

WHY WERE ST GREGORY PALAMAS AND THE PALAMITES ACCUSED OF ICONOCLASM?

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

1. Introduction

During the controversy between St Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria, icons had no place in the arguments on the essence and energies of God. And yet, Fr John Meyendorff said in one of his works on the subject, and only in passing, that the opponents of hesychasm accused St Gregory and the Palamites of Iconoclasm. These laconic references¹ have always intrigued me and inspire me now to investigate the theological basis of the charge. This is the objective of the present study.

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

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

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

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

2. The Theoretical Framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Bogomils:** the Perfect Ones could see God in his essence with their bodily eyes;
- **Hesychasts:** Christians, purified by the prayer of the heart, could, if God so willed but not automatically, see the divine light.
- **Bogomils:** disdain for the sacraments and liturgical offices;
- **Hesychasts:** preference, without disdain for liturgical offices, given to the prayer of the heart in solitude during the week and the Eucharist on Sunday with the other monks.
- **Bogomils:** rejection of the wealth of this world, material poverty being the ideal;
- **Hesychasts:** detachment from all material things, poverty to facilitate pure prayer.⁴

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

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

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

3. *Bogomil Influence in the Fourteenth Century*

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

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

⁵ Philotheos Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople, *In Praise of Palamas*, PG 151, 551–666.

⁶ *The Bogomils*, 127–140 ff.

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

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

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

3.2 *The Hagioritique Tome or Tome Eggraphon*.

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

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

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

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

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

And then.

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

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

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

And then.

[First anathema]

[To the following]

- Joseph of Crete,

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

[to those] who willingly, fraudulently and maliciously give themselves over to the terrible and unclean heresy of the Bogomils;

[to those] who, much more, do and teach the most terrible and ungodly things;

[to those] who say that the divine icons are only wood and mud, spit on them, dishonor, burn, defile and destroy them in any way; to the leaders who teach that holy baptism and the all-holy communion of the all holy and life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, his forbearance—O Christ the King [have mercy on us]—are vain and useless;

[to those] who reject the divine and salutary economy of the incarnation of the One who loves men and his manifestation;

[to those] who say that the resurrection was neither angelic nor from the dead;

[to those] who with great attention perform any impure and iniquitous acts as if such were a great virtue;

[to those] who teach other very terrible things, full of obscenity, impiety, sacrilege, and atheism, which things it is not tolerable for devout Christians to think about, either in writing or by word;

[to those] who infect many other people with these things by their colorful, enticing and fraudulent words and who use ruses, pretending to live godly lives and to be zealous.

And so, let them go, in numbers as great as possible, to their father, the Devil, and let those who are with them go into the abyss of total destruction. To all these, anathema.

[Second anathema]

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

[The members of the synod] added this:

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

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

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

- Joseph of Crete,
- Nicander,
- Dionysios,

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

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

3.3 *The Antirrhethika I* of Nicephoros Gregoras¹¹

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

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

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

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 504–506.

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

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

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

The God-carrying men on Mount Athos wrote a book [*The Hagioritique Tome*¹²] on the wickedness of the Bogomils and brought it to the Holy Synod of the Byzantines. This text speaks of, among other things, the abominable and impure doctrines of Bogomils. There are so many [repulsive] things in it that modest

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

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

3.4 *The Letter of Gregory Akindynos*¹⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 223–225.

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

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

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

4. *St Gregory and the Bogomils*

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

4.1 *In Praise of Palamas*¹⁸

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 The Letter to the Metropolitan of Monemvasia, Gregory Akindynos

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

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

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

5. *Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory and His Disciples*

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

5.1 An Iconoclastic Misdeed Attributed to St Gregory

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

*The AntiPalamite Tome of the Pseudo-Synod of Constantinople*²¹

¹⁹ *The Letters of Gregory Akindynos* 52, 223–225.

²⁰ Meyendorff, 37.

²¹ *The AntiPalamite Tome*, PG 150, 882 AB and 884 AB.

The very pernicious author of this evil is Palamas, and those who reflect on the subject must purify their souls and minds of him. Such a heinous man was consecrated archpriest [archbishop] of the first city of the Thessalonians but was recently deposed for the following reasons: he plundered a church, in the Monastery of Peribleptos, stripping the icons of their coverings, leaving them open to the air. He also broke oil lamps . . . in order to, like Judas, get money, and the thrice miserable fellow did not respect the day of the Lord's Passion, taking a bath to pamper his body and eating, up to the end of the canon. He shocked and outraged the monks and also those who listened and watched him in the Holy Monastery of the Resurrection of Christ.

And yet, with him [Patriarch Isidore], Palamas, the author of evil doctrine, has composed many writings in which he brought together the evil and vain flowering buds of his own thought which he has imposed on the Church of God inventing superior and inferior deities, visible and invisible gods and deities. He holds for nothing the holy creed of Christian faith, sealed by the Holy Fathers at Nicaea, as well as by the other ecumenical synods. This creed directs us to believe in one God and Divinity. He and those who think like him set forth new theological doctrines and attack holy icons and sacred vases. He has violated good Christian order by daring to celebrate the liturgy even after being deposed. This rascal Palamas and anyone else taking part in his evil, anyone who is currently hiding or disguising himself as an archpriest, we remove them all from the priesthood without delay, and we depose them by a full and definitive dismissal. We consider them to be worthy of fire and iron, like unruly children and a perverse and twisted generation, deserving the wrath of God for such things.

5.2 Non-Iconoclastic Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory

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

Nicephoros Gregoras, *Antirrhethika I*²²

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

5.3 Unspecified Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory

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

5.4 Iconoclastic Misdeeds Attributed to St Gregory's Disciples

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

Nicephoros Gregoras, *Roman History* 19, 5²³

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

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

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

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

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

6. The Charge of Iconoclasm: The Theological Basis

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

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

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

The second answer agrees with everything that the first answer says concerning the essence of God, but it does not stop there. According to the spiritual experience of eastern saints, we can have real and direct communion with God, as St Peter said, ‘share in the very being of God’. When Barlaam, as a supporter of the first answer, said that the monks’ stories of this experience were nonsense, St Gregory felt obliged to seek the least inadequate words²⁵ to express and defend the reality and the mystery of the saints’ spiritual experience. He took the words *energy/energies* and applied them to all the divine theophanies in the Old Testament, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and the visions of light in the holy Tradition of the Church. The glory of God in the Temple, the light of Tabor and the manifestations of a light, attested to by the Fathers of the Church, are put into the category of God’s energies, not of his essence, but his energies are outside of his essence.

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

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

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

The Lord speaks to unbelievers.

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

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

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

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

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

arguments to support their complaints. If St Gregory was a Bogomil in one area, he was, 'without a doubt', a Bogomil in other areas, including icons. Everyone knew that Iconoclasm and iconophobia were part of the Bogomil attacks against the Great Church. Then, by a 'happy' coincidence, Nicephoros Gregoras discovered a manuscript written by the iconophile patriarch, Nicephoros of Constantinople, during the period of classical Iconoclasm (730–843). This document is called *Against Eusebius*. Gregoras incorrectly thought that the text had been written by St Theodore Grapto²⁷ (775–844), another iconodule Father, but Gregoras still used the arguments that he found there against the Palamites and, according to Featherstone,²⁸ Gregoras was the first to use the anti-Iconoclastic arguments found in the work of Nicephoros of Constantinople.

In the *Contra Eusebium*,²⁹ Gregoras found a rebuttal of Eusebius's position as expressed in a letter written to the Empress Constantia, the half-sister of the Emperor Constantine. Constantia had written a letter to Eusebius in which she asked him to send her an image of Jesus. Eusebius's answer³⁰ expresses the doctrines that Nicephoros believed erroneous. Eusebius seems to accept a Christological doctrine that reduces the reality of Christ's humanity, and, using this reduced humanity as a reason for refusing to send the image, he even declares the impossibility of painting such a picture. It is not difficult to understand that the Iconoclasts took Eusebius, 'his' letter, and his alleged iconophobia as an expression of their position four centuries before their time. It is also easy to see why Nicephoros fought the doctrine of Christ's deficient humanity and affirmed the possibility of painting

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The underlining is by the author.)

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

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

³¹ *Ibid.*, 212–214.

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

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

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

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

See the illustration in Annex III.3.

6.2 Contra Eusebium by St Nicephoros of Constantinople³²

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

See the illustration in Annex III.4.

6.3 Nicephoros Gregoras

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

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

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

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

6.3.1 *Antirrhetika I*, 2, 5³³

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

³³ *Antirrhetika I*, 308–310.

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

6.3.2 *Antirrhethika I*, 2, 5³⁴

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

6.3.3 *Historia Rhomaike* 19, 3³⁶

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

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 311–312.

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

³⁶ *Historia Rhomaike*, 105.

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

6.3.4 *Historia Rhomaïke* 19, 4³⁷

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

³⁷ *Ibid.*

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

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

6.3.5 *Historia Rhomaïke* 19, 6³⁸

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

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

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

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

7. St Gregory Palamas on Icons

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

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

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

15. They [the Turks] interrupted him [St. Gregory] again saying, 'Why do you place many representations in your churches and venerate them, even though God wrote and said to Moses: "Thou shalt not make a likeness of anything, whatever things are in heaven above, and whatever are in the earth beneath and whatever are in the sea"?'

And the bishop said again, 'Friends are venerated by each other, but they are not made gods. It is evident to everyone that this is, indeed, what Moses learned from God, and this is what he taught the people then. However this same Moses again and at

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

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

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

Many answered, ‘Yes, he did all these things’.

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

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

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

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

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

associated with men (Ba 3:37), and who for the salvation of men suffered, died and rose again, ascended with His body into the heavens and ‘sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High’ (Hb 1:3), and who will come again with His body to judge the living and the dead. Out of love for Him, you should make, therefore, an icon of Him who became man for our sakes, and through His icon you should bring Him to mind and worship Him, elevating your intellect through it to the venerable body of the Savior, that is set on the right hand of the Father in heaven.

In like manner you should also make icons of the saints and venerate them, not as gods—for this is forbidden—but because of the attachment, inner affection and sense of surpassing honor that you feel for the saints when by means of their icons the intellect is raised up to them. It was in this spirit that Moses made icons of the Cherubim within the Holy of Holies (Ex 25:18). The Holy of Holies itself was an image of supracelestial things (cf. Ex 25:40; Hb 8:5), while the Holy Place was an image of the entire world. Moses called these things holy, not glorifying what is created, but through it glorifying God the Creator of the world. You must not, then, deify the icons of Christ and the saints, but through them you should venerate Him who originally created us in His own image, and who subsequently consented in His ineffable compassion to assume the human image and to be circumscribed by it.

You should venerate not only the icon of Christ, but also the similitude of His cross. For the cross is Christ’s great sign and trophy of victory over the devil and all his hostile hosts...

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

8. *Testimony of Antonio Rigo*⁴¹

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

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

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

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

9. Conclusion

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

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

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

purser prayer, to the elimination of all mental imagery from prayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Barlaam of Calabria, in his work *Against the Messalians*, who accuses St Gregory of Messalianism, Bogomilism, does not use the word Iconoclasm against his opponent. Had Barlaam smelled the slightest odor of Iconoclasm coming from St Gregory and his followers, he would certainly not have deprived himself of the joy of adding such a weapon to his polemic arsenal.
- St Gregory himself did not take the accusation seriously enough to respond in his defense of the hesychasm.
- The charges of active and theoretical Iconoclasm were heard in public or at least in writing rather late in the controversy. 1347 is the date that saw the appearance of the *AntiPalamite Tome* of the dissident bishops gathered in a pseudo-synod (5.1) and Gregoras's *Antirrhetika I* (5.2). Barlaam had written *Against the Messalians* in 1339–1340.
- Today's anti-Palamites⁴² have not seen fit to resuscitate the charge of Iconoclasm against St Gregory.

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

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

*Annexes**I. Chronology of St. Gregory Palamas's Life*

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

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

II. The Synodikon of Orthodoxy on the Bogomils

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

To the monk Nilos. To all the proposals of the ungodly monk Nilos and to those who share them, anathema. [Anathemas relating to Bogomils and related sectarians] [I. Text used by an unidentified metropolis.]

To those who do not confess the one nature of the Trinity, holy, inseparable, indivisible, coeternal, sharing the same honor and the same throne, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
but who confess an angel, from outside the Trinity called Amen, calling this angel the Son
and who confess a different and still inferior nature for the Holy Spirit [yet] equal in power to the Father and to the Son,
anathema.

To those who do not confess that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth and of all creatures, the modeler of Adam and the author of Eve
but who say that the “adversary” is the prince and the creator of the universe and the modeler of mankind,
anathema.

To those who do not confess that the Word and Son of God, begotten of the Father without alteration before all ages, in the last time, due to his immense compassion, took flesh of the all-holy Theotokos Mary, was made man for our salvation assuming everything that is ours, except sin

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

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

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

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

II.2 The second series of anathemas is also called the Synodikon of Hellade and was probably composed in the reign of Alexis Comnenos (1081 to 1118) during the trial of Basil the Bogomil, burned in 1111.⁴⁴

[II. Used by a suffragan Church of Athens]

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

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

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

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

who took the name of Christ and promised to rise from the death and who was nicknamed Lykopetros because he was indeed buried under stones for his innumerable acts of witchcraft and heinous conduct

and who promised his wicked followers that he would rise from the dead after three days,

but from whose nefarious remains, three days later, while his people stood around this pile of stones, a demon went out in the form of a wolf,

anathema.

To Tychikos, Peter's fellow heretic and disciple, who altered and deformed the divine Scriptures particularly the whole Gospel of Matthew

and who applied to his spiritual father all the verses relating to God the Father and the Holy Spirit thus redirecting the glory of God toward the leader of his nefarious heresy,
anathema.

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

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

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

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

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

after them, by the divine and blessed Fathers and Doctors of the Church

and who therefore teach as the basis of their apostasy to pray only the Our Father with prostrations, without making the sign of the Cross of the Lord on their face, under the pretext that our Lord Jesus Christ himself gave us this prayer but in reality invoking their infamous father, Satan

and who for this reason also reject the sign of the cross

and who cannot stand to hear the final ecphonetic to the glory of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, added by the divine luminaries and guides of the Church, namely, “for to you is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”

and who think and teach such things persevering until the end in this perverse obstinacy,
anathema.

To those who hate the assemblies of the Church

and who sit in their own places of worship

and who teach there under the pretext of tranquility

but who in reality act thus so that their unclean doctrine may go unnoticed and unchallenged thus secretly pouring all the venom of their heresy into the minds of those they have led astray
and to all those who persevere until the end in such an error,
anathema.

To those who describe as “works of men’s hands” the churches that the tradition of the Holy Apostles has taught us to raise to the glory of God calling them dens of demons

and who continue on this path

and who, accordingly, attack the setting out of venerable, divine and sacred images as well as the honoring and veneration rendered to them

and to these entirely corrupt and gangrenous people,
anathema.

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

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

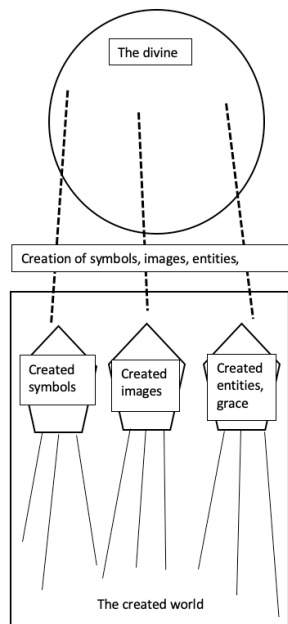
To those who say that the communion in the Body and in the Precious Blood of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is a communion in ordinary bread and wine
and who precisely for this reason advise their converted laity to approach the holy gifts without fasting and to commune by hypocrisy and therefore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

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

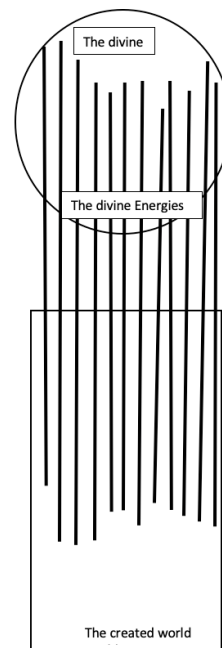
This is the sowing of the perverse impiety and the harvest of the wickedness of perverse Satan. As for us, the chosen people of Christ, let us hold on, from the bottom of the hearts, to the divine and apostolic teachings and the traditions of the Fathers, fleeing, with all our might, from the abominable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

III. Illustrations

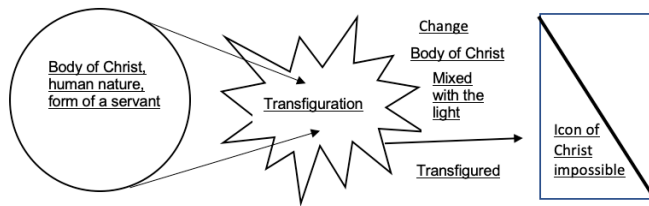
III.1 The anti-Palamites



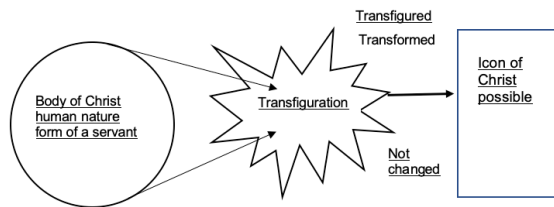
III.2 The Palamites



III.3 Eusebius of Caesarea



III.4. Nicephoros of Constantinople



IV. The Testimony of Antonio Rigo: "Iconoclasm"

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

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

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

ture. We have already seen how the opponents of Athanasios I—whose attachment to sacred images is well known⁴⁵—accused him specifically of desecrating icons and the Cross.⁴⁶ Athanasios I himself, at least a few times, accused some of his opponents of Iconoclasm. In our opinion, the charge against Patriarch Niphonos by Athanasios I^{47, 48, 49} and Nicephoros Choumnos constitutes the “model” on which were based the antiPalamite accusations of 1347. In fact, in 1314, Niphonos⁵⁰ was accused of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, “On Delusion and Other Subjects,” 283: “. . . keep your intellect free from colors, forms and images.”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 285.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁹ G. Nikolopoulos, *Ai eis ton Iōannén ton Chrusostomon esphalmenôs apodidomenai epistolai*, 481.

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

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

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

⁶¹ *Introduction*, 389.