

Adoring Christ's Image: The Icon Theology of Leo of Chalcedon and Theodore of Stoudios

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THE ICON THEOLOGY of Leo of Chalcedon has in recent years again become the subject of academic inquiry.¹ Interestingly, it is not theologians but art historians who have led the way. Annemarie Weyl Carr and Charles Barber argue that Leo's reasoning deviates in important ways from classical icon theology as it had been formulated during the Second Iconoclasm. They show that for Leo relational veneration is directed at the material aspect of the icon and not at the representation of Christ, which receives the same adorational veneration as Christ himself.² There is only one recent contribution by a scholar of Byzantine theology, Basil Lourié.³ Lourié, too, highlights the differences between Leo's arguments and those of his forebears. His assessment, however, is resoundingly negative. According to him, Leo confused the concepts of substance and

¹ For earlier research see P. E. Stéphanou, "La doctrine de Léon de Chalcedoine et de ses adversaires sur les images," *OCP* 12 (1946) 177–199.

² A. Weyl Carr, "Leo of Chalcedon and the Icons," in D. Mouriki and Ch. Moss, *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton 1995) 579–584; Ch. Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting. Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden 2007) 136–145. See also B. Pentcheva, "Miraculous Icons: Medium, Imagination, and Presence," in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium* (Farnham 2011) 263–278.

³ B. Lourié, "Une dispute sans justes: Léon de Chalcedoine, Eustrate de Nicée et la troisième querelle sur les images sacrées," *Studia patristica* 42 (2006) 321–340.

hypostasis and did not pay sufficient attention to the human aspect in the divine Word because he did not understand what Patriarch Nicephorus and Theodore of Stoudios had written on the topic. Since Weyl Carr and Barber do not offer a detailed discussion of the evidence and Lourié's conclusions are problematic it seems opportune to revisit the topic. This article has two objectives, to show that Leo's icon theology is coherent, and to demonstrate that it is adumbrated in Theodore's *Third Antirrheticus*.

At the end of the eleventh century the Byzantine Empire was in a desperate situation.⁴ The Anatolian heartlands had been lost to the Seljuks and the European territories were threatened by Normans and Pechenegs. Repulsing these enemies required large armies. Yet the loss of tax revenue made recruitment of mercenaries very difficult. Therefore, Emperor Alexius took an unusual step. To fill the coffers of the state, he ordered that objects made of precious metal be taken from churches and melted down even if they bore representations of Christ.⁵ This measure met with fierce resistance from the metropolitan Leo of Chalcedon. Leo claimed that those responsible for it were Iconoclasts. In letters to the patriarch and to a fellow-metropolitan he declared that destruction of images of Christ was an attack on Christ himself.⁶ In order to justify this view, he developed an

⁴ For a discussion of the controversy see most recently Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting* 131–136; and J. Ryder, “Leo of Chalcedon. Conflicting Ecclesiastical Models in the Byzantine Eleventh Century,” in M. D. Lauxtermann and M. Whittow (eds.), *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century* (London/New York 2017) 169–180.

⁵ For an overview of the political situation see P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge 1993) 27–34. For earlier measures of this kind see K. Parry, “‘What can the pearl of a king do?’ The Idea of Wealth in Byzantium,” in A. Hintze and A. Williams (eds.), *Holy Wealth: Accounting for this World and the Next in Religious Belief and Practice. Festschrift for John R. Hinnels* (Wiesbaden 2017) 193–210.

⁶ Ed. A. E. Lauriotēs, “Ἱστορικὸν ζήτημα ἐκκλησιαστικὸν ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ,” *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 20 (1900) 405–407 (Letter III to the Patriarch), 414–416, 445–447 (Letter V to Nicholas of

elaborate icon theology, which centred on the formula θεοῦ-ὑπόστατος χαρακτήρ. Study of the contexts in which this formula appears allows us to clarify its meaning:

τούτου τοίνυν τὸν θεοῦπόστατον σωματικὸν χαρακτήρα θεὸν εἰδότες καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις εἰκόσι ... ὡς θεὸν καὶ δεσπότην σεβόμεθα καὶ προσκυνοῦμεν λατρευτικῶς.⁷

His (sc. Christ's) divinely hypostasised bodily imprint we know to be God and we worship it and venerate it adorationally ... as God and Lord also in the holy images.

Here we learn that the “imprint” (χαρακτήρ) is the outward appearance of Christ's body, which can be represented in images. Leo avers that such representations are fully divine and must therefore be accorded “adoration” (λατρεία), a type of veneration that is reserved for God. This is possible because the imprint is “divinely hypostasised” (θεοῦπόστατος). This compound adjective is shorthand for a complex set of Christological concepts.⁸

ὁ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χαρακτήρ θεοῦπόστατος ὑπάρχων, τουτέστιν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὑποστάσει τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑποστάς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θεὸς ὑπάρχων καὶ αὐτὸς κατ' οὐσίαν συναφθέντος αὐτῷ καὶ συνημμένου ὄντος τούτῳ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἀδιαστάτως καὶ ἀδιασπάστως καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις εἰκόσιν αὐτοῦ λατρευτικῶς προσκυνεῖται καὶ σέβεται ὡς θεός.

The imprint of Christ, which is divinely hypostasised, that is, which has gained hypostasis in the very hypostasis of the Son of God, and which is therefore itself God, because the Son has been substantially conjoined and is conjoined with it⁹ (sc. the imprint) so that it cannot be separated and pulled apart, is also venerated adorationally in his holy images and is worshipped as God.

Here Leo explains what he means by “divinely hypostasised.” It indicates that the imprint, the outward appearance of Christ, has been assumed into the hypostasis of the Word, which is divine. Then he makes the additional point that the imprint has been

Adrianople).

⁷ Letter V (446 Lauriotes).

⁸ Letter V (415 Lauriotes).

⁹ Cf. Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 101.22 (ed. P. Gallay and M. Jourjoin, *SC* 208).

united indissolubly with the divine substance (or nature) to which this hypostasis belongs. This ensures that it is divine in the full sense of the word and therefore worthy of adoration.

This is traditional Christological teaching: already the Council of Chalcedon had declared that the human and the divine natures are united in the one hypostasis of the divine Word. There is only one unusual feature. Leo focuses on the imprint of Christ's body, rather than the human nature of Christ to which this imprint belongs. Earlier authors had spoken instead of "the divinely hypostasised flesh" (ἡ θεοὑπόστατος σὰρξ).¹⁰ Yet this does not mean that the human nature plays no role in Leo's argument. Another passage gives a fuller account of his Christological position:¹¹

ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἄναρχος Πατήρ καὶ ὁ συνάναρχος αὐτοῦ Υἱὸς καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐνανθρώπησιν καὶ τὸ συνάναρχον αὐτῷ καὶ πανάγιον Πνεῦμα, μιᾷ προσκυνήσει συμπροσκυνοῦνται λατρευτικῶς· ὁ δὲ σαρκωθεὶς μονογενὴς Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρὸς καθ' ἑαυτὸν θεωρούμενος καὶ ὁ ὑπεράγιος αὐτοῦ χαρακτήρ προσκυνεῖται μιᾷ προσκυνήσει λατρευτικῶς· οὐ γὰρ συμπροσκυνεῖται ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ ταύτης χαρακτήρ τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ (lege: τῆ θεότητι αὐτοῦ)· ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν συναφθεὶς αὐτῇ, ὡς φησὶν ὁ θεολόγος, καὶ ἀεὶ ταύτῃ συνημμένος ὢν μία ὑπόστασις ἐστὶ σὺν αὐτῇ· καὶ εἰς οὐ τῆ φύσει, τῇ δὲ συνόδῳ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ προσκυνεῖται λατρευτικῶς, ἀλλ' οὐ συμπροσκυνεῖται αὐτῷ ἢ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ ταύτης χαρακτήρ.

The Father who is without beginning, and his Son who is equally without beginning even after the incarnation, and the all-holy Spirit who is equally without beginning, are co-venerated adorationally through one veneration, but the incarnated only-begotten Son of the Father when seen by himself and his more-than-holy imprint is venerated adorationally through one veneration. For his flesh and its imprint are not co-venerated with his divinity, but having been conjoined with it, as regards substance, as the Theologian says, and always being conjoined with it (sc. the divinity), it is one hypostasis with it (sc. the divinity), and one not as regards nature but as regards concurrence. Therefore his flesh and its im-

¹⁰ See e.g. Ps.-John of Damascus, *Oratio in occursum domini*, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos V* (Berlin 1988) 383.

¹¹ *Letter V*, ed. Lauriotès 1900, 446.

print are venerated adorationally but not co-venerated with him (sc. the Son).

This passage is discussed by Lourié, who draws from it the conclusion that Leo confused the concepts of nature and hypostasis and paid no attention to Christ's humanity. Yet it can easily be shown that Lourié has misunderstood Leo's reasoning.¹² Leo states that the outward appearance of the body is part of Christ's human nature, and that whatever applies to the human nature also applies to it. We are told that the hypostases Father, Son, and Spirit can be "venerated alongside" (συμπροσκυνοῦνται) each other, that is, separately, because each of them is divine. The situation of the human nature is radically different. Since it is a creature it is not divine by "nature" (φύσις) and therefore cannot be "venerated alongside" the divine hypostases. It can only be "venerated" (προσκυνεῖται) because it has been assumed into the hypostasis of the Son and is united with the divine nature through "concurrence" (σύνοδος) with it. This is a traditional anti-Nestorian argument, which had first been formulated in Late Antiquity. Leontius of Byzantium, for example, points out that if the flesh had a separate human hypostasis and would yet be adored, one would engage in "creature-adoration" (κτισματολατρεία) like the pagans and would furthermore add a "fourth person" (τέταρτον πρόσωπον) to the Trinity.¹³ What Leo has to say about the outward appearance of the body is equally traditional. Chalcedonian theologians of the seventh and

¹² Lourié, *Studia patristica* 42 (2006) 323–324, thinks that Leo is juxtaposing two 'imprints', the χαρακτήρ of the divine Word and the χαρακτήρ of the flesh. In his translation of the last sentence he assumes that ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ ταύτης χαρακτήρ refers only to οὐ συμπροσκυνεῖται αὐτῷ and not to προσκυνεῖται λατρευτικῶς where he supplies the divine χαρακτήρ as a different subject: "C'est pourquoi il (χαρακτήρ) reçoit le culte absolu (*latrerie*), mais *sa chair et son χαρακτήρ* ne reçoivent pas le même culte avec lui." He therefore erroneously concludes that the flesh and its imprint do not receive any veneration.

¹³ Leontius of Byzantium, *Deprehensio et triumphus super Nestorianos*, ed. B. E. Daley, *Leontius of Byzantium, Complete Works* (Oxford 2017) 424, 430.

eighth centuries assert that the “characteristic idioms” (χαρακτηριστικά ιδιώματα) individualise the human nature but do not turn it into a separate human hypostasis because they are also assumed into the divine hypostasis of the Word.¹⁴ There is only one innovative feature: the individual traits are not only found in the body to which they belong but also in images of the body.

That Leo knows how to play the heresiological game can be seen from passages where he attacks his adversaries:¹⁵

πιστεύω οὖν ὅτι Χριστὸς λέγεται καὶ ἡ τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰκὼν· καὶ οὐ δύο Χριστοί, ἀλλ' εἷς κατὰ πάντα, παρὰ μόνον τὸ τῆς οὐσίας διάφορον· καθὰ δὲ καὶ τῷ μεγάλῳ Διονυσίῳ δοκεῖ· οὔτε γὰρ ἡ δόξα τούτων σχίζεται οὔτε τὸ κράτος μερίζεται, ὡς ὁ μέγας Βασίλειος ἀπεφήνατο· ὁ δὲ σχίζων τὴν δόξαν τούτων καὶ τὸ κράτος μερίζων πρόδηλον ὅτι δύο προσκυνήσεις εἰσφέρειν (lege: εἰσφέρειν), σχίζει τὴν δόξαν τούτων καὶ τὸ κράτος μερίζει· καὶ ἔστιν εἰδωλολάτρης ἀναντιρρήτως κατὰ τὴν ἐλάττονα τῆς εἰκό-
νος προσκύνησιν.

I believe, then, that the image of Christ, too, is called Christ, and not two Christs but one in all respects apart from the difference of substance. This is also the opinion of the great Dionysius.¹⁶ For neither is their glory cut asunder nor is their power split, as the great Basil declared.¹⁷ And he who cuts asunder their glory and splits their power evidently introduces two venerations, cutting asunder their glory and splitting their power. And he is without doubt an adorer of idols according to the lesser veneration of the image.

¹⁴ *Doctrina patrum de incarnatione verbi*, ed. Franz Diekamp (Münster 1907) 280; John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos II* (Berlin 1973) 123.

¹⁵ *Letter III*: 406 Lauriotēs.

¹⁶ Ps.-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 4.1, ed. G. Heil and A. M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (Berlin 1991) 96.

¹⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 18, ed. B. Pruche, *Basile de Césarée. Sur le Saint-Esprit* (Paris 1968) 406. Already quoted by Theodore of Stoudios in his second *Antirrheticus*, PG 99.368D–369A. See Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting* 142.

At the beginning of this passage Leo introduces the concept of homonymy, which ultimately goes back to Aristotle: the archetype and the image have the same name but differ in substance.¹⁸ Yet he shows no interest in the aspect of difference. What concerns him is the identity of name, which indicates an identity of hypostasis and thus also an identity of veneration. He makes it clear that there cannot be two different types of veneration, one directed at Christ and another at images of Christ. Both must be worshipped as divine. If one accorded images of Christ a different ‘lesser’ veneration one would separate them from Christ himself. Since they would then be part of creation, their veneration would be nothing but idol-worship, and by implication, Nestorianism.

In order to defend the identity of veneration Leo emphasises the identity of Christ’s “imprint” and the representation of this “imprint” on icons in the strongest terms:¹⁹

ἐνθα δὲ οὐδεμία διαφορὰ εὐρίσκεται, ἀπλοῦν τί ἐστὶ τοῦτο καὶ ἐν καὶ ἀνάριθμον· ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ χαρακτηῖρος· ἀπλοῦν γάρ ἐστι τῆ φύσει τὸ ἐν· τοιαύτη δὲ ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ Θεολόγος φησὶν ἢ τῶν ἀπλῶν φύσις, μὴ τῷ μὲν εἰκέναι τῷ δὲ ἀπεικέναι· ἀλλὰ ὅλον ὅλου τύπον εἶναι· καὶ ταῦτὸν μάλλον ἢ ἀφομοίωμα.

Where no difference is found there is something that is simple and one and without number. Such is the case with one and the same imprint. For what is one is simple by nature. Such is, as the Theologian says,²⁰ the nature of things that are simple, that they are not similar in one respect and dissimilar in another, but one is a whole type of another whole, and the same rather than a similar thing.

This leaves no doubt that for Leo images of Christ’s body are as

¹⁸ Arist. *Cat.* 1, 1a1. This point was already made by the Iconophile authors of the ninth century, see K. Parry, *Depicting the Word. Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden 1996) 54–55.

¹⁹ *Letter V*: 414–415 Lauriototes. See Stéphanou, *OCP* 12 (1946) 183; Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting* 139.

²⁰ Greg. Naz. *Or.* 30.20 (ed. P. Gallay and M. Jourjon [Paris 1978] 268).

much part of the divine hypostasis as Christ's body itself.²¹ They thus gain a status that could be compared to bread and wine in the Eucharist, which are also fully divine.²²

Such a conceptual framework requires that the outward appearance of Christ be separable from his human nature. Only then can it be claimed that an ontological link exists between the prototype and the image. Leo duly makes this point, stating that 'form' (σχῆμα) and 'body' (σῶμα) are separable from one another. Yet he hastens to add that a real distinction only exists in the images:²³

ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν πρωτευόντων αὐτῶν ... κἂν λόγῳ διακρίνη τις τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ σώματος, ἢ γοῦν φύσις οὐ παραδέχεται τὴν διάκρισιν, ἀλλὰ συνημμένως νοεῖται μετὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου τὸ ἕτερον.

In the case of the prototypes themselves, ... even if one may distinguish the shape from the body through a mental operation, their nature nevertheless does not permit the distinction, but the one is thought in conjunction with the other.

With this explanation Leo seeks to dispel the impression that he divides the natural and hypostatic aspects in the divine Son.

Leo regarded himself as a traditionalist who was fighting the same fight as the Iconophiles of old. Yet the reality was rather different. His adversaries, too, could claim with some justification that they were following tradition. They argued that the prototype received "adorational veneration" (λατρευτικὴ προσκύνησις) whereas the image only deserved "relational veneration" (σχετικὴ προσκύνησις).²⁴ This distinction had already been made by Iconophile theologians of the early ninth century

²¹ This was seen by Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting* 138, even if his terminology is rather imprecise: "This portrait shares both the formal and the essential qualities of its subject and is therefore in effect identical with it."

²² See the treatise on the Eucharist by Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople where it is claimed that Christ's body "is found as a complete one in complete ones," ὅλον ἐν ὅλοις εὐρίσκεισθαι (PG 86.2 2393D–2396A).

²³ *Letter III*: 407 Lauriotes.

²⁴ See Lourié, *Studia patristica* 42 (2006) 331; Weyl Carr, in *Byzantine East, Latin West* 582.

who declared that the image was a mere conduit through which the worshipper could reach Christ.²⁵ Their preferred Patristic proof text was Basil of Caesarea's statement that "the honour rendered to the image passes over to the prototype" (ἡ τῆς εἰκόνοσ τιμὴ ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει), which in its original context had referred to the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son.²⁶ Leo could not accept such a notion because it also played a central role in Nestorian Christology. As Leontius of Byzantium explains, Theodore of Mopsuestia had claimed that the human being Jesus could be adored "because the honour rendered to him will be transferred to the Trinity, as that of an image to a king" (ὡς ἀπ' εἰκόνοσ εἰσ βασιλέα τῆσ αὐτοῦ τιμῆσ ἐπὶ τὴν τριάδα ἀναγομένησ).²⁷ Chalcedonian theologians of the Late Antique period regarded such statements as further proof that the Nestorians worshipped a creature as if it were God, an opinion that was undoubtedly shared by Leo.²⁸

Even so, Leo could not simply omit all references to relational veneration. He had to find a way in which he could at least pay lip-service to tradition if he did not wish to be branded an innovator. His solution was to claim that the Iconophile theologians had been misunderstood: when they stated that the image was the recipient of relational veneration they meant by "image" (εἰκόν) not the representation of Christ's features but the "material aspect of the image" (εἰκονικὴ ὕλη). In order to substantiate this claim he quotes several passages where the term

²⁵ See Parry, *Depicting the Word* 28–30.

²⁶ *De Spiritu Sancto* 18 (406 Pruche). See T. Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons. Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Oxford 2018) 117. It is evident that there is no close fit here. Unlike the Spirit, the icon is not a consubstantial image. The Iconophiles could only use Basil's statement as a proof text because they ripped it out of its context.

²⁷ Leontius *Deprehensio et Triumphus* (432 Daley).

²⁸ Iconophile theologians of the ninth century never mention that a possible 'Nestorian' reading of their favourite Patristic proof text might be possible. One wonders whether their Iconoclast adversaries were not aware of this weakness.

'image' can be understood in this way.²⁹ This then allows him to offer a different interpretation:³⁰

ἡ μὲν εἰκονικὴ ὕλη τιμητικῶς καὶ σχετικῶς προσκυνεῖται·
τουτέστι διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεοῦπόστατον Χριστοῦ χαρακτηρὰ
σχέσιν· ὁ δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ ὀρώμενος αὐτοῦ χαρακτηρὸς οὐ δι' ἄλλον τινὰ
ἀλλ' αὐτὸς δι' ἑαυτὸν λατρευτικῶς προσκυνεῖται.

The material aspect of the image is venerated through honour and relationally, that is, because of the relation to the divinely hypostasised character of Christ, whereas the imprint that is seen in it is venerated adorationally not because of another, but itself because of itself.

In this statement "relation" (σχέσις) refers not to the relationship between image and prototype but to the relationship between the material aspect of the image and the image itself, which is again declared to be identical with the prototype.³¹

The discussion so far has given the impression that Leo rejected classical icon theology in favour of a new conceptual framework that justified his reaction to Alexius' 'Iconoclasm'. However, the matter is not as straightforward as it may seem. I would argue that Leo found all the building blocks of his theological edifice in the anti-Iconoclast writings of Theodore of Stoudios.³² There one encounters a broad range of topics, such as the question whether the humanity of Christ is circumscribed or uncircumscribed, which has repeatedly been discussed in secondary literature.³³ What concerns us here are passages where Theodore seeks to define the relationship between Christ

²⁹ See Weyl Carr, in *Byzantine East, Latin West* 580–582.

³⁰ *Letter V*: 415 Lauriotes.

³¹ See Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting* 142, who points out that this theory gives the material aspect a greater role in icon worship. See also Stéphanou, *OCP* 12 (1946) 186, and Weyl Carr, in *Byzantine East, Latin West* 581.

³² Theodore *Antirrheticus* III (PG 99.389–433). Certainly, Leo was very familiar with this text. See Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting* 141.

³³ See e.g. Parry, *Depicting the Word* 99–113; Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons* 60–97.

and his image. As has often been noted, he claims that they are similar or identical as regards hypostasis but differ as regards substance. The latter part of this argument poses no problems: the body of Christ has nothing in common with wood and paint. By contrast, the former part has been interpreted quite differently. Kenneth Parry states that for Theodore “the identity between the image and its prototype is an hypostatic one,” but he does not seek to establish the precise ontological status of identity.³⁴ Theodor Damian is more daring. He speaks of “one hypostasis in Christ and his icon.”³⁵ If Theodore had held such a view he could be considered a forerunner of Leo. Yet Damian’s position has found few followers. Torstein Tollefsen is harshly critical of it, concluding that if it were correct, “one could charge Theodore with animism.”³⁶ The dispute hinges on the interpretation of a passage in Theodore’s *Letter* 57, which had led Damian to formulate his hypothesis:³⁷

ἄλλη μὲν γὰρ φύσις ὑλογραφίας καὶ ἕτερα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὐκ ἄλλη δὲ ὑπόστασις, ἀλλὰ μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, κὰν τῆ εἰκόνι γεγραμμένη.

For the nature of material painting is one thing and that of Christ is another, but there is not another hypostasis but one and the same of Christ, even if it is painted on an icon.

In his refutation of Damian’s interpretation Tollefsen focuses on the phrase “even if it is painted on an icon.” For him this qualification shows that Christ and his icon are not the same.³⁸ Yet this interpretation is problematic. When one considers the context it seems more likely that “icon” here refers to the mater-

³⁴ Parry, *Depicting the Word* 58–62.

³⁵ Th. Damian, *The Icons: Theological and Spiritual Dimensions According to St. Theodore of Stoudion* (diss. Fordham 1993) 244–245. See also G. Metallidis, “Theodore of Studium Against the Iconoclasts: The Arguments of his Letters,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 46 (2002) 191–208.

³⁶ Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite’s Defence of the Icons* 123.

³⁷ Ed. G. Fatouros, *Theodori Studitae Epistulae* I (Berlin 1991) 165.

³⁸ Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite’s Defence of the Icons* 124.

ial substrate—wood and colours—and not to the representation itself, which would be part of the hypostasis of Christ. Tollefsen seeks to shore up his argument by declaring that Theodore never uttered such a view in his anti-Iconoclast treatises. This assertion can be challenged through analysis of arguments in the *Third Antirrheticus* that focus on the topic of veneration, which was so central to Leo's icon theology. These arguments are developed in response to Iconoclast syllogisms, which are inserted into the text.³⁹ One of these syllogisms reads as follows:⁴⁰

εἰ πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν καθ' ὁμοίωσιν γένοιτό τινος, ἀπολείπεται πάντως τῆς πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον ἰσότητος, καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου δόξης ἐστὶ δεύτερον· δηλονότι οὐ ταῦτὸν τῇ προσκυνήσει Χριστὸς πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον εἰκόνισμα. καὶ ἐπεὶ ταῦτα διάφορα, διάφορος καὶ ἡ προσκύνησις, ἥς ἢ εἰσφορά. εἰδωλικῆς ἐστὶν ἄρα λατρείας αἴτιον.

If everything that has come into existence in resemblance to something else certainly falls short of being equal with the prototype and is secondary to its glory, it is evident that Christ is not the same as his own image in regard to veneration. And since these are different, the veneration, which it introduces, is also different. Consequently, it is the cause of the adoration of idols.

Here it is claimed that the image has a lesser ontological status than the prototype and that it can therefore only be rendered a lesser form of worship.⁴¹ And it is argued that the image belongs to the sphere of creation, which makes its veneration a form of idolatry.

It is immediately evident that this argument has a close counterpart in Leo's writings. As we have seen, Leo solved the problem by declaring that the representation of Christ's appear-

³⁹ On the Iconoclast arguments in the *Third Antirrheticus* see Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons* 28. Tollefsen rejects the view that these arguments were manufactured by Theodore. He points out that they generally make good sense. That this is indeed so will become evident in the following discussion.

⁴⁰ *Antirrheticus* III 3.1 (PG 99.420C–D).

⁴¹ See Damian, *The Icons* 245–246, 253.

ance was divine and could therefore be venerated in the same way as God. This raises the question: how did Theodore of Stoudios respond to it? Analysis of his arguments reveals that he focuses on the axiom that an object, which is created in resemblance to something else, is not equal to the prototype:⁴²

τὸ πρωτότυπον οὐ κατ' οὐσίαν ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι. ἢ γὰρ ἂν λέγοιτο καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν πρωτότυπον, ὡς καὶ ἔμπαλιν τὸ πρωτότυπον εἰκὼν· ὅπερ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται διὰ τὸ ἴδιον εἶναι ἑκατέρου ὄρον τῆς φύσεως· ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως ὁμοιότητα, ὅπερ οὐκ ἔστιν ἕτερος λόγος τῆς διορίσεως. οὐκοῦν τὸ ἀπολείπεσθαι τῆς τοῦ πρωτοτύπου ἰσότητος τὴν εἰκόνα, καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου δόξης εἶναι δεύτερον, οὐκ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοίωσιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τῆς οὐσίας διαφορὰν εἴληπται· ἥτις οὐδὲ προσκυνεῖσθαι πέφυκε, κἂν ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ εἰκονιζόμενος ὁράται προσκυνούμενος. οὐκ ἄρα οὖν εἰσφορὰ ἑτέρας προσκυνήσεως, ἀλλὰ μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ τῆς εἰκόνης πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον, κατὰ τὴν ταυτότητα τῆς ὁμοιώσεως.

The prototype is not in the image according to substance—for otherwise the image, too, would be called prototype, just as vice versa the prototype image, which is not possible because each of them has its own definition of nature—but according to the resemblance of the hypostasis, which is not a different way of delimitation. Therefore one can say that the image falls short of being equal with the prototype and is taken to be secondary when compared with its glory, not as regards resemblance but as regards the difference of substance, which is not venerated, even if the one who is represented in it is seen to be venerated. Consequently, there is no introduction of another veneration, but it is one and the same for the image and the prototype, according to the identity of resemblance.

In this argument Theodore concedes to his opponent that the image is not identical with the prototype. However, he then makes it clear that difference is limited to the aspect of “substance” (οὐσία) and “nature” (φύσις). The human body of the prototype has nothing in common with the inanimate matter that is being used for the production of images. In the case of hypostasis there is instead “resemblance” (ὁμοίωσις, ὁμοιότης)

⁴² *Antirrheticus* III 3.1 (PG 99.420D–421A).

between Christ's body and its representations. This resemblance is much more than an accidental similarity. Indeed, as we have seen, Theodore claims that resemblance establishes "identity" (ταυτότης).⁴³ This is a point to which he returns several times:⁴⁴

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ὕλη ἐστὶν ἢ προσκυνουμένη, ἀλλὰ τὸ πρωτότυπον ἅμα τῷ χαρακτηρί, καὶ οὐ τῇ οὐσίᾳ προσκυνούμενον. εἰ δὲ εἰκῶν, μία ἢ προσκύνησις αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον, ὡσπερ καὶ ταύτῃ ἢ ὁμοίωσις.

For what one venerates is not matter, but the prototype, which is venerated together with the imprint but not with the substance. And if there is an image, there is one veneration of it and the prototype, just as the resemblance is identical.

This statement has a direct counterpart in Leo's contention that prototype and image are not similar but the same. That Theodore draws the same conclusions is evident from his use of Trinitarian theology:⁴⁵

εἰ καὶ κατ' οὐσίαν ὁμοίός ἐστι ὁ Υἱὸς τῷ Πατρὶ, ἀλλ' ὅμως οὐκ ἔοικὸς ἐστὶ τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ τὸ γεννητὸν οὐδ' οὐ μὴν τὸ ἐκπορευτὸν, ἃ περὶ τὴν θεϊαν φύσιν θεωρούμενα, τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα κοινωνίας διακέκριται. μία δὲ ἐν τοῖς τρισὶ χαρακτηρσιν ἢ θεότης, ὡσπερ καὶ ἡ προσκύνησις, καὶ οὐ τί που ἀνισουμένη τῇ τῶν ιδιοτήτων ἑτερότητι τῆς φυσικῆς ταυτότητος. οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ πρωτοτύπου· ὅτι εἰ καὶ κατὰ τὸ τῆς οὐσίας διάφορον, οὐ μία προσκύνησις ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν, ὅτι μὴδὲ φύσις ἐστὶ προσκυνουμένη τῆς εἰκόνης, κἂν ἐν αὐτῇ ὁράται ὁ εἰκονιζόμενος, ἀλλὰ ὅμως κατὰ τὸ ταυτόν τῆς ὑποστατικῆς ὁμοιώσεως, ἢ αὐτῇ ἐστὶν ἀναλόγως τῇ μιᾷ καὶ ὅλη ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν ἐμμερεῖα ταυτιζομένη.

Even if the Son is similar to the Father as regards substance, being begotten is nevertheless not like being unbegotten nor indeed is procession, which are seen as regards the divine nature and are separate from what they share with one another. And there is one divinity in three imprints, just as there is also one veneration, and

⁴³ On the concept of identity see Parry, *Depicting the Word* 27, 31, who is however more interested in the question whether the image actually needs to look like the prototype. See also G. Ladner, "Origin and Significance of the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," *Mediaeval Studies* 1 (1939) 127–149.

⁴⁴ *Antirrheticus* III 3.2 (PG 99.421A).

⁴⁵ *Antirrheticus* III 4.7 (PG 99.432AB).

it is not somehow made unequal from the natural identity through the difference of the properties. This, then, is also the case with the image of the prototype. Even if according to the difference of substance there is not one veneration of both, because the nature of the image is not venerated, even though the one who is depicted is seen in it, it is nevertheless the same according to the identity of hypostatic resemblance, made identical in analogy with the one and comprehensive similarity in both.

Here the relation between the body of Christ and its representations is compared to the relation between Father, Son, and Spirit. Theodore creates a neat chiasm, arguing that in the latter case there is a common nature and different hypostases, whereas in the former case the connecting element is hypostasis while the natures are different. The analogy leaves no doubt that Theodore assumes a strong ontological bond between the characteristic idioms of Christ's humanity and the representation of these idioms.

He reinforces this point by blurring the distinction between the two scenarios. On the one hand, he again states that the "hypostatic similarity" (ὑποστατικὴ ὁμοίωσις) between Christ's appearance and its representations establishes "identity" (ταυτότον) between them. On the other hand, he declares not only that there exists "natural identity" (φυσικὴ ταυτότης) between Father and Son but also, rather more unusually, that the Son is "similar as regards substance" (κατ' οὐσίαν ὅμοιος) to the Father.⁴⁶ Since both phrases can only indicate consubstantiality, the reader again gets the impression that similarity is synonymous with identity. The obvious conclusion is that the one hypostasis encompasses not only Christ but also his representations, just as the common divine nature encompasses not only the Father but also the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, Theodore could not have argued otherwise because only identity of the object of venera-

⁴⁶ In Late Antiquity this formula was used by the so-called Homoiousians, see W. A. Lohr, *Die Entstehung der homöischen und homöousianischen Kirchenparteien: Studien zur Synodgeschichte des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn 1986). It was later condemned as heretical.

tion can guarantee the identity of veneration.⁴⁷

Unsurprisingly, the Iconoclasts also attacked the concept of “relational veneration” (σχετική προσκύνησις), accusing their opponents of introducing two types of veneration and thus ripping Christ apart:⁴⁸

εἰ μόνον θεῷ τὸ προσκυνεῖσθαι παρά τε ἡμῶν καὶ ἀγγέλων ὀφείλεται· πῶς οὖν ἔσται μία προσκύνησις τῆς εἰκόνοσ προῶ Χριστόν; εἴπερ ἡ μὲν σχέσει, ὁ δὲ φύσει προσκυνεῖσθαι ὡμολόγηται. οὐκοῦν δύο προσκυνήσεις ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ Χριστῷ διὰ τῆς εἰκονικῆς προσκυνήσεωσ· ὅπερ ἀσεβές.

If we and the angels are charged to venerate God alone, how then will there be one veneration of the image and of Christ, since it is agreed that the former is venerated because of relation and the latter is venerated because of nature? Consequently, there are two venerations in the one Christ because of the veneration of the image, which is impious.

Here one would have expected Theodore to defend the concept of relational veneration. He could have pointed out that it does not denote a different kind of veneration, which is directed at the image, but rather signals that the image is a mere conduit for veneration, which is directed at the archetype. This, however, is not the case:⁴⁹

εἰ διὰ τὸ μόνῳ θεῷ τὴν προσκύνησιν ἡμᾶσ προσφέρειν, οὐ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν τὴν Χριστοῦ εἰκόνα, ὡσ δύο προσκυνήσεωσ παρά τὴν μίαν καὶ λατρευτὴν εἰσφερομένων, κατὰ τὸ διττὸν τῆσ τε εἰκόνοσ καὶ τοῦ πρωτοτύπου· διττὴ ἄρα ἔσται προσκύνησις ἐπὶ τε τοῦ Πατρὸσ καὶ Υἱοῦ διὰ τὸ τῶν ὑποστάσεωσ διττὸν. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο ἀσεβές λέγειν· μία γάρ ἐστι καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ κατὰ τὸ μοναδικὸν δη-

⁴⁷ It should be noted that Theodore's identification of similarity with identity is at odds with philosophical teaching. According to Aristotle, qualities establish similarity between things but not identity (*Cat.* 5, 11a15–19). I am grateful to Christophe Erismann for having pointed this out to me. This shows that Theodore did not feel beholden to the philosophical tradition. See also D. Krausmüller, “From Homoousion to Homohypostaton: Patriarch Methodius of Constantinople and Post-Patristic Trinitarian Theology,” *Journal of Late Antique Religion and Culture* 3 (2009) 1–20.

⁴⁸ *Antirrheticus* III 3.9 (PG 99.424B).

⁴⁹ *Antirrheticus* III 3.9 (PG 99.424C–D).

λαδὴ τῆς φύσεως· μία ἄρα καὶ ἡ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ εἰκόνα προσκύνησις· κατὰ τὸ μοναδικὸν τῆς ὑποστατικῆς ὁμοιώσεως, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ ἕτεροῖον τῶν φύσεων.

If because we accord veneration to God alone, one must not venerate the image of Christ, since two venerations would be introduced besides the one, which is adorational, according to the duality of image and prototype, then there will consequently also be a dual veneration of the Father and the Son because of the duality of hypostases. But if to say this is impious, for it is one and the same, according to the singularity of nature, there is consequently one veneration of Christ and of his image, according to the singularity of hypostatic resemblance, but not according to the qualitative difference of natures.

Theodore begins by summarising the position of his adversary. If Christ were accorded “adorational veneration” (λατρευτὴ προσκύνησις) and the image of Christ were venerated in a different manner, there would be two types of veneration and not just one. Then he produces a counterargument, again using Trinitarian theology for comparison. Father and Son are worshipped as one because they have an identical substance, whereas Christ’s outward appearance and depictions of this outward appearance are worshipped as one because they have an identical hypostasis. Only the substances, Christ’s human nature on the one hand and inanimate matter on the other, differ from one another. Here only the former can be worshipped. This difference, however, does not impinge on the hypostatic dimension where the one veneration of Christ and Christ’s image must take the form of “adorational veneration” (λατρευτὴ προσκύνησις).⁵⁰

It is evident that Theodore has come to the same conclusion as Leo of Chalcedon. Depictions of Christ’s appearance are truly divine, just like Christ’s appearance itself, and must therefore be adored. As we have seen, this point of view led Leo to use the term “relation” (σχέσις) not for the link between image and prototype but for the link between the material aspect of the image and the representation. Theodore does not make this

⁵⁰ Accordingly, Christians who venerate icons of Christ must be aware that they are venerating the hypostasis of Christ and not mere copies of it.

shift. Yet he, too, is forced by the counterarguments of the Iconoclasts to redefine the meaning of "relation." He no longer claims that relation is a one-way street, which indicates only how the image is linked to the prototype.⁵¹ Instead, he makes use of the Aristotelian category of "relatives" (τὰ πρὸς τι) where one cannot exist without the other: someone is father only as long as he has a son.⁵² Theodore applies this concept to the pair "prototype" and "image." Strictly speaking, the existence of Christ's human appearance should not be affected by the absence of images. All that happens is that he is no longer a prototype.⁵³

There are, however, indications that Theodore went further, blurring the two aspects.⁵⁴ For the passage continues:

οὐκοῦν ὠμολόγηται Χριστὸς πρωτοτύπου λόγον ἐπέχων, ὡς εἴ τις ἄλλος τῶν καθέκαστα· πᾶσα ἀνάγκη καὶ εἰκόνα ἔχειν μεταφερομένην ἀπὸ τοῦ χαρακτῆρος αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀποματτομένην ἔντινι ὕλη, ἵνα μὴ καὶ τὸ εἶναι ἄνθρωπος ἀπολέσῃ, μὴ καὶ διὰ εἰκονικῆς παραγωγῆς ὀρώμενός τε καὶ προσκυνούμενος.

Therefore, if it is agreed that Christ has the role of a prototype, just as any other individual, it is very necessary that he also has an image that is transferred from his imprint and copied onto some

⁵¹ On this sense of σχέσις, which is linked to the Platonic concept of participation, see Parry, *Depicting the Word* 22–25.

⁵² Arist. *Cat.* 7, 6a37–8b24. This concept had already been used by Late Antique theologians: see e.g. B. Sesboüé, *Saint Basile et la Trinité: Une acte théologique au IV^e siècle* (Paris 1998).

⁵³ See K. Parry, "Aristotle and the Icon: The Use of the Categories by Byzantine Iconophile Writers," in S. Ebbesen et al., *Aristotle's Categories in the Byzantine, Arabic and Latin Tradition* (Copenhagen 2013) 4–58; Th. Anagnostopoulos, "Aristotle and Byzantine Iconoclasm," *GRBS* 53 (2013) 763–790; Ch. Erismann, "Venerating Likeness: Byzantine Iconophile Thinkers on Aristotelian Relatives and their Simultaneity," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24 (2003) 405–425; Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons* 117–121.

⁵⁴ For this there is also a precedent in Trinitarian theology. Whereas the Arians claimed that God pre-exists his being Father their opponents argued that God is always Father and that he would therefore be nonexistent if there were no Son. See R. Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition* (Oxford 1987) 103.

matter, lest he lose his being human, when he is not also seen and venerated through the derivative image.

This is not an isolated passage in the *Third Antirrheticus*. Elsewhere Theodore claims that if one does not represent Christ as the prototype in images “one also removes his being in human shape” (καὶ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἀνθρωπόμορφον ἀναιρεῖ).⁵⁵ Thus it is not surprising that he emphasises the indivisibility of Christ’s appearance, both in himself and in his images.⁵⁶

Theodore’s use of the concept of homonymy may also have been influenced by his insistence on a singular veneration. He often states that Christ’s image has the same name but not the same account of substance as Christ himself. We have already seen that for him the identity of name is not simply accidental: he repeatedly emphasises that it signals identity of hypostasis.⁵⁷ One passage suggests that he modified the concept of homonymy even further:⁵⁸

τοῦτο γὰρ φύσις εἰκόνοσ, ταυτίζεσθαι μὲν κατὰ τὴν ὁμοίωσιν τοῦ πρωτοτύπου, διαφορεῖσθαι δὲ κατὰ τὸν τῆς οὐσίας λόγον, ἐφ’ ᾧ ἡ ὁμωνυμία.

For this is the nature of the image, to be identical according to the resemblance with the prototype, and to be different according to the account of substance, in which one finds the homonymy.

Here it is claimed that the icon of Christ is homonymous with Christ himself because of the difference in substance. Yet identity refers not just to a name but also to a set of individual characteristics, which suggests that in their case the alternative concept of “synonymy” (συνωνυμία) applies. As a consequence the representation of Christ’s hypostasis *is* Christ’s hypostasis. This may not be as surprising as it first seems. Hagiographical texts of the time often mention speaking, bleeding, or crying

⁵⁵ *Antirrheticus* III 4.10 (PG 99.433A; see also 436A).

⁵⁶ *Antirrheticus* III 3.15 (PG 99.428B).

⁵⁷ See e.g. Parry, *Depicting the Word* 59; Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite’s Defence of the Icons* 122.

⁵⁸ *Antirrheticus* III 4.6 (PG 99.432A).

icons, thus eliding the difference between image and archetype.⁵⁹

To conclude: when Leo of Chalcedon claimed that representations of Christ's appearance should be adored like God because they, too, were part of the divine hypostasis, he did not present an innovative theological position. Already Theodore of Stoudios had put forward a very similar argument when Iconoclast attacks forced him to redefine the concept of relational worship.⁶⁰

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⁵⁹ See e.g. Pentcheva, in *The Cult of the Mother of God* 277.

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