing penalties on penitent bishops, priests and monks who had sided with the Iconoclasts. He charged that these activities had produced unseemly rivalries and jealousies, to such an extent that the competing clergy failed to recognize each other's decisions. The monk Theodore even suggested that pardons had been granted for cash and urged that there was no difference between Iconoclasm and Manichaeism, a thesis that if accepted would have had the consequence that a return from Iconoclasm to orthodoxy would be extremely onerous. The abbot of Studios replied to these allegations that Patriarch Nicephorus had, for the duration of the persecution, "allowed all those so inclined to treat the illnesses as they happened and as best they could."<sup>56</sup> It was undoubtedly because of Theodore's genius in organizing and directing first the Studite community-in-exile and gradually large sections of the Byzantine church in general that he was one of only two monastic leaders of

<sup>52</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.32, col. 1205A; 2.49, col. 1257B. Especially full details in 2.215, cols. 1645–1653.

<sup>53</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.152, col. 1472D f., note the formula: *ὄχι ὀριστικῶς ἀλλὰ συμβουλευτικῶς*. St. Peter of Atroa considered his decisions more definitive, cf. *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, ch. 28, p. 130 f. and the editor's note 3 on p. 130.

<sup>54</sup> *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, ch. 37 f.; pp. 144–148.

<sup>55</sup> *Vita Retractata of St. Peter of Atroa*, BHG 2365, ed. V. Laurent, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 31 (Brussels, 1958), ch. 41 bis and p. 42 f.

<sup>56</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.162, cols. 1504–1516. The charge of venality: col. 1505B (*λημμάτων ἡττώμενοι πόρους ἐπινοοῦντες*). The author of the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1084B, also called the Iconoclasm of Leo III a Manichaean heresy.

a past generation who was commemorated in the original *synodikon* celebrating the return to orthodoxy in 843.<sup>57</sup>

No theme recurs more frequently in Theodore's letters than the call to constancy (*ἔνστασις*), confession (*ὁμολογία*) and martyrdom (*μαρτυρία*). In some letters the loss of blood under punishment seems to differentiate the martyr from the confessor, yet most of the time Theodore does not seem to make a clear-cut distinction between these terms. Thus he speaks of Empress Irene after the Seventh Ecumenical Council as "having shown herself as a martyr without bloodshed," just as Theosterictus, author of the *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, mentions Irene's "act of constancy on behalf of the truth" in reference to her dismissal of the iconoclastic garrison at Constantinople and speaks of his hero as "a confessor or bloodless martyr."<sup>58</sup> Theodore never tires of exhorting his correspondents to continue their resistance to the Iconoclasts. Just as, in his opinion, it is illegitimate to provoke martyrdom as St. Gordios had done long ago, so he admonishes his disciples to spurn the example of "the lukewarm brethren" and to join instead the ranks of "the fervent."<sup>59</sup> Martyrdom, in the sense of being whipped, while not required from those who have "fallen," i.e., who made concessions to the Iconoclasts, demonstrates the forgiveness of their sin.<sup>60</sup> Theodore constantly reminds his flock of those of his monks who had suffered for their iconophile convictions and admonishes his correspondents to follow their example. Among the Studite martyrs he praises with special frequency and intensity the monk Thaddaeus who was beaten to death by the persecutors. He had been of Bulgarian origin, a freedman of Theodore and a person without education.<sup>61</sup>

The most desperate and violent form of resistance was adopted by the group exposed to the most severe type of religious persecution, the Paulicians. According to the most recent studies, elements of this group, which probably was of Armenian origin, had in the course of the eighth century left Byzantine territory, settled on the other side of the Arab frontier and later returned to the Empire.<sup>62</sup> At the end of the eighth and early ninth centuries the Paulicians won many converts and on certain occasions played a role in the internal politics of the Empire and especially in its capital. Because of their success, the government of Michael I decreed, as noted at

<sup>57</sup> Ed. Jean Gouillard, "Le Synodikon de l'orthodoxie," Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines, *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967), 1-316, esp. line 127, p. 53, and p. 144. The other earlier monastic leader was "Isaac the miracle worker" whom Gouillard proposes to identify with St. Theophanes (the chronicler).

<sup>58</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 108, p. 96 f.; *Laudatio Platonis*, ch. 24, col. 828B; *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, chs. 30, p. xxiv, and 47, p. xxvii.

<sup>59</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.44, col. 1248B; ed. CL, no. 107, p. 96.

<sup>60</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.45, col. 1249A.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*, p. 101, n. 1. Add *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, col. 353, l. 51, BHG<sup>a</sup> 2415e; Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.5, col. 1124C; ed. CL, nos. 112, 113, 114 (p. 102), 116, 120, 121, 124.

<sup>62</sup> Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 112-125; Lemerle, "L'Histoire des Pauliciens," p. 49 f.



the beginning of this paper (p. 239 above) the death penalty against them and a number of executions took place. Peter of Sicily recounts that in the Armeniac "theme," i.e., in northeastern Asia Minor, the bishop of Neocaesarea and the "exarch," in this case probably a monastic official, "executed [those Paulicians] whom they discovered because they deserved death and led [others] to perdition."<sup>63</sup> The result of this cruel persecution, unparalleled in the Empire's treatment of other heretical groups, was dramatic. A Paulician militia called the *Astatoi* (a term of uncertain meaning) was formed, the bishop and the exarch were slain and the *Astatoi* fled beyond the Arab frontier where they found refuge in the territory of the emir of Melitene, Amr b. Abdallah. This violent reaction took place prior to 834/5. Reinforced by new emigrants during the following decades the Paulicians built an organization closely resembling a state and repeatedly raided the eastern provinces of the Empire. Eventually it took the emperor Basil I (867–886) a series of hard-fought campaigns until he succeeded in 878 to capture the Paulician capital of Tefrik.<sup>64</sup> The Paulician reaction to their fierce persecution by the Byzantine authorities was the most extreme employed by a persecuted group during the eighth and ninth centuries. Both the persecution of the Paulicians and their response will be reconsidered in the discussion of the arguments advanced by persecutors and resisters in defense of their activities.

#### 4. JUSTIFICATIONS OF PERSECUTION

Before commenting on the ways in which the persecutors of the eighth and ninth centuries justified their measures a few preliminary remarks are in order. In the first place, I shall be concerned with some of the justifications adduced by the persecutors, not with the historical reasons for the persecutions, which is another topic. Then, a great difficulty in this discussion is the fact that, except for the treatises against the Paulicians, the surviving literature reflects the point of view of the anti-Moechians and the Iconophiles. To a large extent, therefore, any study of the argumentation used by the persecutors must be based on sources emanating from their victims. This is true even of the vocabulary of persecution beginning with the word itself (*διωγμός*). Indeed, it is highly unlikely that the Moechians, the Iconoclasts or any other persecutors thought or spoke of themselves as "persecuting" their opponents. Instead they saw themselves as defending the truth, restoring the unity of the church divided by dissension, implementing imperial or ecclesiastical law, safeguarding the prerogatives of the imperial office, etc. The entire terminology of persecution derives from the views and experience of the victims and any inference as to the intentions of the persecutors is therefore hazardous. Finally it is obvious that especially in the persecution of Iconophiles and Paulicians questions of doctrine were of

<sup>63</sup> Peter of Sicily, ed. Astruc, § 176, p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> Garsoïan, *Paulician Heresy*, p. 119 f.; Lemerle, "L'Histoire des Pauliciens," pp. 71–108.

paramount importance. However, I shall not be concerned here with doctrinal matters but with the arguments advanced by the group in power for taking the crucial step from doctrinal debate and polemic to measures of coercion.

Such escalation had by no means gone unchallenged in the history of the Church. Thus probably in the late fourth century an unknown revisor, perhaps an Arian or an Apollinarian, interpolated into Ignatius of Antioch's *Epistle to the Philadelphians* a passage to the effect that the addressees should hate and admonish those who hate God (i.e., heretics) and call them to repentance, but should not beat or persecute (*διώκειν*) them.<sup>65</sup> A century and a half later, the secular historian Agathias, when commenting on the paganism of the Alamanni and contrasting it with the Christianity of the Franks, expressed the opinion that the Alamanni deserved to be pitied rather than being treated harshly (*χαλεπαίνεσθαι*, i.e., persecuted). Agathias even generalized his statement by adding that it applied to "all those who fell short of the truth," a formulation that includes Christian heretics.<sup>66</sup> It may be doubted whether such tolerant attitudes survived into the eighth and ninth centuries. The fourth-century interpolator of Ignatius of Antioch's *Epistle to the Philadelphians* had made it clear, by citing 1 Thess. 4.5, that he rejected persecutions of Christian heretics of the kind that had occurred in his own experience during the Arian Controversy, on the grounds that they represented a repetition of the pagan persecutions of Christians. In the eighth and ninth centuries the persecutions of the early church were only a dim memory. Thus Theodore of Studios, so far as I know, never cited Pseudo-Ignatius and the tradition represented by him as a general argument against persecution, except on one occasion when he used it to justify his opposition to the death penalty imposed upon the Paulicians.<sup>67</sup>

Yet although the voices opposing persecution of heretics had fallen silent by the eighth and ninth centuries, historical circumstances often prevented authorities from enforcing their religious convictions. Each of the "Isaurian" emperors of the eighth century, for example, waited several years before launching a persecution of the Iconophiles, just as Empress Irene did not take steps to restore image worship during the first four years of her reign. As already noted (p. 244 above), there is no evidence of persecutions of Iconoclasts in the interval between the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Second Iconoclasm. The new outbreak of the controversy was initiated by

<sup>65</sup> Ed. J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, 3, p. 206 f., cited by Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.155, col. 1485A. On the date of the interpolation, see Wilhelm von Christ, Wilhelm Schmid and Otto Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, 6th ed., Zweiter Teil, Zweite Hälfte (Munich, 1924), p. 1227 f.

<sup>66</sup> Agathias, ed. Rudolf Keydell, 1.7.3., p. 18, l. 13. The first part of the passage contains echoes of Plato's *Republic*, Book I, 336e–337a. See Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 94, 110.

<sup>67</sup> See note 65 above.

Emperor Leo V almost immediately after the Bulgar attack on the Empire, which had brought him to the throne and had ended with the death of the Bulgar ruler Krum. Michael II did not persecute the Iconophiles and under his son Theophilus the persecutions did not begin until he had been on the throne for several years.<sup>68</sup> The pattern is clear: while, as will be seen, the political and religious establishments considered the transition from a more or less non-violent propagation of their religious views to acts of coercion and persecution as little more than a continuation of missionary activity by additional means, most emperors, especially those belonging to new dynasties (Leo III, Michael II) or those whose throne was initially shaky (Constantine V, Irene), delayed measures of religious persecution until they had consolidated their power over state and church. The one apparent exception, Leo V, confirms the pattern, for the population of the capital in particular related the Bulgar victories over Byzantine armies with the iconophile policies of his immediate predecessor and a vigorous return to Iconoclasm seemed the best means of securing their allegiance.

What then were the grounds for persecution adduced by the persecutors of the eighth and ninth centuries? For the Iconoclast and Moechian controversies there exist, as noted before (p. 253 above), no narrative sources emanating from the persecutors. The campaign against the Paulicians was given, at least partially, a biblical foundation (p. 254 above). Furthermore, the (historically false) connection of the Paulicians of the ninth century with the Manichaeans, which emerges as early as the chronicle of Theophanes and later underlies Peter of Sicily's account of the genesis of the sect, was designed to legitimize the application of the severe century-old legislation against the Manichaeans to the new sect.<sup>69</sup> It was an instance of the general tendency on the part of an established church to brand a new group as heretical by relating it to an earlier heresy. The motivation is especially clear in the text of Peter of Sicily where the narrative of the executions of "Manichaeans" follows immediately upon the mention and explanation of the supposed change of the sect's name from Manichaeans to Paulicians.<sup>70</sup> Here, however, Peter supplies in addition an argument for persecution of which it is not certain whether it was advanced by the persecuting government or whether it is Peter's own. He writes that these executions occurred in accordance with a saying of Jesus at the conclusion of the Parable of the Pounds which he cites, somewhat freely, as follows: "those who do not want

<sup>68</sup> On the difficult problem of chronology regarding the initial date of Theophilus's persecution, see V. Laurent in his edition of the *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, on ch. 63, p. 186 and n. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Theophanes, p. 488, l. 22: "τῶν δὲ Μανιχαίων, τῶν νῦν Παυλικιάνων καλουμένων." Cf. the title of Peter of Sicily's treatise: . . . τῶν Μανιχαίων, τῶν καὶ Παυλικιάνων λεγομένων . . . ; Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, pp. 201–205 and passim; also "Byzantine Heresy: A Reinterpretation," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971), 87–113, esp. p. 94 f.; and Lemerle, "L'Histoire des Pauliciens," p. 124 and passim.

<sup>70</sup> Peter of Sicily, ed. Astruc, § 86 f., p. 37 f. Peter does not state clearly which persecuting emperors he has in mind.

me to reign (*βασιλεῦσαι*) over them, bring them before me and slay them” (Luke 19.27).<sup>71</sup> The argument, which exploits the messianic connotations of Byzantine imperial titulature (*βασιλεύς*), is interesting inasmuch as it is both biblical and political, the latter in the sense that the Paulicians are implicitly charged with opposition against the Byzantine emperor, just as the king in the parable calls those who did not want him to reign over them his enemies. The dialogue between Bishop Cosmas and the monk George, cited at the beginning of this paper (p. 238) above), shows that a political allegation of a similar nature served also as a justification for the persecution of the Iconophiles.

The charge of political insubordination on the part of the Paulicians was undoubtedly reinforced by the consideration that by the second half of the ninth century they had indeed repudiated the authority of the Byzantine emperor and established themselves in Arab territory. In addition the persecutors of the Paulicians reassured their consciences with the consideration that the Manichaean heresy, from which in their opinion Paulicianism descended, “was persecuted by all peoples because it was incurable and full of all kinds of disgusting features.”<sup>72</sup> Perhaps under Emperor Theophilus, an iconophile abbot, Macarius of Pelekete, himself jailed because of his iconophile conviction, refused the request of Paulician prisoners about to be executed to recite the funeral prayers, by saying:

Light and darkness have nothing in common, therefore you are dying a death worthy of your impiety. And your punishment will not end at this point, but after your execution chastisement without end awaits you.<sup>73</sup>

It is one of the attractive aspects of Theodore of Studios’s personality that under Michael I he and his adherents opposed the execution of the Paulicians with the argument that the death penalty would deprive them of their opportunity to repent (p. 239 above). Many years later, Theodore defended this position against one of the few iconophile bishops, Theophilus of Ephesus, who called advocacy of the death penalty for the Paulicians “the greatest and noblest deed.” Against the cruel fanaticism of men like Macarius and Theophilus, Theodore cited biblical and patristic evidence and concluded that while it was permissible for emperors to wage war against Scythians (i.e., Bulgars) and Arabs because they were slaughtering Christians, heretics under the control of the Byzantine emperor (*οἱ ὑπὸ χεῖρα αἰρετικοῦ*), as was still the case with the Paulicians under Michael II when Theodore’s letter was written, should be taught but not punished. At the end of his letter to Theophilus of Ephesus Theodore cites words that he had once said, presumably in connection with the problem of the death penalty

<sup>71</sup> Peter of Sicily, ed. Astruc, § 87, p. 39, l. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Peter of Sicily, ed. Astruc, § 33, p. 19, l. 12.

<sup>73</sup> *Life of St. Macarius of Pelekete*, BHG 1003, *Analecta Bollandiana* 16(1897), 142–163, esp. p. 159, l. 8; cf. Lemerle, “L’Histoire des Pauliciens,” p. 83.

for Paulicians, to Patriarch Nicephorus and which the latter had approved: "The Church does not punish with the sword."<sup>74</sup>

The arguments of the Iconoclasts in support of their persecution of the Iconophiles are described by the latter as predominantly political in nature. This is clear in an early document, the *Nuthesia*, discussed earlier (p. 238 above), where the persecuting bishop accused the Iconophiles of "setting themselves directly against our (imperial) power" and the monk George in particular of blasphemy against the emperor and concludes that he (George) "should be executed according to imperial laws." Theophanes gives as the reason advanced for the execution of Andreas Kalybitis under Constantine V that Andreas had "refuted his impiety [i.e., Iconoclasm] and had called him a second Valens and Julian."<sup>75</sup> He also says that one of the charges against St. Stephen the Younger was that he admonished many persons "to look down on imperial honors and money gifts."<sup>76</sup> A related accusation was that St. Stephen persuaded many persons to enter monasteries at a time when Emperor Constantine V was exerting great pressure on monastic institutions (pp. 242–244 above). The successful recruitment of monks by St. Stephen was therefore considered an act of political sabotage. Supposedly association with and admiration for St. Stephen was one of Constantine V's allegations against a number of high officials, which resulted in their decapitation or blinding.<sup>77</sup> According to Methodius, the chronicler and saint, Theophanes was accused of undoing the work of Leo V's henchmen who had by means of coercion (*θλίβειν*) converted many to Iconoclasm. Theophanes had later persuaded them to return to orthodoxy.<sup>78</sup> Leo V also is said to have construed an all-night vigil held by Patriarch Nicephorus at St. Sophia at the beginning of the Second Iconoclasm as an attempt of the patriarch to stir up disturbance and revolution and an act of opposition against the emperor's policy of religious peace.<sup>79</sup>

Even more revealing is another incident reported in the *Life of the Patriarch Nicephorus*. He had refused to debate the issue of religious images with the emperor's iconoclastic advisors unless every one of the emperor's subjects was allowed to follow his own inclination (*ἡ ἐκάστου ῥοπή*), prisoners were released, exiles allowed to return and the persecution (*μάστιξ*) halted. Thereupon Leo's entourage urged the emperor to reject the patriarch's conditions with the following argument:

<sup>74</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.155, coll. 1481C–1485D.

<sup>75</sup> Theophanes, p. 432, l. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Theophanes, p. 437, l. 6; cf. Nicephorus, p. 72, l. 14.

<sup>77</sup> Theophanes, p. 438, l. 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Life of Theophanes*, BHG 1787z, ed. B. Latyshev, Mémoires de l'Académie de Russie, 8th series, 13, pt. 4 (1918), 1–40, esp. 30, 26.

<sup>79</sup> *Life of St. Nicephorus*, BHG 1335, ed. C. de Boor, *Nicephori . . . opuscula historica* (Leipzig, 1880), pp. 139–217, esp. p. 167, l. 19 f.: Leo V, afraid of *νεωπερισμός*, holds the Patriarch responsible for *ταραχή* and claims that he, the Emperor, is working for *εἰρήνη*; cf. p. 169, 23ff. The Patriarch in his turn accuses the Emperor of turning *βαθεῖα εἰρήνη* into *στάσεις*, p. 168, l. 8.

If every one's inclination (ἡ ἐκάστου βούλη) were allowed to turn in whichever direction he wished and those condemned to exile were allowed to return and every one could choose his own way of thinking (αἵρεσις, heresy?) without compulsion, we (the court) should promptly be left naked and alone. For everybody's opinion would quickly follow him (the Patriarch) and our (side) lose all support."<sup>80</sup>

The passage is interesting because at least for one fleeting moment a patriarch of Constantinople supposedly discussed with the emperor's entourage the possibility of allowing freedom of religious conscience — or at least the hagiographer imagined that a discussion of this sort might have taken place. What is more germane to the present purpose, however, is that in the eyes of the court the right to persecute heretics was an indispensable component of imperial power and any relaxation of the persecution of Iconophiles, therefore, a dangerous weakening of the emperor's prerogatives.

During the second period of Iconoclasm and after the Restoration of Orthodoxy the Iconophiles tended to emphasize more and more that the Iconoclasts justified their persecution in terms of imperial power. In the *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, for example, the iconophile bishop Peter of Nicaea is made to say to Leo V that even if the emperor allied himself with the so-called Manichaeans (i.e., Paulicians), the most pernicious heretics, they would win because they had the support of the emperor. To this the hagiographer added a personal observation: "for where power is combined with impiety, truth is defeated and justice tyrannized and crushed."<sup>81</sup>

The risk of basing a discussion of arguments advanced by Iconoclasts in support of their persecution of the Iconophiles on sources emanating from their victims cannot be overstressed. On the other hand, two considerations make it probable that the picture derived from Iconophile sources is not seriously distorted. In the first place, it has been shown, on the basis of surviving evidence drawn from spokesmen of the persecuting authorities, that the political argumentation predominates in the persecution of the Paulicians. More importantly, it would be surprising if the Iconophiles who on the doctrinal level preserved much of iconoclastic literature and theory, in order to refute it, should have ignored nonpolitical justifications for the persecution if such had been put forward in consistent and powerful fashion. It does seem, then, that the Iconoclasts based their measures of persecution principally on the authority of the emperor to decide in matters of doctrine and to implement his decision by coercive measures. The persecutors frequently cited biblical and patristic authority in favor of their doctrinal position and in general they attempted to justify their attitudes towards Iconophile or Paulician teachings in religious terms. Yet except in the case of the death penalty they never resorted to religious arguments in

<sup>80</sup> *Life of St. Nicephorus*, p. 191, l. 19–192, l. 1 and 192, l. 24–193, l. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, ch. 33, p. xxiv.

support of the emperor's right or duty of persecuting religious dissidents. They considered it inherent in the imperial office.

### 5. JUSTIFICATIONS OF RESISTANCE

Iconophiles were aware of the claims of the imperial power over the church and made their rejection an important part of their resistance. If it is true that information on the justifications for persecution comes largely from Iconophiles, this is so because they cited them in order to refute them and to account for their resistance to imperial demands. Thus many biographies of iconophile saints contain as one of their purple passages a dialogue between an iconoclastic emperor and the saint (or with several saintly persons) in which the emperor asserts his control of the church and the saint rejects it. In the *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, for example, Emperor Leo V claims the right to act as a mediator (*μεσίτης*) between iconoclast and iconophile clergy and Theodore of Studios replies as follows:

Do not undo the status of the church, for the Apostle spoke thus: "And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4.11), but he did not speak of emperors. To you, Emperor, has been entrusted the body politic and the army. Take care of them and leave the church to its shepherds and teachers according to the Apostle. If you do not agree to this — even if an angel from Heaven should give us a message about a deviation from our faith we shall not listen to him, and certainly not to you.<sup>82</sup>

The author of this saint's life even states that Iconoclasm differed from all earlier heresies in that it was launched not by bishops or priests but by an emperor, a view that is not far off the truth if he is thinking of Emperor Leo V and the Second Iconoclasm.<sup>83</sup> In a similar vein Theodore of Studios concluded a description of the persecution under Leo V — the destruction of altars and of sacred vessels, the burning of vestments and manuscripts, the investigation of individuals and households, the recriminations among members of the clergy and the rewards offered for betrayal, beatings, jailings, exile and execution of resisters — with the remark: "There is one law only — the will of Caesar."<sup>84</sup>

The principal ground, however, adduced by the victims of persecution was the contention that they were acting on behalf of truth or justice or that they were defending God, Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints against their detractors. In a letter to his uncle Plato written during the Moechian Controversy Theodore wrote that he was suffering "because of the law of God."<sup>85</sup> When in 808 he was asked to hold communion with the priest

<sup>82</sup> *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, ch. 33, p. xxiv. Similar passage in *Life of St. Nicephorus*, p. 188, l. 12.

<sup>83</sup> *Life of St. Nicetas of Medikion*, ch. 27, p. xxiii.

<sup>84</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.16, cols. 1165D–1168B.

<sup>85</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.3, col. 916A.

Joseph who had officiated at the second marriage of Constantine VI, he claimed that “a commandment of God and the canons of the Fathers” forbade compliance.<sup>86</sup> In a letter of uncertain date he speaks of his brother, Archbishop Joseph of Thessalonica, as being exiled for the third time “on behalf of God’s truth” and in another letter he calls the Iconoclasts “persecutors of the truth and rebels (*ἀντάρπαι*) against Christ.”<sup>87</sup> Indeed, the notion of resistance for the sake of Christ is ubiquitous during the Iconoclastic Controversy inasmuch as the Iconophiles equate attacks on Christ’s image with a persecution of Christ himself.<sup>88</sup>

The resisters often refer to biblical passages for support. Both Theodore of Studios and the author of the *Life of St. Peter of Atroa* invoke one of the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5.10) and to a Studite monk who had sinned with women Theodore praises “the beatitude of persecution.”<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere Theodore cites in letters to monastic correspondents Jesus’ exhortation to the twelve apostles to “confess me before men” (Mt. 10.32) as an encouragement to join the ranks of the confessors of the Iconophile cause.<sup>90</sup> In the same letter he declares that a written promise not to assemble signed by some of the monks conflicts with Jesus’ injunction, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Jo. 6.37), a favorite quotation which Theodore used in a variety of contexts.<sup>91</sup> In another letter he cites the *Second Letter to Timothy* (3.12) to the effect that persecution is the result of a pious Christian life.<sup>92</sup>

The resisters also appeal regularly to the example of earlier martyrs and confessors, either in general terms or by references to specific personalities. Only a few examples can be given here. St. Stephen the Younger is of course frequently compared to the first martyr Stephen (Acts 6 f.), as is Patriarch Nicephorus by his biographer.<sup>93</sup> When St. Stephen was dragged by Constantine V’s henchmen through the streets of the capital and paid his last respects to a chapel of the martyr Theodore as he was passing it, one of the executioners shouted: “Behold, the Unmentionable wishes to die like a martyr.”<sup>94</sup> The example of the Maccabees is invoked in the *Life of St. Michael Syncellus* and by Theodore of Studios (together with that of John the Bap-

<sup>86</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 1.21, col. 969D.

<sup>87</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, nos. 1, p. 1; 127, p. 113.

<sup>88</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.2, col. 1120B: ὁ Χριστὸς διώκεται διὰ τῆς εἰκόνης αὐτοῦ.

<sup>89</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 183, p. 156; 2.105, col. 1364A–B; cf. *Life of St. Peter of Atroa*, ch. 83.34, p. 219.

<sup>90</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.2, col. 1121B.

<sup>91</sup> For example, also as an argument against handing over refugees to the Bulgars, Theophanes, p. 498, l. 3.

<sup>92</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 98, p. 86.

<sup>93</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1124B; *Life of St. Nicephorus*, p. 204, l. 8.

<sup>94</sup> *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, col. 1176C.



tist).<sup>95</sup> Theodore reminds his correspondents constantly of earlier martyrs, for example of the Ten Martyrs of Crete, of Cyprian of Antioch and Justina, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and of Sabas and Theodosius (under Anastasius I).<sup>96</sup> He consoles an iconophile abbess, who had complained that bishops, priests and abbots had joined the ranks of the Iconoclasts, by observing that even in earlier generations few men and women had obtained the crown of martyrdom. Upon hearing the news that Pope Paschal had spoken out in favor of the images he remarks: "let the blood of the martyrs irrigate the church."<sup>97</sup> The biographer of St. Macarius of Pelekete even attempts a quasi-philosophical argument to prove that the martyrs of the Iconoclastic Controversy such as St. Macarius were the equals of the early Christian martyrs:

[The martyrdom of Macarius] is inferior in one respect only, namely that time in that case [the early martyrs] came first and in this case [Macarius] came second. But it [time] contributes nothing to holy men, is potentially indifferent and is responsible neither for vice nor for virtue. The [free] choice of the sufferers, on the other hand, demonstrates by their labors their equality or even superiority [over the early martyrs], for goodness is achieved not through [priority of] time but by the free choice and zeal of the will.<sup>98</sup>

The comparison of the iconophile confessors with earlier martyrs served to assure them that their resistance to persecution was no less meritorious than that of previous sufferers for religion's sake. Theodore of Studios affirms, apparently in reaction against persons who expressed doubts concerning the importance of the issue of religious images, that the resister was "a true martyr and that he did in no way fall behind those who suffered martyrdom from the hands of pagans or Jews."<sup>99</sup> But Theodore connects the persecution of Iconophiles even more directly with earlier divisions in the church, going as far back as the situation prior to the Seventh Council. In a letter to a perfume dealer he writes:

Do you see what is happening, my friend? Fire is, as it were, setting the church of God on fire, a fire fed by previous fuel. We were devoured by the flame of adultery (*μοιχεία*), consumed by the flash of the adulterous wedding ceremony (*μοιχοζευξία*). . . . I should add, not inappropriately, earlier happenings concern-

<sup>95</sup> *Life of St. Michael Syncellus*, p. 247, l. 14; Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.21, col. 1185A.

<sup>96</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 108, p. 97; 2.63, col. 1281C and ed. CL, no. 49, p. 42; 2.59, col. 1273C; 2.2, col. 1120D.

<sup>97</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 71, p. 58; 2.63, col. 1281B. Cf. 2.21, col. 1181B; 2.62, col. 1280B. In 2.63, col. 1281B Theodore also rejoices over the pope's intervention as an indication that the Iconoclasts "cut themselves off from the body of Christ." Similarly, Tarasius in 784 was hesitant to accept the patriarchal office because both eastern Christians (i.e., those under Arab rule) and the West were separated from the Byzantine church, Theophanes, p. 459, ll. 18-24.

<sup>98</sup> *Life of St. Macarius of Pelekete*, p. 156, ll. 9-15.

<sup>99</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters* 2.21, col. 1185A.

ing and caused by the Simoniacs. . . . And then in addition the (measures taken) because of and against the Paulicians, for the law of the church does not use the sword or the whip against anybody, for, says [Scripture], "all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 26.52).<sup>100</sup>

Here Theodore sees in Iconoclasm and persecution a divine punishment for earlier sins: the lax attitude of the clergy towards the second marriage of Constantine VI in 795 and towards the restoration in 808 of the priest Joseph who had performed the ceremony, towards those who prior to the Seventh Ecumenical Council had bought ecclesiastical office, and the cooperation of the clergy in the execution of Paulicians.<sup>101</sup>

#### 6. CONCLUSION: EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSECUTION AND RESISTANCE

Byzantine literature of the eighth and ninth centuries presents religious persecution as a frequent occurrence, almost a normal fact of life. Monks and nuns suffered most intensely while the overwhelming majority of the secular clergy and laity either joined the ranks of the persecutors or gave at most secret support to the victims. In some instances, Byzantine rulers prepared for persecution by issuing propaganda pamphlets and holding public meetings in which the religious issue was discussed. The means used by the persecuting emperors ranged from promises of rewards for collaborators to harassment of all sorts, banishment, imprisonment and corporal punishment, all designed to break down the resistance of the victims at a gradual or rapid pace. The death penalty was not imposed on heretics, except intermittently on groups such as the Paulicians considered particularly nefarious. Impressive intellectual efforts were often made by the persecutors to justify the theological positions espoused by them, but the reasons given for measures of persecution as such strike one as perfunctory, contrived and predominantly political rather than religious: individuals singled out for punishment are charged with disobedience to the emperor and to imperial law.

The resisters, too, resorted to the written word to defend their cause and composed both learned refutations of their opponents' theses and pamphlets of a popular kind. Because of the persecution, they were not often in a position to assemble in larger groups. Their leaders compensated for this disadvantage by organizing a more or less clandestine network of communications through which they reminded each other of the right and duty of free religious expression (*παρηρησία*), even at the risk of suffering punishment or martyrdom. In this way the iconophile resistance movement, for example, grew into an underground church, a development that confronted its leaders with the problem of striking a reasonable balance between the

<sup>100</sup> Theodore of Studios, *Letters*, ed. CL, no. 23, p. 20 f.; cf. also 2.55, col. 1269B; ed. CL, no. 124, p. 111.

<sup>101</sup> On these developments, see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*, pp. 80–101.

need for unity within the resistance movement, on the one hand, and for regional and local flexibility to make authoritative decisions in individual cases on the other. In fact, the leadership was faced daily with quarrels and rivalries difficult to arbitrate in a climate of isolation and fear, as well as with the problems of those who had weakened under duress and later repented. In its resistance the Paulician heresy is again exceptional as the extraordinary fierceness of persecution resulted in military secession of the Paulicians and the establishment of a state hostile to Byzantium. In response to the political argument for persecution the resisters contested the right of the emperor to decide on matters of church doctrine and discipline. They justified their resistance by means of biblical citations, by the example of earlier martyrs, by their conviction of defending religious truth and by seeing the persecution as divine punishment for sins committed during former religious crises.

The material discussed in this paper has implications for the question of the effectiveness of religious persecution and resistance, although it should be stressed that they derive from a body of evidence narrowly defined in time and place and that they should not be generalized without wider research. The sources show that for the victims there was little hope that a persecution once begun might end while the emperor who had initiated it sat on his throne. He had burned his bridges and was likely to intensify the persecution as time went on. On the other hand, there was every reason to expect that with the accession of a new ruler, of a prince belonging to the same dynasty and particularly of a successful usurper, the persecution would be interrupted for a considerable period of time so that the new emperor could consolidate his power, or would even be halted altogether. In the case of the Iconoclastic and Moechian Controversies the persecutors lost in the end, not however without leaving the imprint of their views on Byzantine church and civilization (witness, for example, the introduction or intensification of ecclesiastical control over religious art).<sup>102</sup> The Iconophiles, on the other hand, who did not persecute the Iconoclasts (or did so only minimally), ultimately won. The persecutors were more successful in their treatment of the Paulicians whom they exterminated individually by executions and collectively by warfare, but at a very high price to themselves in lives and money. It should be remembered, moreover, that Paulicians and Paulicianism survived in northern Greece and Bulgaria and there exercised a profound influence on the Bogomil movement and indirectly on the Albigensians and related heretical groups in Western Europe. The conclusion, encouraging though hardly original and based on severely limited evidence, seems inescapable that religious persecution did not pay.

The rights of the Byzantine autocrat in the church were numerous and his influence over its personnel, institutions and on occasion even its teachings powerful. They could produce fierce repression of religious dissidents. Yet

<sup>102</sup> Grabar, *L'Iconoclisme byzantin*, pp. 214–261, esp. pp. 259–261.

the high price to be paid for it, coupled with its normal restriction, in the event of widespread and determined resistance, to one reign, demonstrate once again that the so-called Caesaropapism, that is the notion that the Byzantine emperor was supreme in and over the church, was subject to severe limitations.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> On the characterization of church-state relations at Byzantium as Caesaropapism see, for example, Ernest Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 7–10; Wilhelm Ensslin, *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, part 2 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 12 f.; Emil Hermann, *ibid.*, p. 105 and n. 1 (bibliography); Steven Runciman, *ibid.*, p. 374; Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 2, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 9 (Washington, D.C., 1966), p. 837 f. and n. 409 (bibliography).