

Contextualizing Constantine V's radical religious policies: the debate about the intercession of the saints and the 'sleep of the soul' in the Chalcedonian and Nestorian churches

Dirk Krausmüller

Mardin Artuklu University

This article argues that in the last years of his reign Constantine V came to reject the intercession of saints, despite the fact that the Council of Hieria, which he himself had convened only a decade earlier, had explicitly anathematised those who held such a view. Moreover, it makes the case that the emperor participated in a broad religious discourse that began in the sixth century and continued into the ninth century, both among the Chalcedonians of Byzantium and the Levant and among the Nestorians of the East.

In the last three decades the evaluation of Byzantine Iconoclasm has undergone a radical change. Traditional narratives have been challenged and the historical value of the sources on which these narratives were based has been questioned. As a consequence some scholars are now of the opinion that the policy against religious images was implemented only half-heartedly and that most Byzantines at the time were not particularly exercised about the issue. If the relatively well-documented historical phenomenon of Iconoclasm has been treated in this manner it comes as no surprise that measures against the cult of the saints, which are less frequently mentioned in the sources, have usually been dismissed as entirely imaginary. In this article I will argue that in the last years of his reign Constantine V did indeed come to reject the intercession of saints, despite the fact that the Council of Hieria, which he himself had convened only a decade earlier, had explicitly anathematised those who held such a view. I will then show that the emperor participated in a broad religious discourse that began in the sixth century and continued into the ninth century, both among the Chalcedonians of Byzantium and the Levant and among the Nestorians of the East. Finally I will ask what concerns motivated those who objected to the cult of the saints.

The Byzantine emperor Constantine V (741–775) is best known for his opposition to the display and worship of images of Christ and the saints. In 754 he convened the bishops of his realm at his palace in Hieria and had them elevate ‘iconoclasm’ to the rank of a Christian dogma, and he took active steps to enforce the new orthodoxy.¹ However, this is not the only religious policy Constantine is credited with in the Byzantine sources. Later Iconophile writers inform us that he also denied the existence of a privileged group of dead people who could act as intermediaries between the faithful and God. For example, in the *Second Antirrheticus* of the patriarch Nikephoros we are told that the emperor objected to prayers addressed to Mary and the other saints, and in the treatise *Against Constantine Caballinus* we read that he even refused to use the very term ‘saint’.² This evidence was analysed in detail by Stephen Gero in his monograph on Constantine V, which appeared in 1977.³ Gero came to the conclusion that some accusations, such as the emperor’s alleged rejection of the term ‘God-bearer’, were without substance but that statements about his opposition to the cult of the saints reflected historical reality.⁴ Since then, however, a new consensus has emerged, which regards all texts relating to this topic as Iconophile fabrications intended to blacken the emperor’s reputation.⁵ The basis for this hypothesis is two anathemas that were pronounced at the Iconoclast Council of Hieria. These anathemas, which have survived in the *Acts* of the Council of Nicaea, are directed against anyone who does not accept the traditional role of Mary and the saints within the Christian belief system and ‘does not ask for their prayers as having the freedom to intercede on behalf of the world according to the tradition of the church’ (τὰς τούτων οὐκ ἐξαίτηται προσευχὰς ὡς παρρησίαν ἐχόντων ὑπὲρ τοῦ κόσμου πρεσβεύειν κατὰ τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν παράδοσιν).⁶ For Marie-France Auzépy and more recently, Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, this is irrefutable proof that Constantine

1 The secondary literature on the reign of Constantine V and on his Iconoclast policies is substantial. See L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History* (Cambridge 2010), esp. 156–247 and the earlier monographs of A. Lombard, *Études d’histoire byzantine: Constantin V, Empereur des Romains 740–775* (Paris 1902); and I. Rochow, *Kaiser Konstantin V. (741–775)* (Frankfurt am Main 1994). On the Council of Hieria, see T. Krannich, Ch. Schubert, C. Sode, and A. von Stockhausen, *Die ikonoklastische Synode von Hieria 754. Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar ihres Horos* (Tübingen 2002). See also S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III with particular attention to Oriental Sources*, CSCO 346, Subs. 41 (Louvain 1973).

2 Patriarch Nicephorus, *Antirrheticus* II.4, MPG 100, 330–74, esp. 341C13–D3: τὰς πρεσβείας αὐτῆς ἀπαναίβεται. Cf. e.g. *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum* 21, MPG 95, 337C11–12: τὸ ἄγιον ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποβαλλόμενος.

3 S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V with particular attention to the Oriental Sources*, CSCO 384, Sub. 52 (Louvain 1977).

4 Cf. Gero, *Constantine V*, 143–51: ‘Chapter VI: Constantine V the radical theologian’.

5 A notable exception is G. Dagron, ‘Le christianisme byzantin du VIIe au milieu du XIe siècle’, in *Histoire du christianisme*, 4: *Evêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)*, ed. J.-M. Mayeur, Ch. and L. Pietri, A. Vauchez, and M. Venard (Paris 1993) 7–371, esp. 111–12.

6 The quotation is from *Anathema* 17, ed. J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 31 vols. (Florence and Venice 1758–98) 13, 348D–E, which is directed against the detractors of saints. The content of *Anathema* 15, ed. Mansi, 13, 345A–B, which is directed against the detractors of Mary, ends with

never rejected the intercession of saints because they regard it as inconceivable that the emperor could have gone against the decisions of a council that he himself had convened.⁷ As a consequence, texts that present the emperor as an enemy of the saints are now given short shrift in secondary literature. Indeed, in Haldon's and Brubaker's recent book the topic is hardly mentioned at all.⁸

However, can one really dismiss a substantial corpus of primary sources and all previous scholarly analysis in such an off-hand manner? At this point it is worth remembering that the argument put forward by Auzépy, Brubaker and Haldon is by no means new. It was first formulated in 1878 by Constantine Paparrigopoulo.⁹ However, this does not mean that it found universal acceptance. In 1902 Alfred Lombard proposed an alternative interpretation. He pointed out that the anathema outlawing the veneration of images of the saints is inserted between the two anathemas against the detractors of Mary and of the other saints.¹⁰ This, he suggested, showed that the Iconoclast bishops wished to detach the issue of icon worship from more radical views, which were already in existence at the time: otherwise it would be difficult to explain why they should have felt the need to defend a long-established practice like the cult of saints.¹¹

Lombard conceded that in 754 Constantine V himself could not have held such views because otherwise he would not have permitted the bishops to legislate against them. However, he then argued that in the following years the emperor changed his mind. In order to make his case he drew attention to a brief pronouncement that in the *Acts* of the Council of Nicaea follows the reading of the anathema against detractors of the saints. This pronouncement concedes that the Council of Hieria had affirmed the orthodox position but then claims that the Iconoclasts had later followed the path of earlier heretics. Just as the Arians had not been content with their original claim that

Continued

an almost identical statement. See Krannich, Schubert, Sode and von Stockhausen, *Die ikonoklastische Synode*, 64.

7 See M. F. Auzépy, *L'Hagiographie et l'Iconoclasme byzantin. Le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 5 (Aldershot 1999), 250–51; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 39, and 238, note 342. See also Rochow, *Kaiser Konstantin*, 70–72, who argues that Constantine showed devotion to Mary in his *Peuseis* where he referred to her as God-bearer and could therefore not have been opposed to her cult later in his life; and P. Magdalino, 'L'église de Phare et les reliques de la passion à Constantinople (VIIe/VIIIe–XIIIe siècles),' in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. J. Durand and B. Flusin, Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 17 (Paris 2004), 15–30, esp. 21, who argues that the council would not have met in the Blachernai church if the emperor had rejected the cult of Mary.

8 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 39.

9 C. Paparrigopoulo, *Histoire de la Civilisation hellénique* (Paris 1878) 214: 'Ces textes (sc. the anathemas of the Council of Hieria) prouvent d'une manière irréfragable que Théophane altère la vérité quand il blâme les empereurs d'avoir défendu aux fidèles d'invoquer l'intercession de Marie et des saints'.

10 *Anathema* 16, ed. Mansi, 13, 345C–D. Cf. Krannich, Schubert, Sode and von Stockhausen, *Die ikonoklastische Synode*, 64.

11 See Lombard, *Études d'histoire byzantine*, 116.

the Word was a creature, but had later also asserted that the Word incarnated without a soul, so they had not been able to stop at the rejection of depictions of saints but had eventually turned against the saints themselves.¹² In this context we find the following comment:

Ὅθεν καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἔκδοσιν αὐτῶν ταύτην, καὶ τὴν τῶν πρεσβειῶν εὐπρόσδεκτον τῷ θεῷ προσαγωγὴν ἀπεβάλλοντο, λειώσαντες ταύτην ἐκ τοῦδε αὐτῶν τοῦ συγγράμματος· καὶ τοῦτο ἴσασι πάντες.¹³

Therefore also after this publication of theirs, they also rejected the well-received offering up of intercessions to God, having wiped it out from this writing of theirs; and this everybody knows.

For Lombard the meaning of this comment was clear. In the years after 754 the emperor had come to the conclusion that the doctrine formulated at the Council of Hieria was not sufficiently orthodox and therefore needed to be revised in order to reflect his new, more radical position.¹⁴ By contrast, the present scholarly consensus regards it as a fabrication. Indeed, it is not without problems since according to ecclesiastical law the decisions of a council could only be abrogated by another council. However, it is not at all certain whether Constantine V felt bound to this law.¹⁵ Moreover, it is difficult to see how the organisers of the Council of Nicaea could have invented such a story when many of the participants would already have been in office during the reign of Constantine and thus would have had first-hand knowledge of his religious policies. In any case it was clearly not their intention to slander the emperor since they attributed the revision to unidentified ‘champions’ (πρόϊστορες) of the Iconoclast heresy.¹⁶ As Lombard pointed out, they most likely chose this vague term because they did not wish to openly attack the grandfather of the ruling emperor.¹⁷

The discussion so far has shown that Lombard’s interpretation of the *Acts* of Nicaea is not only coherent but can also withstand criticism. Indeed, it can be further corroborated through analysis of another Iconophile text, the *Chronographia* of Theophanes Confessor, which dates to the early ninth century. There we find the following entry for the year 765/6:

Ὁ δὲ Χριστιανῶν βασιλεύων ἀφάτοις θεοῦ κρίμασιν ἴσως, ὡς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ὁ μανιώδης Ἀχαάβ, πολλῶ χειρόνα τῆς τῶν Ἀράβων μανίας τοῖς ὑπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ

12 Mansi, 13, 348A.

13 Mansi, 13, 349A.

14 See Lombard, *Études d’histoire byzantine*, 121, 116, and Gero, *Constantine V*, 147.

15 Here one could point to the parallel case of the *Acts* of the Council in Trullo. As is well known one canon legitimised the use of religious art and thus directly contradicted Iconoclast doctrine. There is no sign that the entire text was suppressed during the Iconoclast period. However, the Iconoclast emperors may well have excised the canon about images from the *Acts*.

16 See Mansi, 13, 349A.

17 This is accepted by Gero, *Constantine V*, 147, note 18.

ὀρθοδόξοις ἐπισκόποις καὶ μοναχοῖς καὶ λαϊκοῖς, ἄρχουσί τε καὶ ἀρχομένοις ἐπεδειξάτο, πανταχοῦ μὲν τὰς πρεσβείας τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου καὶ θεοτόκου καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων ἐγγράφως ὡς ἀνωφελεῖς καὶ ἀγράφους (de Boor: ἀγράφως) ἀποκηρύττων, δι' ὧν ἡμῖν πηγάζει πᾶσα βοήθεια.¹⁸

But he who ruled over the Christians, perhaps by God's ineffable judgement, as was the case with the mad Ahab who ruled over Israel, displayed a madness much worse than that of the Arabs to the orthodox bishops and monks and laymen, governors and subjects, under his rule. Everywhere he rejected in writing as being unprofitable and unscriptural the intercessions of the holy Virgin, the Mother of God, and of all the saints, thanks to which all manner of help wells forth for us.¹⁹

In this passage Theophanes informs us that in the last decade of his reign Constantine began to agitate publicly against the cult of the saints. Like everything else, this evidence has also been dismissed out of hand.²⁰ However, it, too, merits a closer look. When one accepts that the text should read ἀγράφους instead of the meaningless ἀγράφως one realises that Theophanes attributes to the emperor a specific strategy, namely the claim that a practice was invalid if it was not mentioned in the Bible. Accordingly Constantine would have argued that there were no Scriptural proof texts for the intercession of the saints and that it must therefore be rejected. As is well known, the Iconoclasts employed the same strategy in their polemic against religious images and thus forced their opponents to rethink traditional notions of what constitutes an authoritative text.²¹ If the passage under discussion had no basis in reality it is difficult to see why Theophanes would attribute such a potentially troublesome argument to the emperor.

Another significant feature of the passage is Theophanes' statement that the emperor made his views known to the *orthodox* bishops under his rule. Coming from the mouth of an Iconophile author this statement is decidedly odd because in the 760s the Byzantine episcopate was staunchly Iconoclast. The most straightforward explanation would be that it was adapted from the title of Constantine's missive, which would have originally been addressed 'to the orthodox bishops and monks and laymen, governors and subjects, under my rule'.²²

18 *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–85; repr. Hildesheim, 1963) 1, 439. 15–22.

19 The translation is a modified version of C. Mango, R. Scott, and G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813, Translated with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford 1997) 607.

20 See Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 39, note 135.

21 See e.g. John of Damascus, *Oratio de Imaginibus* II.16, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols., Patristische Texte und Studien, 7, 12, 17, 22, 29 (Berlin 1969–1988) 3, 111.1–6, and 114.81–90; and Patriarch Nicephorus, *Antirrheticus* II.7, MPG 100, 385B13–D4. See the discussion in M.–F. Auzépy, 'La tradition comme arme du pouvoir', in *L'autorité du passé dans les sociétés médiévales*, ed. J.-M. Sansterre (Rome 2004) 79–92, esp. 88.

22 See e.g. the letter of Pope Liberius reproduced in Socrates, *Church History* 4.12, ed. G. Ch. Hansen, *Sokrates, Kirchengeschichte*, GCS. Neue Folge 1 (Berlin 1995) 241.6–7: πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ ὀρθοδόξοις

These two arguments strengthen Lombard's case that in the years after 754 Constantine changed his mind. Indeed, the emperor's decision to publicise his ideas in writing would have been entirely in keeping with his self-image as a promoter of orthodoxy. After all, he had taken a similar step only a few years earlier when he presented a series of arguments against religious images in his *Peuseis*.²³ Since publication of the *Peuseis* preceded the Council of Hieria one could even argue that Constantine was planning to convene another synod, which would ratify his changed views.

The last piece of evidence I would like to discuss is the confessions of faith that were presented by a group of Iconoclast bishops at the Council of Nicaea.²⁴ The first text was read out by Theodosios of Amorium:²⁵

Τῆ ἁγία καὶ οἰκουμενικῆ συνόδῳ Θεοδοσίος ὁ ἐλάχιστος Χριστιανὸς ὁμολογῶ καὶ συντίθεμαι καὶ δέχομαι καὶ ἀσπάζομαι καὶ προσκυνῶ πρωτοτύπως τὴν ἄχραντον εἰκόνα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν εἰκόνα τῆς ἀσπύρας αὐτὸν τεκούσης τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου· καὶ τὴν βοήθειαν καὶ τὴν σκέπην αὐτῆς καὶ τὰς πρεσβείας αὐτῆς ἐκάστης ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς ἐπικαλοῦμαι ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς εἰς βοήθειάν μου, ὡς παρρησίαν ἐχούσης πρὸς τὸν ἐξ αὐτῆς τεχθέντα Χριστὸν τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῶν.

I, the most humble Theodosios, confess and agree to and accept and embrace and venerate first of all the unsullied image of our lord Jesus Christ, the true God, and the holy icon of she who bore him without seed, the holy God-bearer. And I call on her help and protection and her intercessions every day and night as a sinner so that she may help me, since she has freedom of speech before Christ our God who was born out of her.

The text begins with an endorsement of the worship of icons of Christ and Mary, which is what one expects to hear at a council devoted to the veneration of images. However, in the case of Mary this primary statement is then followed by a detailed endorsement of the efficacy of her intercessions. Since there is no mention of icons in this second sentence, there is no reason to assume that the intercessory prayers mentioned here are to be identified exclusively as prayers directed at icons. Thus it appears that intercession is treated as a second independent topic. Significantly we find the same pattern in the subsequent paragraph, which deals with the other saints. Moreover, in the short *florilegium* that concludes the text only one quotation affirms the cult of images whereas the two others deal with the issue of intercession.²⁶

Continued

ἐπισκόποις Λιβέριος ἐπίσκοπος. See also Constantine of Tios, *Invention of Euphemia* (BHG 621), ed. F. Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcedoine. Legendes byzantines*. Subsidia Hagiographica, 41 (Brussels 1965) 81–106, esp. 105–106: ἀναξί τε καὶ ἀρχιποιμέσιν, ἱερεῦσί τε καὶ μονάζουσιν, ἄρχουσι καὶ ἀρχομένοις.

23 See Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 180–83.

24 See Gero, *Constantine V*, 59–60.

25 Mansi 12, 1014A–1015B.

26 Mansi 12, 1015BC. This is followed by a passage about relics.

A similar emphasis on intercession is found in the confession of faith that was read out by Basil of Ancyra and Theodore of Myra:²⁷

Πιστεύω τοίνυν καὶ ὁμολογῶ εἰς ... τριάδα ὁμοούσιον καὶ ὁμόθρονον. ... Ὅμολογῶ καὶ πάντα τὰ τῆς οἰκονομίας τοῦ ἐνὸς τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος, κυρίου δὲ καὶ θεοῦ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... ἔξαιτούμενος καὶ τὰς πρεσβείας τῆς ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν θεοτόκου τῆς ἁγίας τῶν τε ἁγίων καὶ ἐπουρανίων δυνάμεων, καὶ ἀπάντων τῶν ἁγίων. ... Τὰς σεπτὰς εἰκόνας τῆς τε οἰκονομίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καθὸ ἄνθρωπος γέγονε διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν, καὶ τῆς ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου, τῶν τε θεοειδῶν ἀγγέλων, καὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων, προφητῶν, μαρτύρων τε καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων ἀσπάζομαι καὶ περιπτύσσομαι.²⁸

I believe in and confess ... a triad of same substance and same rank. ... I also confess all things that pertain (1a) to the dispensation of the one of the holy Trinity, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, asking also for the intercessions (2a) of our undefiled Lady, the holy God-bearer, and (3a) the holy and heavenly powers and (4a) all the saints. ... I accept and embrace the venerable images (1b) of the dispensation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he became man for our salvation and (2b) of our undefiled Lady, the holy God-bearer, and (3b) of the God-like angels and (4b) of the holy apostles, prophets, martyrs and all the saints.

In this text the intercession of the saints is mentioned immediately after the Trinity and the incarnation, and before the specific issue of icon worship is broached.²⁹ This confirms the impression that intercession is an independent topic. Moreover, the document was clearly crafted with great care: the statements about the incarnated Christ (1), his mother Mary (2), the angels (3) and the saints (4) form a sequence that is reproduced almost *verbatim* in the section about the icons. This arrangement presents belief in the traditional heavenly hierarchy with Christ as the primary mediator and his mother, the angels and the saints as secondary mediators as the necessary precondition for the cult of images and at the same time treats the fact that these figures can be approached through their depictions as merely one aspect of this general belief.

That the theme of intercession figures prominently in both texts has already been highlighted by Marie-France Auzépy. However, Auzépy came to the conclusion that this merely tells us something about how the Iconophiles conceptualised their own position.³⁰ I would argue instead that the emphasis on intercession reflects the suspicions of the organisers of the Council of Nicaea that the Iconoclast bishops were holding aberrant views about the saints. Indeed, the link between icon worship and intercession has a

27 Cf. Gero, *Constantine V*, 59–60.

28 Mansi, 12, 1010A–C.

29 For a similar arrangement see *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum* 2, 312A6–313B10.

30 M.-F. Auzépy, 'L'iconodoulie: défense de l'image ou de la dévotion à l'image', in *Nicée II*, 787–1987. *Douze siècles d'image religieuses*, ed. F. Boespflug and N. Lossky (Paris 1987) 157–65, esp. 158–59.

parallel in the *Acts* of the Council of Hieria. As we have seen there, too, a statement about religious imagery is complemented with an affirmation of the cult of saints.

At this point it becomes possible to construct a new narrative. In 754 Constantine V convened the Council of Hieria in order to elevate Iconoclasm to the rank of an official dogma of the church. However, already at this time there existed a group of radical Iconoclasts who were not content with rejecting the depictions of saints but went so far as to deny the saints their role as intermediaries between the faithful and God. The council responded to this situation by making a careful distinction between the two issues and by anathematising all those who questioned the validity of intercession. Whether Constantine V himself favoured such a radical position already at this date is, of course, impossible to ascertain. However, one should not simply assume that the views of the bishops and those of the emperor tallied in all points. It is possible that a consensus was reached only after fierce negotiations and that the emperor did not always get his way. In any case, ten years later Constantine had come to the conclusion that the decisions taken at the Council of Hieria were not sufficiently orthodox. He seems to have tinkered with the *Acts* of the council by removing all references to the intercession of saints. Moreover, he sent out official letters to ecclesiastics and laypeople in which he openly attacked the custom of directing prayers to the saints. It is likely that by this time many bishoprics had been given to people who shared Constantine's radical opinion. The emperor may even have planned another council but if this was the case these plans would have been cut short by his untimely death in 775.

Constantine's son Leo IV seems to have decided right from the start not to continue his father's radical policies. Indeed, Theophanes reports that at the beginning of his reign the new emperor 'appeared to be pious ... and a friend of the holy God-bearer' (καὶ ἔδοξεν εὐσεβῆς εἶναι ... καὶ φίλος τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου).³¹ This may explain why these policies were not discussed in any detail at the Council of Nicaea. Since they had already been discarded ten years earlier, the organisers of the council would have seen no reason to address them at length, especially if this meant to heap further opprobrium on the grandfather of the ruling monarch. However, this does not necessarily mean that opposition to the cult of the saints had disappeared entirely by this time, for there is evidence that Constantine's views found adherents even after the bishops had yielded to official pressure. The author of the ninth-century *Life of Joannicius*, for example, calls a relative of the saint a follower of Constantine 'because the wretch did not at all accept the intercessions of the saints' (οὐδὲ γὰρ τὰς πρεσβείας τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἅπαν ὁ πανάθλιος ἐδέχετο).³²

So far the case for a debate about the intercessory activity of the saints has been made through analysis of Iconophile texts from the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

31 Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, 1,449.13–14.

32 Peter, *Life of Joannicius*, 35, ed. J. van den Gheyn, *Acta Sanctorum Novembris* II.1 (Brussels 1894) 384–435, esp. 403F–404A.

However, this evidence may not be sufficient to persuade those who deny the existence of such a debate. In their writings they claim that opposition to the cult of saints would have been inconceivable because it would have meant a radical break with a tradition that stretched back to the early church.³³ In order to test the validity of this argument we need to take a closer look at the religious literature of the previous centuries. Comparison with earlier texts is made difficult by the fact that Iconophile authors did not usually trouble themselves with discussing the arguments that the Iconoclasts put forward in defence of their views. However there are a few exceptions, such as the following passage from the *Refutation of the Synod of 815* by the patriarch Nikephoros:

Τὰς πρεσβευτικὰς αὐτῶν πρὸς θεὸν ἐντεύξεις ἐξουθενῶν παραιτῆ καὶ τοὺς αἰτοῦντας βδελύττη καὶ ἀπελαύνεις ὡς οὐ ζῶσιν οὐδὲ δεομένοις ἐπικουρεῖν ἰσχύουσιν προσερχομένους· ἀλλὰ οἱ γε ζῶσιν ἐν θεῷ γέγραπται κἂν ἔδοξαν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς τῶν ἀφρόνων τεθνάναι.³⁴

You reject and set at naught their intercessory entreaties with God and abominate those who request them, and chase them away as people who approach those who are not living nor have the strength to help those who ask for help. But these live in God, it is written, even if in the eyes of the imprudent they seem to be dead (cf. Wisdom 3:1-3).³⁵

Here Nikephoros claims that Constantine V regarded prayers to the saints as futile because the saints are not alive and therefore cannot act. This could be dismissed as more Iconophile slander were it not for the fact that such a view has a clear precedent. As Jean Gouillard pointed out long ago there is a striking parallel in the treatise *About the State of the Souls after Death* by the Constantinopolitan priest Eustratios, which was written in the late sixth century.³⁶ According to his own words Eustratios was confronted with a group of people who attacked the cult of saints:

Τινὲς τῶν περὶ λόγους ἐσχολακότων καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν ἐθελόντων περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν, οἱ καὶ τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν ἀμφισβήτησιν ποιούμενοι, διῆσχυρίζονται λέγοντες ὅτι

33 See Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 32–38. On the cult of saints in Late Antiquity see e.g. Y. Duval, 'Les saints protecteurs ici-bas et dans l'au-delà. L'intercession dans l'Antiquité chrétienne', in *L'intercession du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne. Autour d'une pratique sociale*, ed. J.-M. Moeglin (Geneva 2004) 17–39.

34 Nikephoros of Constantinople, *Refutation of the Synod of 815*, 119, ed. J. M. Featherstone, *Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Refutatio et Eversio Definitionis Synodalis anni 815 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 33)* (Louvain 1997) 210.23–28.

35 Nikephoros of Constantinople, *Refutation of the Synod of 815*, 119, ed. Featherstone, 210. 23–26.

36 J. Gouillard, 'Léthargie des âmes et culte des saints: un plaidoyer inédit de Jean diacre et maïstôr', *TM 8* (1981) 182, note 53: 'Curieusement, le patriarche Nicéphore, dans son 'Elenchos' inédit (Parisinus gr. 1250, fol. 272v–273v) semblerait faire des iconoclastes des partisans de l'inertie posthume des saints.' On Eustratios and his work, see N. Constatas, 'An apology for the cult of saints in late antiquity. Eustratios presbyter of Constantinople "On the state of the souls after death" (CPG 7522)', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002) 267–85.

μετὰ τὴν τοῦ βίου τοῦδε μετάστασιν καὶ τὴν τῶν ψυχῶν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων ἀναχώρησιν, ἀνεργητοὶ μένουσι καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ ψυχαί, εἴτε ἅγιοι, εἴτε ἄλλως πως ὑπάρχουσιν.³⁷

Some of those who devote themselves to academic inquiry and want to make a study about human souls, who also create a debate about it, claim that after the departure from this life and the withdrawal of the souls from the bodies, the souls themselves, too, remain inactive, be they saintly or somehow otherwise.

This statement explicitly excludes the posthumous activity of saints. Indeed, Eustratios' adversaries had developed a complex argument to explain away the apparitions of saints in dreams and visions, which might be taken as proof of such activity. They claimed that it was not the saints themselves that appeared to the faithful in dreams and visions, but rather anonymous divine powers that took on their appearance.³⁸

It is evident that such an understanding of the afterlife also rules out the possibility of intercession. Indeed, this nexus was clearly seen by Eustratios, who described it several times in his text. Here one example may suffice:

Ὁ θεὸς λέγει διὰ τῶν προφητῶν· Ὑπερασπιῶ τῆς πόλεως ταύτης δι' ἐμέ καὶ διὰ Δαυὶδ τὸν δοῦλόν μου. Ὁρᾷς ὅτι δυσωπούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς παράγει δικαίαν ἀπειλὴν κινουμένην καθ' ἡμῶν; Ἄρα οὖν οἱ ἅγιοι πρεσβεύοντες ἐνεργοῦσιν ἢ οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσιν, κρίνατε ὑμεῖς· πρεσβεῖα οὐκ ἔστι κοιμωμένων νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ ζώντων καὶ ὑφεστώτων καὶ ἐνεργούντων.³⁹

God says through the prophets: 'I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.' Do you see that when entreated by his servants God averts a just threat that is directed against us? Are then the saints when they intercede active or not active, according to your judgement? Intercession is not an activity of the sleeping dead but an activity of those who are alive and existing and active.

Here we have a conceptual framework that in all respects corresponds to the description of Constantine's position by the patriarch Nikephoros: because the souls of the saints are inactive they cannot intercede for the living. Moreover, one of Eustratios' counterarguments is based on Wisdom 3:1-3, the same proof text that Nikephoros would employ two centuries later.⁴⁰ Of course, this does not yet prove that Constantine V and his Iconophile opponents were influenced by, or even aware of the earlier debate. In order to make the case that such a link did indeed exist I will first demonstrate that other

37 Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. P. van Deun, *Eustratii Presbyteri Constantinopolitani De statu animarum post mortem* (CPG 7522). Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 60 (Turnhout 2006) esp. 5.50–55.

38 Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 5.55–60.

39 Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 16.340–347. See also 27.633–635. On the role of saints as intercessors, see 65.1568–70.

40 Significantly, Eustratios quotes Wisdom 3:1–3 several times in his text. See Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 48.1160–1164, 87.2100. This shows that he relied on the same Scriptural proof texts as the patriarch Nikephoros.

authors from the late sixth century shared the views of Eustratios' adversaries, and then show that the debate continued in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries.

Thanks to the groundbreaking work of Matthew Dal Santo we now know that in the last decades of Late Antiquity the afterlife had become a contentious issue, not only in Constantinople but also in Rome, where Gregory the Great devoted a book of his *Dialogues* to the topic.⁴¹ However, the parallels between Eustratios and Gregory are not quite as close as Dal Santo would have it, since Gregory does not mention the notion of a sleep of the soul and its two corollaries, the inability of saints to appear to the faithful and to intercede for them. In any case it cannot be ruled out that both authors misrepresent the views of their opponents. Indeed, it is almost impossible to get a sense of the arguments used by Eustratios' adversaries, because Eustratios contents himself with piling up quotations from Scripture and from Patristic and hagiographical literature that support his own point of view.

Fortunately, this impasse can be overcome through study of a further text, a Nestorian treatise dating to the late sixth or early seventh century, which is preserved in the refutation of Leontius of Jerusalem.⁴² The anonymous author of this text frequently draws parallels between the incarnated Christ and the human compound, and as a consequence gives us an insight into his anthropological views. One of his arguments contains the following statement:

Μετὰ τὴν ἔξοδον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς ἐνέργειαν αὐτοκίνητον ἀδυνατῶς ἔχει ὡς ἐν ὕπνῳ βαθυτάτῳ καὶ μηδὲ ἑαυτὴν ἐπισταμένη διάγουσα.⁴³

After the departure of the soul from the body the soul, too, is incapable of a self-moved operation, remaining as if in a very deep sleep without even knowledge of itself.

The author then explains that the faculties of the soul are dependent on the senses of the body and will therefore only become functional again when soul and body are reunited at the resurrection. The souls of the saints are not explicitly mentioned in the context but there can be no doubt that the statement applies to them as well. This can be concluded from the argument with which the author supports his contention. According to him the souls would have already reached 'the state of complete perfection' (τὸ παντέλειον) if they were to become functional right after death. This, however, is impossible because it would contradict Hebrews 11:39-40: 'they have not carried off the promise, since God has foreseen something greater for us lest they be perfected without us' (οὐκ ἔκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρείττον τι προβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσιν). The author infers from this verse that perfection will only be attained when the last generation of human beings is brought before Christ at the Last Judgement, and

41 M. Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints' Cult in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford 2012) esp. 21–148.

42 On the date of the Nestorian treatise, cf. D. Krausmüller, 'Leontius of Jerusalem, a theologian of the 7th century', *Journal of Theological Studies* 52 (2001) 637–57, esp. 650–54.

43 Leontios of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos* I.51, MPG 86, 1513D1–12.

when those who had died earlier are resurrected.⁴⁴ Significantly Hebrews 11:39-40 is not concerned with ordinary people, but with the great figures of the Old Testament – many of whom were accorded saintly status in Late Antiquity. This suggests strongly that the author held the same to be true for the saints of the Christian era.

Indeed, a case can be made that Eustratios' adversaries employed the same argument in order to deny the posthumous activity of martyrs:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων βοᾶν καὶ λέγειν· ἕως πότε ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινὸς δεσπότης οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν, ἐναργῶς παρίστησιν τὴν αὐτῶν ἐνέργειαν· ἐπιθυμοῦσι γὰρ τελείως τοὺς αὐτῶν ἀποκομίσασθαι στεφάνους. Καὶ τὸ μὲν **τελείως** τὴν ἐκδίκησιν ἢ τοὺς μισθοὺς ἀπολαβεῖν, οὐπω τέως ὑπέσχετο· εἶπεν γάρ, *ἀναπαύσασθε μικρὸν χρόνον, ἕως ὅτου καὶ οἱ σύνδουλοι ἤγουν ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν πληρώσωσιν*, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος ἐδίδαξεν εἰπών· *Τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρεῖττόν τι προβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν **τελειωθῶσιν***. Οὐ μέντοι ἀπράκτους ἢ ἀνεργήτους αὐτοὺς εἶασεν· τὸ γὰρ δοθῆναι αὐτοῖς στολὰς λευκάς, δείκνυσι τὴν **μερικῶς** ὑπ' αὐτῶν γινομένην ἐνέργειαν.⁴⁵

But the fact that the souls of those who had been slaughtered cried from the altar and said: 'until when, holy and true Lord, do you not judge and avenge our blood', shows clearly their activity, for they desire to carry off their crowns in a perfect manner. And for the time being he did not promise that they receive the revenge or the rewards **perfectly**, for he said 'rest a little while, until their fellow-servants, that is, brothers are fulfilled', as the apostle also teaches when he says: 'since God has foreseen something greater for us, lest they be **perfected** without us.' Yet he did not leave them inactive and without operation because the fact that white garments were given to them indicates the activity that was **partially** performed by them.

This argument only makes sense if Eustratios' adversaries interpreted Hebrews 11:39-40 in the same manner as the author of the Nestorian treatise. They would then have claimed that the perfect state in which the souls again become functional could only be attained at the resurrection. Eustratios responded to this argument by highlighting the similarity of the verse in Hebrews with Revelation 6:9-11: 'it was given to each of them a white garment, and it was said to them to rest yet a little while until also are fulfilled their fellow-servants and their brothers who will be killed just like them' (ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐκάστῳ στολὴ λευκὴ, καὶ ἐρρέθη αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἀναπαύσονται ἔτι χρόνον μικρὸν, ἕως πληρωθῶσιν καὶ οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν οἱ μέλλοντες ἀποκτεννεσθαι ὡς καὶ αὐτοί). Since in the latter case Christ tells the martyrs not only to wait for their fellows but also gives them white garments as a temporary comfort, Eustratios could

44 For a detailed discussion see D. Krausmüller, 'Conflicting anthropologies in the Christological discourse at the end of Late Antiquity: the case of Leontius of Jerusalem's Nestorian adversary', *Journal of Theological Studies* 56 (2005) 413-47, esp. 429-34.

45 Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 29-30.640-652.

claim that Revelation qualified the meaning of Hebrews. While it was true that the saints would only become perfect at the Last Judgement, they would already receive a partial recompense at the moment of their death and would therefore be operational.

Significantly, this is not the only parallel between the two texts. Further comparison shows that the topic of saintly apparitions, which looms so large in Eustratios' treatise, also played a role in the controversy between the Nestorian author and his Chalcedonian adversary, Leontios of Jerusalem.⁴⁶ This affinity may come as a surprise because Eustratios' adversaries were undoubtedly good Chalcedonians: if their orthodoxy had been questionable Eustratios would not have failed to draw attention to this fact. However, at this point we need to remember that the Late Antique discourse about the afterlife was conducted quite independently from the Christological controversy and that proponents of a sleep of the soul could be found in all sects.⁴⁷ Indeed, the debate even crossed linguistic borders. This can be seen from the writings of the Nestorian theologian Babai, which were without exception composed in Syriac.

Babai was a tireless propagator of the theory of a sleep of the soul, which he expounded in both his theological and his spiritual works.⁴⁸ In his Christological treatise *About the Union* he states:

*Et anima, mortuo corpore, sine operatione manet, etsi vitalitas eius et rationalitas eius et cognitio apud eam tanquam in somno servantur.*⁴⁹

The soul, too, remains without activity after the death of the body, even if its life and reasoning and cognitive faculties are preserved in it as if in sleep.

Significantly Babai, too, makes no difference between the souls of ordinary human beings and the souls of saints. Indeed he is not even prepared to make an exception for Christ:

*Cum Dominus noster animam suam tradidisset et divinitas eius esset cum corpore in sepulcro et etiam cum anima in paradise, corpus mansit absque vita et sensu, et anima absque cogitatione et operatione.*⁵⁰

46 Leontios of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos* I.33, MPG 86, 1497B7–C2.

47 See Krausmüller, 'Conflicting anthropologies', 447–49, and 'The flesh cannot see the word: "Nestorianising" Chalcedonians in the seventh to ninth centuries AD', *Vigiliae Christianae* 67 (2013) 185–208.

48 Among Syriac-speaking Christians, the notion of a sleep of the soul was already well known in the fourth century. See J. Martikainen, 'Die Lehren vom Seelenschlaf in der syrischen Theologie von Afrahat dem Persischen Weisen bis zu dem Patriarchen Timotheos I', in *Theologia et Cultura: Studia in honorem G. Nygren* (Åbo 1986) 121–29. Discussion of this evidence is beyond the scope of this article.

49 Babai the Great, *Liber de Unione* 3, trans. A. Vaschalde, *Babai Magni Liber de unione*. CSCO, 80, *Scriptores Syri*, 35 (Paris 1915) 77.3–5. On Babai, see G. J. Reinink, 'Babai the Great's Life of George and the propagation of doctrine in the Late Sasanian Empire', in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority. Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Watt (Leiden and Boston 1999) 171–93.

50 Babai, *Tractatus adversus eos qui dicunt: Quemadmodum anima et corpus sunt una hypostasis, ita Deus Verbum et homo sunt una hypostasis*, trans. Vaschalde, 236.21–24.

When our Lord had relinquished his soul and his divinity was with the body in the grave and also with the soul in Paradise, his body remained without life and sense perception and his soul without thought and operation.

That we are in the presence of the same debate again becomes obvious when we analyse individual arguments. In his treatise Eustratios states that fire is ever-moving as long as it is seen in matter, and then concludes that the soul is even more ever-moving because unlike fire it is incorporeal.⁵¹ It is evident that this analogy does little to support his case because fire ceases to move once the fuel is consumed. The explanation for this oddity is found in Babai's *Commentary on Evagrius* where it is argued that just as fire does not burn without matter so the soul cannot function without the body.⁵² This leaves no doubt that Eustratios' adversaries had employed the same argument as Babai, and that Eustratios' version is a clumsy attempt to make it serve his own purposes.

Thus we can conclude that in the second half of the sixth century, authors belonging to different religious and linguistic groups rejected the posthumous activity of all souls, including the souls of the saints, and that they made use of the same arguments in order to support their views. This shows clearly that Eustratios' adversaries were not isolated figures, they participated in a broad discourse.

Unlike Eustratios' treatise, the surviving texts by the anonymous Nestorian author and by Babai the Great do not broach the topic of intercession. However, this does not mean that the topic played no role in the Nestorian debate, since it surfaces in a text from the seventh century – the *Commentary on the Book of Abba Isaias* by the monk Dadišo of Qatar. From this text we can gauge the impact that Babai had on the discourse about the afterlife. Those who considered all souls to be inactive after death turned to his writings in order to support their arguments, and even Dadišo, who held the contrary view did not dare to attack him directly, seeking instead to demonstrate that Babai could not possibly have taught such a thing. Having quoted texts from much earlier authors who had accepted the posthumous activity of the saints, Dadišo claimed that these texts reflected the Patristic consensus from which Babai would not have departed. In a second step he then focused on a few passages from Babai's works that seem to allow for some continuing activity of the soul.⁵³ Dadišo was so alarmed

51 Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 15.324–329: Εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἰσθητὸν καὶ ὕλικόν πῦρ, ὅπερ καὶ πρὸς ὑπηρεσίαν ἡμῖν δέδοται, ἀεικίνητον οὐδέποτε παύεται τῆς κινήσεως, ἐν ὧσφ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ θεωρεῖται, πῶς ἢ νοητῇ καὶ λογικῇ ψυχῇ δύναται μένειν ἀκίνητος ἢ ἀνενέργητος, ἀσώματός τις οὖσα καὶ πολλῶ πλεον ἀεικίνητος οὖσα τοῦ φαινομένου πυρός.

52 Babai the Great, *Commentary on Evagrius*, trans. W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*. Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse, 13.2 (Berlin 1912) 31: 'Wie Leuchtkraft und Wärme beim Feuer sind, aber es ohne Brandstoff nicht wirken kann, so besitzt auch die Seele in sich Leben, Vernunft, Erkenntnis, Erinnerung, aber sie läßt sie nicht wirksam werden'.

53 R. Draguet, *Commentaire du Livre d'Abba Isaïe par Dadišo Qatraya*. CSCO, 327 (Louvain 1972) 200–202. See R. Beulay, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha, mystique syro-oriental du VIIIe siècle*, *Théologie historique* 83 (Paris 1990) 501–502.

by the teachings of his adversaries that he decided to devote whole chapters to the various contentious issues. Having discussed whether the saints have perception, whether they glorify God and whether they enjoy his presence, he also considered the specific topic of intercession.⁵⁴ Under the heading 'Whether the souls of the saints who are in Paradise pray, and whether their prayers are of help to those who turn to them', he assembled a plethora of Patristic texts, all of which emphasise the efficacy of intercession.⁵⁵ Thus he was employing the same technique as Eustratios had used when he defended the real presence of saints in dreams and visions. The considerable effort that Dadišo expended in order to prove his point leaves no doubt that the ability of dead saints to intercede for the living was a real issue at the time.

In the Nestorian church the debate continued well beyond the seventh century. In the year 790 the Nestorian patriarch Timothy convened a synod in Baghdad, which elevated the sleep of the soul to the rank of a dogma and which took measures to eradicate the alternative concept of an active afterlife.⁵⁶ The bishop Nestorios, who had incurred Timothy's displeasure, for example, was forced to anathematise as heretical 'those who say that the souls after their departure from the body feel, know, act, praise God or have benefits because they have none of these until they again put on their bodies'.⁵⁷ The specific issue of the saints is not raised in these documents, but from a letter of Timothy it is evident that the patriarch himself was not prepared to make an exception for this group. The subject matter of this letter is the proper attitude towards relics. Timothy argues that the bodies of the saints should be honoured by the faithful in churches as if in an earthly paradise because God has honoured their souls by giving them the heavenly Paradise as a dwelling-place.⁵⁸ However, in the same context he makes it clear that the souls are not aware of the honour that is accorded to them because 'they remain there without sense perception and without knowledge until the resurrection of the bodies' (*sine sensu et sine scientia usque ad resurrectionem corporum ibi commorantur*).⁵⁹ Timothy does not explain how the faithful should

54 Dadišo, *Commentaire*, trans. Draguet, 204.14–15: 'Chapitre 6. Où habitent les âmes des justes quand elles sortent de leur corps? et si elles sentent et glorifient, ou non?'; Dadišo, *Commentaire*, trans. Draguet, 205. 33–206.2: 'Chapitre 7. Si les âmes des justes qui sont au Paradis voient notre Seigneur dans une manifestation de lumière et (si) elles glorifient Dieu pour les mystères qui leurs sont révélés, ou non?'

55 Dadišo, *Commentaire*, trans. Draguet, 206.30–31: 'Chapitre 8. Si les âmes des saints qui sont au Paradis prient, et (si) leurs prières assistent ceux qui recourent à eux, ou non'.

56 See O. Braun, *Moses Bar Kepha und sein Buch von der Seele* (Freiburg 1891) 145–46.

57 O. Braun, 'Zwei Synoden des Katholikos Timotheos I.', *Oriens Christianus* 2 (1902) 283–311, esp. 309: 'Auch anathematisiere ich die ... welche sagen, dass die Seelen nach ihrem Ausgang aus dem Leibe fühlen, wissen, wirken, (Gott) loben oder (von Fürbitten?) Nutzen haben. Denn nichts solches kommt ihnen zu, bis sie ihre Leiber (wieder) anziehen'.

58 Patriarch Timothy, *Epistula* 36, trans. O. Braun, *Timothei Patriarchae Epistulae*, I. CSCO, 75, Scriptorum Syri, 31 (Louvain 1915) 181.7–12.

59 Patriarch Timothy, *Epistula* 36, trans. Braun, 181.31–33.

behave when they turned to relics for help. However, a collection of ecclesiastical laws fills this gap: there the faithful are told to pray directly to God.⁶⁰

In the Nestorian church it is thus possible to follow the debate about the cult of saints from the late sixth to the late eighth century. This raises the question: can a similar continuity be demonstrated for the Chalcedonian churches of Byzantium and the Levant? In one of his letters Maximos Confessor complained that the notion of a sleep of the soul had become so popular in monastic circles that it threatened to eclipse alternative models.⁶¹ However, Maximos makes no explicit statements about the specific case of the saints and their activities.⁶² Fortunately for us, this lacuna can be filled through study of contemporary collections of *Questions and Answers*. Anastasios of Sinai devoted a whole chapter to this topic. He observed that each faculty of the soul is related to an organ of the body and is therefore impaired when this organ is damaged, and then presented the following argument:

Οὐκοῦν ὡσαύτως καὶ χωριζομένης αὐτῆς, λέγω δὴ τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐξ ὅλου τοῦ σώματος οὐκέτι δύναται τι ἐνεργεῖν ὧν ἐνήργει, διὰ τῶν μορίων τοῦ σώματος, οὐ λαλεῖν, οὐ μνησκεισθαι, οὐ διακρίνειν, οὐκ ἐπιθυμεῖν, οὐ λογίζεσθαι, οὐ θυμοῦσθαι, οὐ καθορᾶν.⁶³

Therefore also when it, that is, the soul, is separated from the whole body it cannot do anything of what it did through the parts of the body, not speak, not remember, not discern, not desire, not think, not be angry, not see.

From this argument Anastasios draws the conclusion that the soul will be in a sleep-like state until it is reunited with the body during the general resurrection.⁶⁴ Here we are clearly in the presence of the same conceptual framework that we have found in

60 See Braun, *Moses bar Kepha*, 147.

61 Maximos Confessor, *Epistula* 7, MPG 91, 433–440. See G. Benevich, ‘Maximos the Confessor’s polemics against anti-Origenism. *Epistulae* 6 and 7 as a context for the *Ambigua ad Iohannem*’, *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 104 (2009) 5–15; and D. Krausmüller, ‘Anti-Origenism and the “Sleep of the Soul” in seventh- to ninth-century Byzantium’, in *Evagrius and His Legacy*, ed. R. Young and J. Kalvesmaki (forthcoming 2015).

62 One should, however, note that another letter of Maximos, which deals with a closely related topic, ends with the promise to put together a florilegium of Patristic teachings about the soul if the need should arise, *Epistula* 6, MPG 91, 432D1–3: ἔτοιμοὶ ἐσμεν θεοῦ χάριτι τὸ περικείμενον ἡμῖν τῶν θείων μαρτύρων τε καὶ μαρτυριῶν καταφεῖναι αὐτῶν νέφος. This sentence is a paraphrase of Hebrews 12:1: τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων, the verse immediately following Hebrews 11:39–40, which the champions of a sleep of the soul considered to be Biblical proof of their own position. This suggests that Maximos was acknowledging this fact in a roundabout way, but was planning to challenge his opponents by offering alternative proof texts and by proposing a different interpretation of Hebrews 11:39–40, quite possibly using the same strategy as Eustratios. For another case of such indirect acknowledgement see below, note 79.

63 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 19.6, ed. A. Munitiz and M. Richard, *Anastasioi Sinaitae Quaestiones et Responsiones*. Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 59 (Turnhout 2006) 32.51–55.

64 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 19.6, ed. Munitiz and Richard, 32.53–56.

Eustratios' treatise, and this link is even more evident when we consider that Anastasios quotes Hebrews 11:39–40;⁶⁵ and that he claims that in dreams and visions the saints are impersonated by angels.⁶⁶ However, at this point an important qualification needs to be made. Unlike Eustratios' adversaries, Anastasios makes an exception for the saints. After he has explained why the soul cannot function after death, he avers:

Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἡμῖν εἴρηται περὶ τῶν ἐν ἁμαρτίαις τελευτώντων, ἐπεὶ αἱ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον κτησόμενοι ψυχαί, ὡσανεὶ σῶμα καὶ ὄργανον αὐτοῦ γενόμενοι, ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ὅτι διὰ τῆς ἐλλάμψεως αὐτοῦ καὶ μετὰ θάνατον εὐφραίνονται, καὶ Θεὸν λόγῳ νοερῶς δοξολογοῦσι, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄλλων πρεσβεύουσιν, ὡς ἐκ τῶν Γραφῶν μανθάνομεν.⁶⁷

But this we have said about those who have died in sin, because the souls that have acquired the Holy Spirit have become, it seems to me, so-to-speak its body and instrument because they rejoice through its illumination even after death, praise God intellectually through their word and intercede on behalf of others, as we learn from the Scriptures.

From this passage it is evident that the saints are regarded as a privileged group to which the general rule does not apply. As a consequence they enjoy God, praise him and, most importantly, act as intercessors for the faithful. Significantly, this list corresponds exactly to the chapter headings in Dadišo's treatise.

A similar, albeit somewhat briefer argument is found in another collection of *Questions and Answers*, attributed to Athanasios of Alexandria. There the discussion of the sleep of the soul is followed by the comment that 'the souls of the saints, being activated by the Holy Spirit, praise God with the angels in the land of the living' (αἱ γοῦν τῶν ἁγίων ψυχαί, ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐνεργούμεναι, μετὰ ἀγγέλων ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων Θεὸν ὑμνοῦσι).⁶⁸

How are we to explain this data? I would argue that the two collections of *Questions and Answers* present us with a modification of an originally more extreme position. This is suggested by the manner in which Anastasios of Sinai sets out his argument. As I have already pointed out, the statement about the saints is inserted between a general exposé of the sleep of the soul and a discussion about angelic impersonation. In the conceptual framework established by Eustratios' adversaries the two themes were closely related: the souls are comatose and can therefore not appear to the faithful. In Anastasios' argument this nexus is broken. There we only find the supplementary argument that the saints have not yet been resurrected and are therefore not able to manifest themselves corporeally.⁶⁹

65 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 19.8, ed. Munitiz and Richard, 33.64–75.

66 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 21.3 ed. Munitiz and Richard, 39.21–24.

67 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 19.7, ed. Munitiz and Richard, 33.58–63.

68 Pseudo-Athanasios, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* 33, MPG 28, 617A10–12.

69 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 19.8, ed. Munitiz and Richard, 33.64–75. Eustratios' adversaries had used the same argument, see Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 83.2005–2021.

Thus one can hypothesise that the comment about the saints was added by the author as a personal opinion when he adapted an existing text.

This hypothesis can be substantiated when we consider the genesis of the two surviving collections of *Questions and Answers*. It has long been noticed that they are closely related to one another.⁷⁰ Indeed, the similarities are nowhere as obvious as in the section about the soul, which both authors introduce in the following manner:

Anastasios:

Διψᾶται παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὡς ὕδωρ μικρὸν τοῦ μαθεῖν καὶ ἀκριβῶς γινῶναι τί ἐστὶ ψυχὴ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ποία ἐστὶ, καὶ πόθεν συνίσταται, καὶ πότε, καὶ πῶς ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ ποῦ μετὰ τὸν χωρισμὸν τοῦ σώματος πορεύεται.⁷¹

There is a thirst among all human beings as if it were for a little water to know and to learn exactly what the soul of a human being is and what qualities it has, and from where it is constituted, and when and how it operates in the body, and where it goes after the separation from the body.

Ps-Athanasios:

Πολλὴ γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ ἡ περὶ τούτου (sc. τοῦ περὶ ψυχῶν λόγου) παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ὑπάρχει ζήτησις τε καὶ ἀμφιβολία: λέγω δὴ, τί αὐτὸ χρῆμά ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πόθεν αὕτη συνίσταται ἐν τῷ σώματι, καὶ πότε καὶ πῶς τοῦ σώματος χωρίζεται, καὶ τί μέχρι τῆς ἀναστάσεως διαπράττεται.⁷²

There is certainly also about this topic (sc. the debate about the soul) much searching and doubt among human beings, I mean, what thing the soul of a human being is and from where it is constituted in the body, and when and how it is separated from the body and what it does until the resurrection.

The two sentences not only have the same content but also share a number of expressions. In a recent article I have argued that Anastasios and Pseudo-Athanasios drew on a common source, a now lost treatise that sought to address all questions related to the soul in a systematic fashion.⁷³ In order to make my case I focused on another topic discussed in both extant collections, the inability of the resurrected to recognise one another. Through comparison with other texts I could show that the author of the common source allowed for no exception to this rule and that Anastasios and Pseudo-Athanasios then modified this argument by claiming that the saved would know each other. This parallel greatly strengthens the case that the insistence on the continuing activity of the souls of saints and their ability to intercede was also a later modification. The original text most likely dated to the late sixth or early seventh century. It closely resembled the lost treatise of Eustratios' adversaries and may even have been identical.

There can be little doubt that there was once a lively debate between authors who held diverging opinions. A Nestorian collection of *Questions and Answers*, which is attributed to Isaac the Great, affords us a glimpse at the dynamics of the discourse. The anonymous author of this text denies posthumous activity to all souls and contends that visions are the work of impersonators. However, he is then told by his interlocutor that according to some people the souls of the righteous praise God after the separation

70 See J. Haldon, 'The works of Anastasios of Sinai: a key source for the history of seventh-century East Mediterranean society and belief', in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, Volume I: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron and L. Conrad (Princeton 1992) 107–47, esp. 118–25.

71 Anastasios, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 19.1, ed. Munitiz and Richard, 29–30.1–5.

72 Ps-Athanasios, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* 15, 605D6–608A5.

73 D. Krausmüller, "'At the resurrection we will not recognise one another': radical devaluation of social relations in the lost model of Anastasios' and Pseudo-Athanasios' *Questions and Answers*", *B* 83 (2013) 207–27.

from the body. The author replies that if that were the case the souls of the sinners would also ask God for forgiveness, which is irreconcilable with the Christian faith and can therefore not be true.⁷⁴ Here we see not only that some Nestorian authors modified the original framework in the same way as Anastasios and Pseudo-Athanasios but also that the defenders of the original framework formulated counter-arguments against the modifications.

The text on which Anastasios and Pseudo-Athanasios drew was still in circulation around the year 800 when Theodore of Stoudios quoted from it the statement that no mutual recognition is possible after the resurrection.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, Theodore's lengthy refutation contains no information about the context of the debate. In order to establish how the rejection of the cult of saints became bound up with the Iconoclast cause we need to turn to John of Damascus (+749). John's *Exposition of Faith* contains a chapter 'about the saints and the honour owed to their relics' (περὶ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τῆς τῶν λειψάνων αὐτῶν τιμῆς).⁷⁶ In this chapter John does not simply declare that the faithful should honour the saints but gives a series of explanations why they should do so. Indeed, he presents us with a specific argument for the posthumous activity of saints:

Ἵτι μὲν οὖν ψυχὰι δικαίων ἐν χειρὶ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἄνηται αὐτῶν βάσανος, φησὶν ἡ θεία γραφή· ὁ θάνατος γὰρ τῶν ἁγίων ὕπνος μᾶλλον ἐστὶ ἢ θάνατος. Ἐκοπίασαν γὰρ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ζήσονται εἰς τέλος, καὶ· Τίμιος ἐναντίον κυρίου ὁ θάνατος τῶν ὁσίων αὐτοῦ. Τί οὖν τιμιώτερον τοῦ ἐν χειρὶ εἶναι θεοῦ; Ζωὴ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς καὶ φῶς καὶ οἱ ἐν χειρὶ θεοῦ ὄντες ἐν ζωῇ καὶ φωτὶ ὑπάρχουσιν.⁷⁷

Divine Scripture, then, says: 'the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and torture does not touch them' (Wisdom 3:1), for the death of the saints is sleep rather than death, for 'they have toiled forever and they will live until the end' (cf. Psalm 48:10), and 'worthy before God is the death of his saints' (Psalm 115:6). What, then, is more worthy than to be in the hand of God, for God is life and light, and those who are in the hand of God are in life and light?

Significantly, this argument has a close parallel in Eustratios' treatise where Psalms 55:14 and 114:9 are used to make the same point.⁷⁸ This shows clearly that the cult of saints

74 Braun, *Moses bar Kepha*, 144: 'Schüler: Haben die Seelen der Gerechten Erquickung über ihre guten, oder die Seelen der Gottlosen Beschwerde über ihre bösen Werke? Lehrer: Weder die Seelen der Gerechten haben Erquickung über ihre guten, noch die Seelen der Gottlosen Beschwerde über ihre bösen Werke, denn gleich nach der Trennung verlieren Seele und Leib Sinnen und Denken. ... Schüler: Ich hörte aber sagen, dass die Seelen der Gerechten Gott loben nach ihrer Trennung im Leibe. Lehrer Wenn das so wäre, würden sie ihn auch über ihre Sünden loben, um ihn zu erbitten. Aber keines von beiden ist der Fall'. The next section then deals with the apparitions of martyrs.

75 See Krausmüller, "'At the resurrection we will not recognise one another'", 220.

76 John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei* 88, in Kotter, 2, 202–205.

77 John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei* 88, ed. Kotter, 2, 203.22–204.29.

78 Eustratios, *De statu animarum*, ed. van Deun, 15.322–324: Εἰ ὁ Δαυὶδ ἠῤῥαχτο ἐν φωτὶ καὶ χάρα ζώντων διαίγειν, οἱ ἐν φωτὶ ζῶντες, ἄργοι ἢ ἀκίνητοι μένειν οὐ δύνανται.

was a contentious issue, and not just their images.⁷⁹ Indeed, John deals with the latter topic in the immediately following chapter ‘about icons’ (περὶ εἰκόνων), which justifies the role of religious imagery in the face of Iconoclast criticism.⁸⁰ The sequence of saints, their relics and their images is highly suggestive since it parallels later Iconophile creedal statements. Moreover, one is reminded of the *Acts* of the Council of Hieria, where the rejection of icons is complemented with an affirmation of the cult of saints. This corroborates the hypothesis that by the middle of the eighth century this topic had come to divide radical Iconoclasts on the one hand, and moderate Iconoclasts and Iconophiles on the other.

With John of Damascus we have reached the lifetime of Constantine V. However, there is clear evidence that the debate did not stop at this point but continued into the Second Iconoclasm. This evidence is found in the writings of Methodios, one of the leaders of the Iconophile faction, who in 843 became patriarch of Constantinople. In his *Life* of the Iconophile confessor Euthymios, which most likely dates to the 830s, Methodios engages in a discussion about the possibility of reward and punishment before the Last Judgement.⁸¹ There he envisages two objections: ‘how would what is without body be punished?’ (πῶς τὸ ἀσώματον κολασθήσεται); and ‘how would what is without flesh be able to enjoy divine grace?’ (πῶς αὐτίς τὸ ἄσαρκον ἐν ἀπολαύσει θείας χάριτος γένηται)⁸² The thrust of these objections is obvious: without the organs of the body the soul cannot feel either joy or pain. In order to rebut them Methodios points to the fact that fragrant unguent flows from the graves of saints whereas the graves of great sinners exude stinking pitch. He claims that if the visible bodies are in this way active the invisible souls must be active, too.⁸³ The significance of this theory becomes obvious in the following paragraph:

Καὶ τὰ μὲν εἰρημένα τοῖς κατ’ ἄκραν, ὡς ἔφημεν, Θεῷ εὐαρέστησιν καὶ κατ’ ἄκραν ἔμπαλιν ἔκπτωσιν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ τέθειται, τῶν δέ γε μέσον ἀμφοῖν καταστάσεων τῶν μῆτε ὑπεραποθανόντων Θεοῦ, μῆτε ἄκρως διὰ βίου κατωρθωμένων καὶ διευθετημένων, καὶ τῶν μῆτε κατεξαρνησαμένων ἀμετανόητα, μῆτε πάλιν πλημμελησάντων βαρύτερα,

79 The chapter ends with a praise of the saints, which is a paraphrase of Hebrews 11:37–38, the verses immediately preceding Hebrews 11:39–40, the main Biblical proof texts of the champions of a sleep of the soul. This is most likely an indirect acknowledgement of the position of John’s adversaries, in particular since Maximos had used the same strategy, see above, note 62.

80 John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei* 89, ed. Kotter, 2, 206–208. Interestingly, the saints, their relics and their icons are discussed in the same order as in *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum* and in the Creed for Iconoclast bishops at the Council of Nicaea.

81 J. Gouillard, ‘La vie d’Euthyme de Sardes († 831), une oeuvre du patriarche Méthode’, *TM* 10 (1987) 1–101 (*BHG* 2145). For the dating of the text cf. J. Gouillard, ‘Une oeuvre inédite du patriarche Méthode: La Vie d’Euthyme de Sardes’, *BZ* 53 (1960) 36–46, esp. 36–38, who establishes 831 as the *terminus ante quem* for the former text.

82 Methodios, *Life of Euthymios* 24, ed. Gouillard, 55.488–489.

83 Methodios, *Life of Euthymios* 24, ed. Gouillard, 55.477–486.

τάχα ἡ κοινὴ ἐξανάστασις ἔσται καὶ ἀρχὴ τῆς ἀνταποδόσεως, καθ' ὃ οὐδ' ἔνθεν τὰ σωματία τούτων οὐτ' ἐνεργοῦνται τι τῶν ἀπευκταίων οὔτε προκρίνονται, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀλόγων εἰσὶν ἀψύχων ἢ ὡσπερ γῆ τις ἀπλῆ καὶ ξύλον ἀχρήσιμον.⁸⁴

And what has been said applies, as we have said, to those who have pleased God in the highest degree and who have again fallen away from God in the highest degree, whereas for those between the two states, those who have neither died for God nor lived a life of utmost achievement and righteousness, and those who have neither denied him without repenting nor again sinned too greatly, the common resurrection is perhaps also the beginning of the recompense, insofar as here, too, their bodies show neither any untoward activity nor any preferment, but are like those of beings without reason, without soul, or like some ordinary earth and useless wood.

In this passage Methodios infers from the absence of visible 'activities' (ἐνέργεια) in dead bodies that the souls who had once inhabited them are inactive and that they will only reap rewards or punishments at the Last Judgement. Accordingly, posthumous activity is restricted to the souls of the extremely good and the extremely wicked, whereas the souls of the middling sort – the vast majority of Christians – remain inactive until the resurrection. This shows clearly that Methodios himself accepted the notion of a sleep of the soul and that he then tried to make a case for the continuing activity of the saints within this conceptual framework, just as Anastasios of Sinai had done a century earlier. It is evident that such an argument only makes sense if Methodios, too, was confronted with the claim that the saints were inactive after death.

That we are in the presence of a continuous debate can be seen from the fact that the theory of angelic impersonation resurfaces in Methodios' *Encomium* of the Sicilian martyr Agatha, which most likely predates the restoration of icon worship.⁸⁵ This text includes an episode in which the imprisoned saint is visited by an old man who identifies himself as an apostle and then heals her mutilated breasts.⁸⁶ In the course of the narrative Methodios mentions this figure twice: in the sentence preceding the self-identification he introduces him as 'the one who appeared as Peter or truly was Peter' (ὁ φαινόμενος εἰς Πέτρον ἢ ὡς ἀληθῶς τυγχάνων Πέτρος), and after the miracle he lets Agatha thank 'the Lord Jesus Christ who had sent his apostle or an angel as apostle' (τῷ πεπομφότι τὸν ἐαυτοῦ ἀπόστολον, ἢ ὡς ἀπόστολον ἄγγελον, Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ).⁸⁷ In each case Methodios thus presents side by side two alternative interpretations of supernatural agency. Significantly, this feature is not found in Agatha's Late Antique *Passio*, which he otherwise followed quite closely: there Peter's personal involvement is taken for granted. This shows clearly that Methodios deliberately changed his model in order to accommodate

84 Methodios, *Life of Euthymius* 26, ed. Gouillard, 59.531–537.

85 E. Mioni, 'L'encomio di S. Agata di Metodio patriarcha di Costantinopoli', *AB* 68 (1950) 58–93, esp. 72–3.

86 Patriarch Methodios, *Encomium of Agatha* 23, ed. Mioni, 88.

87 Patriarch Methodios, *Encomium of Agatha* 23, ed. Mioni, 88.1–4 and 12–14.

the concept of angelic impersonation. Since there can be no doubt that he himself believed in the real presence of the saints, one can conclude that he offered the alternative explanation in response to the views of his envisaged audience, which may well have included people with Iconoclast sympathies.⁸⁸

However, the clearest evidence for continuity is found in Methodios' *Life of Theophanes*, which dates to the 820s.⁸⁹ This text contains the following passage:

Ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἐξεληθοῦσα φωνὴ πρὸς τῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἀρνίου ἐσφαγμένων τὸν ἐπὶ τῶ ἀντῶν αἵματι θεῖον ἔλεον ἐγκαλουμένων γέγονεν, ὡς υἱὸς τῆς βροντῆς φησιν, ὅτι *περιμείνατε ἕως ἂν εἰσέλθωσι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ὑμῶν καὶ ὅτι ἐδόθη τέως αὐτοῖς ἀπλῆ στολή*, ταύτην ἣν λέγει περιμείναι τελείωσιν ἐν τῇ κοινῇ ἀπάντων τῶν γεννηθέντων ἐξαναστάσει προσεκδεχομένοις, ἐπεὶπερ μέχρις ἐσχάτης ἡμέρας διὰ τῶν κατὰ καιροὺς εὐαρεστούντων Κυρίῳ ἀδελφούς οἱ ἄγιοι θεῖαις ἐπικτῶνται ταῖς χάρισιν, οἷ, φησιν ὁ τὰ μυστήρια γράφων τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἡμῖν θεῖος ἀπόστολος, *ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς τελειωθῶσι*, τὸ καὶ ψυχῇ καὶ σώματι συνεξαστράψαι Κυρίῳ τελειότητα ὀριζόμενος, ἔμφασίν τε τῶ τοῦ *τελειωθῶσι* ῥήματι τῆς τοῦ μερικοῦ μεθέξεως ὑπενδίδωσιν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ *τέλειον* πρὸς *μερικόν* ἐστὶ τέλειον, ὡς καὶ τὸ ἔμπαλιν, τὸ μέρος τοῦ τελείου πάντως μέρος καθέστηκε.⁹⁰

The voice that went out from the altar was raised by those who had been slaughtered for the lamb, who called out for the divine mercy on the strength of their blood, as the Son of Thunder says: 'wait until your brothers, too, enter', and 'there was given to them for the time being a single garment', who awaited the perfection which he said they should wait for in the common resurrection of all that had been born, if indeed the saints acquire brothers through divine grace until the last day through those who please God at different times. Thus says the divine apostle who writes for us about the secrets of the resurrection, 'lest they be **perfected** without (sc. us)', defining as perfection our being resplendent together with the Lord both in soul and in body, and he implies through the verb 'be **perfected**' the notion of a participation in the **partial**, since the **perfect** is perfect in comparison with the **partial**, as also vice versa the part is indeed a part of the perfect.

From this argument it is evident that Methodios' adversaries had recourse to Hebrews 11:39–40 where it is stated that the rewards will be given to the righteous of the Old Testament only at some future point 'lest they be perfected without us'. They considered this

88 For a full discussion of the passage, cf. D. Krausmüller, 'Denying Mary's real presence in dreams and visions: divine impersonation in the *Life of Constantine the Ex-Jew*', *B* 78 (2008) 288–303.

89 V. V. Latyšev, *Methodii Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Vita S. Theophanis Confessoris*. Zapiski rossijskoj akademii nauk, viii. ser. po istoriko-filologičeskomu otdeleniju, 13.4 (Petrograd 1918). For the date cf. Gouillard, 'Un œuvre inédite', 36–38, who establishes 831 as the *terminus ante quem* for the former text.

90 Patriarch Methodios, *Life of Theophanes* 51, ed. Latyšev, 32.27–33.13. I have emended the text in the following manner: τῶν ... ἐσφαγμένων ... ἐγκαλουμένων, instead of Latyšev: τὸν ... ἐσφαγμένον ... ἐγκαλούμενον, and προσεκδεχομένοις, instead of Latyšev: προσεκδεχόμενος. The relative pronoun οἱ appears to be corrupt.

statement to be Scriptural proof of their opinion that the souls of the saints will not receive anything before the resurrection. Methodios counters this argument through recourse to the similar passage in Revelation 6:9–11, where the souls of the martyrs are also told to wait until the resurrection but are given robes as a comfort. He concludes that the eventual perfection mentioned in Hebrews 11:39–40 does not exclude the possibility that the saints already receive some reward in the present because ‘perfect’ implies ‘partial’. There is nothing new about this clash of the two interpretations. In the previous discussion we have come across an almost identical argument in Eustratios’ treatise *On the State of the Souls after Death*. Moreover, an abbreviated version of it is found in Anastasios of Sinai’s *Questions and Answers*.⁹¹ Thus we can conclude that Iconoclasts and Iconophiles perpetuated an old controversy.⁹² However, this does not mean that there are no new features. In Methodios’ case the implications for the intercession of the saints are made much more explicit. Having stated that Theophanes has been empowered by God, he adds: ‘wherefore he also can intercede only being seen by the Lord’ (ἐξ οὗ καὶ τὸ πρεσβεύειν ὁρώμενος καὶ μόνον τῷ δεσπότηι δεδύνηται), and then launches into a lengthy explanation of the mechanics of intercession.⁹³ This section ends with the exclamation: ‘therefore may be shamed those who do not accept the intercessions of the saints’ (αἰσχυνέσθωσαν ἐντεῦθεν οἱ τὰς πρεσβείας τῶν ἁγίων οὐκ ἐκδεχόμενοι).⁹⁴ Although Methodios does not identify his adversaries there can be no doubt that his arguments are directed against radical Iconoclasts who remained faithful to the vision of Constantine V even though the architects of the Second Iconoclasm affirmed the traditional role of the saints in the Christian belief system.⁹⁵

Unfortunately we know next to nothing about the concerns that motivated this group. Only the treatise *Against Constantine Caballinus* affords us a glimpse at their thought-world. There we read:

Τὴν παναγίαν θεοτόκον ὠνόμαζε μετὰ θάνατον αὐτὴν βοηθεῖν μὴ δυναμένην καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους ἀποστόλους καὶ πάντας τοὺς μακαρίους μάρτυρας πρεσβείαν μὴ κεκτημένους μόνους ἑαυτοὺς ὠφελήσαντας διὰ τὰ πάθη, ἅπερ ὑπέστησαν, καὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχὰς ἐκ τῆς κολάσεως διασώσαντες ἐπεὶ τοὺς παρακαλουμένους αὐτοὺς ἢ προστρέχοντας μηδὲν ὠφελήσαντες.⁹⁶

He called the all-holy one (sc. simply) ‘God-bearer’, who cannot help after death, and the holy Apostles and all the blessed martyrs who do not possess intercession but only profit themselves through the sufferings that they endured, and having

91 Anastasios of Sinai, *Quaestiones et Responsiones* 21.3, ed. Munitiz and Richard, 38.17–18.

92 Indeed, it is quite likely that Methodios knew Eustratios’ treatise since it was summarised by Photios, see van Deun, *Eustratii Presbyteri*, xlvi–lii.

93 Methodios, *Life of Theophanes*, 52, ed. Latyšev, 33.18–34.17.

94 Methodios, *Life of Theophanes*, 53, ed. Latyšev, 34.18–19.

95 See Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 39.

96 *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum* 21, 337C11–D4.

saved their souls from the punishment, since not having profited those who call on them or run to them.

From this passage it appears that Constantine was a moral rigorist who believed that Christians need to secure their own salvation and cannot rely on the help of others. It is possible that this belief was informed by social experience. In their writings the defenders of the cult of saints unselfconsciously drew parallels between the two spheres. They pointed out that one does not approach powerful people directly but pursues one's case through middlemen, and then concluded that the same rules guide the interaction between the individual believer and God.⁹⁷ Accordingly, one can argue that radical Iconoclasts like Constantine V projected onto the afterlife their own view of society, which was deeply suspicious of social networking.

At this point we can conclude that Constantine did indeed claim that the saints were inactive and could therefore not intercede on behalf of the faithful. Moreover, there was nothing innovative about such a theory. It had already put forward in the late sixth century by Chalcedonian and Nestorian theologians who all used the same arsenal of arguments. Moreover, it continued to find proponents in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries both in the Chalcedonian churches of Byzantium and the Levant and in the Nestorian church of the East. In Byzantium the situation became more complex in the eighth century when the cult of images became a new topic of controversy. Those who rejected the role of saints as mediators found a new home in the Iconoclast faction. However, not everybody in this new grouping shared their views. A more moderate party confined itself to rejecting the mediating role of icons and affirmed the cult of the saints. At the Council of Hieria this party gained the upper hand and even secured the condemnation of the radicals as heretics. However, this was not a lasting victory because in the following years Constantine V publicly proclaimed that he was no longer prepared to accept the cult of the saints. Moreover, the emperor then began to interfere with religious practice. He had appeals to the saints removed from church hymns and hagiographical texts, and took it on himself to write sermons in honour of saints that did not contain the customary prayers for intercession.⁹⁸ Yet the triumph of the radicals was short-lived because the reign of Leo IV saw a return to the position defined at the Council of Hieria. This situation did not change during the Second Iconoclasm when emperors and patriarchs pursued an even more moderate policy. However, despite the lack of official support the radical faction was still active. Only with the final restoration of icon worship did it disappear from the historical record. It is suggestive that opposition to the cult of saints was first voiced in the second half of the sixth century, when the old Roman

97 See *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum* 21, 340A5–11; and John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei* 88, ed. Kotter, 2, 204.49–52.

98 Patriarch Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* II.4, 341A7–C13. Cf. Theosteriktos, *Life of Nicetas*, 29, *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis*, I, Appendix (Antwerp 1675; repr. Brussels 1968) xxviiiE: τριακαίδεκα λογίδρια, ἅπερ παρέδωκεν ταῖς δυνὶν ἑβδομαδαῖς, πρεσβείαν μὴ ἔχοντα.

order was beginning to disintegrate and that it disappeared in the second half of the ninth century when a new stability had begun to emerge. Thus one wonders if it was not a response to political, social and economic dislocation, which threw into question established modes of social interaction.