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The Role of Christ’s Soul-Mediator in the Iconoclastic Christology

A time when ritual as a physical embodiment of religious practice became a center of controversy was Iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth century Byzantium. Upon examining religious polemics produced during the debate, it is especially interesting to see the interplay between ritual and theology, whose main concepts materialized in ritual. Yet if the choices of religious practice were relatively simple – to venerate or not to venerate the icon – the theological elaborations of both parties involved in the debate, that is the Iconoclasts and the Iconodules, were much more complex and were based on older traditions rethought in a systematic and sophisticated way.

Iconoclastic writings and anti-Iconoclastic polemics testify to the recurrent and even somewhat annoying usage of a pejorative epithet “soulless” towards artificial representations¹. In an anathema of the Council of Hieria (754), while quoting one of the texts of their *florilegium*, the Iconoclasts even considered it important to insert the words “soulless and speechless (ἄψυχοι καὶ ἄναυδοι)” into the original quote from

¹ For example, the Iconoclastic Council of Saint Sophia (815) mentions in several places “soulless matter (ἀψύχη ὕλη)” (ed. J. Featherstone, *Nicephori Patriarchae Constantinopolitani Refutatio et eversio definitionis synodalis anni 815*, CCSG 33, Turnhout–Leuven 1997, 34, 9 [p. 74]); “those who give veneration to soulless icons (οἱ ταῖς ἀψύχοις εἰκόσιν τὴν προσκύνησιν δώσαντες)” (ed. Featherstone, 37, 3–4 [p. 81]). Cf. the *Letter of Three Patriarchs* (ed. H. Gauer, *Texte zum byzantinische Bilderstreit: der Synodalbrief der Drei Patriarchen des Ostens von 836 und seine Vewandlung in sieben Jahrhunderten*, Frankfurt-am-Main 1994, 52, 30–39).

Theodotus of Ancyra². We might pose the question: could it be that the term “soulless” is not simply a pejorative epithet *per se* but a precise theological formulation of the Iconoclastic vision of icons?

The *Definition* of the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria, on the basis of certain expressions from Gregory Nazianzen on the role of the soul of Christ as mediator between the flesh and the divinity of the Word³, formulates a doctrine of the special role of Christ’s human soul as a mediator between the divine and human natures:

...He made His dwelling in the virginal womb, He assumed flesh consubstantial with us into his own existence or hypostasis from her holy and blameless flesh, and condensed and shaped it through the mediation of the rational and intelligent soul (διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς λογικῆς τε καὶ νοεραῆς συμπήξας τε καὶ διαμορφώσας)⁴...

It is not surprising that the Iconoclasts chose to quote Gregory Nazianzen, the celebrated theologian. What is surprising is that this quote, originating in the pre-

² The text from Theodotus of Ancyra is: “...ἐν εἰκόσιν ἐξ ὑλικῶν χρωμάτων...” (ed. J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* vol. 13, Florence–Venice, 1759–98, 309e, hereafter: Mansi XIII; I will use the text from the edition of the *Horos* in T. Krannich, Ch. Schubert, and C. Sade, *Die Ikonoklastische Synode von Hieria 754*, Tübingen 2002, giving the references to the original numbering in Mansi XIII); that of the anathema is: “...ἐν εἰκόσιν ἀψύχοις καὶ ἀναύδοις, ἐξ ὑλικῶν χρωμάτων...” (Mansi XIII, 345c). It is worth noting that the phrase for Theodotus of Ancyra refers to the saints as animated images; the anathema changes the context and uses the quote against “soulless” icons (Ch. von Schönborn, *L’icône du Christ: Fondaments théologiques*, Paris 1986, 160, n. 1).

³ “...O marvellous mixture! The one who is (cf. Exod. 3: 14) comes into being, the uncreated is created, that which cannot be contained by place is contained, by the means of a rational soul, mediating between the divinity and the coarseness of flesh (διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς νοεραῆς μεσιτευούσης θεότητι καὶ σαρκὸς παχύτητι)” (*Oration* 38, 13; ed. C. Moreschini, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 38-41*, SC 358, Paris 1990, 134, 27–30; and the identical passage in *Oration* 45, 38: PG 36, 633d–636a). I should like to express my gratitude to Dr. Basile Markesinis (Institut voor Vroegchristelijke en Byzantijnse Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), who identified the source of this quotation. For similar expressions on the mediating function of soul in Gregory Nazianzen, see *Epistle* 101, 49 (ed. P. Gaullay, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Lettres théologiques*, SC 208, Paris 1974, 120) and *Oration* 2, 23 (ed. J. Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours 1-3*, SC 247, Paris 1978, 56). See also A. Richard, *Cosmologie et théologie chez Grégoire de Nazianze*, Paris 2003, 467–68.

⁴ Mansi XIII, 213d; cf. “While the divinity of the Son has assumed in his own hypostasis the nature of the flesh, the soul mediated between the divinity and the coarseness of the flesh... (Προσλαβούσης γὰρ τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ θεότητος ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς φύσιν ἢ ψυχὴ ἐμεσίτευσεν θεότητι καὶ σαρκὸς παχύτητι...)” (Mansi XIII, 257a).

Ephesian theological environment with a certain freedom of Christological language for eighth-century theology⁵, is repeated twice in a relatively short but very condensed *Definition* in a form of its Christological formula. The expressions about the mediating function of the soul in Gregory Nazianzen are made in passing and do not seem to have a particular technical meaning other than exposing his general Christian Platonic background⁶. In the Iconoclastic definition, however, the role of Christ's soul as mediator is clearly emphasized, and this soul seems to play a leading role in the Incarnation, first "condensing and shaping" Christ's flesh, and then, connecting the flesh to the divinity.

If this doctrine does have an importance for the Iconoclasts in the realm of Christology, what are its consequences for the rejection of cultic images, because this issue was the driving force of all theological elaborations in the controversy? The importance of the position on the mediating function of Christ's soul may help to see the main theological weapon of the Iconoclasts – the famous "Christological dilemma" – integrated into the whole of the Iconoclastic doctrine. According to the *Definition*, depictions of Christ on icons introduce either a mixture of the natures of Christ or their division⁷.

⁵ So, for example, Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century dedicated the whole collection of *Ambigua* (PG 91, 1065–1416) to the harmonisation of "difficult" passages of Gregory Nazianzen. As the analysis by P. Sherwood clearly showed, in the *Ambigua* St. Maximus carefully eliminates any possibility of interpreting passages from Gregory Nazianzen in an Origenist sense (P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism*, Rome 1955).

⁶ On the Platonism of Gregory Nazianzen see C. Moreschini, "Il platonismo cristiano di Gregorio Nazianzeno," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di lettere e filosofia* 4 (1974): 1347–92; *idem*, "Influenze di Origene su Gregorio di Nazianzo," *Atti dell'Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere la Columbaria* 44 (1979): 33–57; H. Pinault, *Le platonisme de saint Grégoire de Nazianze. Essai sur les relations du christianisme et de l'hellénisme dans son oeuvre théologique*. Thèse, Paris–La Roche-sur-Yon 1925.

⁷ The *Definition* of Hieria (Mansi XIII, 244d; Mansi XIII, 252a), and the *Definition* of St. Sophia: "But those who had given veneration to the soulless images, made these heresies the support of their previous absurd doctrine, either circumscribing, together with the image, the incircumscribable, or cutting the flesh from the divinity, thus correcting evil with evil, escaping nonsense, they fall into nonsense" (ed. Featherstone, 37, 2–9, p. 81).

This argument, attributed by all scholars of Iconoclasm to Constantine V himself⁸, was used, as I argue, at least two centuries earlier than the time of Hieria. Its essence can be found in the treatise *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* by Leontius of Byzantium. Leontius attempts to defend the Chalcedonian formula “one hypostasis,” and “in two natures” and claims that in spite of the seemingly opposite Christologies (Nestorian “two natures, two hypostases” and Monophysite “one nature, one hypostasis”), both heresies are based on one and the same failure of establishing a proper distinction between union according to substance and union according to hypostasis⁹.

Leontius accuses two opposite heresies of one error; the Iconoclasts accuse the Iconodules in their act of depicting and venerating Christ on the icon, of two opposite heresies. The Iconoclastic argument goes along the lines of Leontius of Byzantium in a reversed form: according to the Iconoclasts, by depicting and venerating the *soulless* image of Christ, where his mediating soul (which by its ambivalent status secures a proper union of hypostasis and distinction of natures) is absent, the Iconodules fall into a double Christological error: either they err in the manner of the Nestorians, splitting apart Christ’s flesh from the divinity of the Word, or they circumscribe the divinity of the Word by depicting Christ.

⁸ See, for example, the opinion of Paul Alexander: “Constantine’s adoption of the christological argument of his iconophile opponents to serve his own iconoclastic ends, a generation later, was an act of genius” (P. Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Workshop in the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford 1958, 48).

⁹ Cf. “It must be understood that in respect of the *oikonomia* – that is, the incarnation – Eutyches stands in the same relation to Nestorios as in respect of theologia Sabellius to Arius; for these latter, too, by reason of their opposition to one another – fell into a [single and] equivalent evil. [Sabellius] for the sake of the *ousia* confused the hypostases into a single hypostasis; while [Arius], for the sake of the hypostases, divided with them also the *ousia*. With [Nestorios and Eutyches], however, it is the other way around; for the former splits the natures into hypostases, while the latter mingles the natures into a [single] nature; and again, the former makes the hypostasis into hypostases, while the latter mixes the natures into a [single] nature” (PG 86, 1276bc, trans. D. Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology*, Washington, DC, 1970, 17–18).

If we give full importance to the Iconoclasts' doctrine on the mediatory role and function of Christ's soul in the Christological union, an important question regarding their attitude towards artificial images can be resolved. The icon of Christ, for obvious reasons, did not attempt to represent the soul of Christ, a fact emphasized by the Iconodules themselves throughout the whole Controversy¹⁰. Thus, if we attempt to look at Christ's representation on the icon through the eyes of the Iconoclasts, what we will see is merely a piece of wood with no access to the divinity¹¹ and with no relation to the true person of Christ, because it is deprived of the soul which only can perform the mediatory function with the divinity of the Word.

However, we should stop for a moment and ask a question: why is the concept of the soul-mediator so crucial in Iconoclastic Christology? This Christology seems to follow the Origenist theology based, in turn, on the wider Platonic doctrine about the impossibility of the direct deification of matter. According to the famous metaphor of a chariot from Plato's *Timaeus* 30ab, one of the main sources for the anthropology of Christian Platonism, without a soul it is impossible for intellect to be joined to a body. This doctrine helps to reconstruct the role of Christ's soul-mediator in the Iconoclastic viewpoint: since in the Platonic scheme every intellect requires a soul to be connected to the body, in its Christological transformation the soul of Christ also mediates between the divinity of the Word, connected to Christ-intellect, and the coarse

¹⁰ "If it is not possible to depict the soul, how more impossible is it to depict God who gave the immateriality to the soul!" (John of Damascus, *Apology* I, 4, 85–88; ed. B. Kotter, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 3, PTS 17, Berlin 1975, 78], see also *Apology* III, 16, 8–12 [Kotter, 125]); the Nicaea II: "For it is quite clear to everyone that 'icon' is one thing and 'prototype' another; the one is inanimate, the other animate... Thus when Peter and Paul are depicted, one can see them. Their souls, however, are not present in the icons. Even if the body of Peter were present, one could not see his soul. Since one cannot see it [the soul], who then of those who adhere to the truth can say – unless in thought only – that the body of Peter is separated from his soul?" (Mansi XIII, 261ab, trans. D. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm*, Toronto–Buffalo–London 1986, 91–92); cf. "The image of Christ is different: it is not of [the image] of the invisible soul (not to say of the divinity), but it is the image which belongs to His body, since [He is] man in every respect" (Theodore the Studite, PG 99, 461d).

¹¹ Cf. the anathema to Patriarch Germanus at the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria: "To Germanus the double-minded and worshipper of wood, let there be anathema!" (Mansi XIII, 365d).

material body. On the basis of this premise the Christian Platonist theologians developed several trends in their eschatological doctrine. Many scholars dealing with the problem of corporeity and materiality in Origen seem to agree that Origen is careful enough to assign the proper incorporeity to God himself: all the rest of the creatures have bodies; however, this does not mean that these bodies are necessarily material¹². Origen's theological follower, Evagrius of Pontos, while retaining the idea of the resurrection as a change of quality, stepped aside from Origen's subtle theory and spoke on the suppression of bodies in the *eschaton*¹³.

As I argued elsewhere, the Iconoclasts followed this tradition and built their polemics on the necessity of intellectual contemplation of the divinity, deprived of all sensual perception necessarily connected with matter and multiplicity¹⁴. The Iconodules did not object to the Iconoclasts' thesis that it is impossible to render the soul on the icon; they also agreed that body without soul is a dead body. Dogmatic divergence started with the issue of the deification of Christ's body in the Incarnation. The Iconodules build their doctrine on the affirmation of such deification – for example, Patriarch Nicephorus considered the issue of deification of Christ's flesh in the Sepulchre to be so crucial that he even included the corresponding point in his Exposition of faith sent to Pope Leo III (795–816) in the official plead for help

¹² L. Hennesey, "A Philosophical Issue in Origen's Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality," in *Origeniana Quinta, Papers of the Fifth International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14–18 August 1989*, ed. R. Daly, Leuven 1992, 378; H. Crouzel, "La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité," *BLE* 81 (1980), 241f., and D.G. Bostock, "Quality and Corporeity in Origen," in *Origeniana Secunda, Quaderni di "Vetera Christianorum"* 15, eds. H. Crouzel, and A. Quacquarelli, Rome 1980, 323–37 on the philosophical background of Origen's doctrine; see also M.J. Edwards, "Origen's Two Resurrections," *JTS* n. s. 46 (1995): 501–18; and *Idem.*, "Origen No Gnostic; or on the Corporeality of Man," *JTS* n. s. 43 (1992): 23–37.

¹³ Ed. A. Guillaumont, *Les Six centuries des "Kephalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique*. PO 28, fasc. 1, Paris 1958, I, 58; III, 66.

¹⁴ V.A. Baranov, "Origen and the Iconoclastic Controversy," in *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, ed. L. Perrone, Leuven 2003, 1043–52; *Idem.*, "Образ в контексте эпистемологических подходов иконоборцев и иконопочитателей," [Image in the context of the epistemological approaches of the Iconoclasts and Iconodules], *AKADEMEIA: materialy i issledovaniya po istorii platonizma* 5 (St. Petersburg 2003): 390–407.

against the Iconoclasts¹⁵. Theodore the Studite argued against precisely the doctrine which rejected the direct deification of material flesh, and emphatically stated that God penetrates everything, and can dwell not merely in the beings which possess soul, but in other material (and not necessarily animated) beings and objects, for example, in holy things¹⁶. Conversely, the Iconoclastic theology was founded on the rejection of the possibility for deification of the material body, going as far as leipsanoclasm¹⁷ or consecrating their churches without the ancient practise of placing parts of relics into the altars.

Yet one reservation is to be made. Our interpretation of the possibility of deification of Christ's flesh for the Iconoclasts, which is conceived of only by means of the deification of the soul, is contradicted by one statement of the Council of Hieria immediately following a clause on the soul-mediator from the second passage:

¹⁵ PG 100; 188d. There exists an interesting episode closely related to the problem of deification of Christ's dead body in the tomb in the *Panegyric* to Theophanes the Confessor by Theodore the Studite. When Theophanes the Confessor was interrogated by the future Iconoclastic Patriarch John Grammaticus, he was specifically asked: "In the tomb, in which Christ's body lay, where was his divinity?" – to which the Confessor replied: "Divinity is everywhere, but in your heart, oh, the adversary of God!" (S. Efthymiadis, "Le Panégyrique de S. Théophane le Confesseur par S. Théodore Stoudite (BHG 1792b). Édition critique," *Analecta Bollandiana* 111 (1993): 280). The dossier of the Patristic texts related to the problem of the relationship between the Word, body, and soul in the period when dead body of Christ was in the tomb, see J. Lebon, "Une ancienne opinion sur la condition du corps du Christ dans la mort," *RHE* 23 (1927): 5–43, 209–41; J. Lebourlier, "À propos de l'état du Christ dans la mort," *RSPT* 46 (1962): 629–49; 47 (1963): 161–80.

¹⁶ "For where is that place where the divinity is not, either in rational or in irrational, in animated or inanimate beings (although according to the analogy of the susceptibilities of natures toward increase and decrease)? Thus, if somebody says that the divinity is also in the icon, he will not be mistaken, given that [it is] also in the shape of the Cross and in other objects devoted to God; not by natural union – for [it is not] the deified flesh, but by reason of a relative participation" (PG 99, 344b).

¹⁷ Ed. C. de Boor, *Theophanes Chronographia*, Leipzig 1883–85, repr. Hildesheim 1963, 439 (hereafter: Theophanes); trans. C. Mango, and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, Oxford 1997, 607 (hereafter: Mango-Scott). S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources*, CSCO. Sub. 52, Louvain 1977, 152–65 (hereafter: Gero, *Constantine V*); see also J. Wortley, "Iconoclasm and Leipsanoclasm: Leo III, Constantine V and the Relics," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982): 253–79. Though the initiative of leipsanoclasm was often ascribed to the Emperor himself, we may think that the rejection of the usefulness of relics was accepted Church-wide, since the seventh canon of Nicaea II was especially aimed to correct the fact that many churches dedicated during Iconoclasm did not receive relics, which was a normal practice of the Church from the early Christian times.

...and as [the flesh] is together with God the Word, so also the soul is a soul together with God the Word, and both are together, that is to say, the soul, just as the body, is deified, and both are inseparable from the divinity, even when, in the voluntary passion, the soul is separated from the body¹⁸.

Here the traditional doctrine on the deification of Christ's body even without soul is defended. In the face of this blatant contradiction we should attempt to disclose the reasons for this statement: whether it is compatible with the rest of the Iconoclastic doctrine or was inserted for other reasons. This discrepancy initiated a scholarly argument between John Meyendorff and Stephen Gero, but this argument did not receive any definite solution¹⁹.

Yet all the argumentation of the Iconoclasts is centered around the point that the dead body, even that of Christ, does not constitute anything worth of representation for veneration, and directly contradicts the cited words on the indivisibility of the divinity from the dead body. Thus we are compelled to conclude that the doctrine of deification of the dead body *de facto* was not part of the Iconoclastic theology and we have to explain how the pertinent passage got into the *Definition* of Hiereia.

Stephen Gero pointed out in his monograph on Constantine V that the theology of Hiereia constituted a partial compromise with the theology advanced by

¹⁸ "... καὶ ὥσπερ ἅμα σὰρξ, ἅμα Θεοῦ λόγου σὰρξ, οὕτως ἅμα ψυχὴ, ἅμα Θεοῦ λόγου ψυχὴ καὶ ἀμφοτέρω ἅμα, τεθειωμένης δηλονότι τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς καὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἀχωρίστου τούτων τῆς θεότητος ὑπαρχούσης, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ διαζεύξει τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἐν τῷ ἔκουσίῳ πάθει" (Mansi XIII, 257b). The contains a quote from pseudo-Athanasius, *Epistula ad Jovianum* (PG, 28, 532, 8f).

¹⁹ "... the *horos*' emphasis on the continuing union of the divinity and the flesh, while the soul was separated from the latter, is in flagrant contradiction to the Origenistic doctrine of the union of the divinity and the humanity taking place *mediante anima*" (Gero, *Constantine V*, 99; see also *Ibid.*, 99 n. 150). Stephen Gero argues here against the thesis of John Meyendorff on the Origenist scheme of mediating soul (which I am accepting and developing here) from J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, Crestwood, NY, 1975, n. 23, p. 204.

the Emperor in his “Inquiries” written as the Council’s guidelines²⁰. In this manner the Council omitted the Imperial doctrine of the “consubstantial image,” though retained its ramifications on the Eucharist being the only true image of Christ²¹. Several sources allow us to suppose that the problem of compromise was even more acute in relation to the conditions of Christ’s physical body.

Patriarch Nicephorus describes a whole program of liturgical reforms designed but not carried out by Constantine V and aimed at the rejection of the doctrine that the Virgin Mary gave birth to God. Even the term “Theotokos” was supposed to be excluded from use²². This term has a direct relation to our discussion since the Virgin Mary conceived and gave birth to the flesh of Christ and not to his soul, and according to the Iconoclastic doctrine on the deification of Christ’s flesh through the soul, she could not be properly called “the Theotokos,” or “the One who Gave Birth to God”). Nicephorus does not tell why these reforms had not taken place. Another source does— Theophanes the Confessor – in his *Chronicle* under the year 762/63. Without naming his source Theophanes reports the dialogue between Constantine V and Patriarch Constantine (754–766).

The emperor summoned the patriarch [Constantine] and said to him: ‘What harm is there if we call the Mother of God Mother of Christ?’ The other embraced him and said: ‘Have mercy, O lord! May not this statement come even to your mind. Don’t you see how much Nestorius is held up to public scorn and anathematised by the whole Church?’ The emperor replied: ‘I have asked you for my own information. Keep it to yourself’²³.

²⁰ Gero, *Constantine V*, 40, 96, 100.

²¹ PG 100, 225a.

²² Nicephorus, *Antirrheticus* II, 4 (PG 100, 341c).

²³ Mango–Scott, 601 of Theophanes, 435.

Other sources, in their integrity totally ignored by the scholars, also report a similar position of Constantine V concerning the Theotokos²⁴. Yet this radical position is not in any way reflected in the *Definition* of Hiereia but is ascribed by all sources to Constantine V alone.

Now we need to take into account that the high clergy of Constantine's time could not have an independent doctrinal position and it's only logical to expect inconsistency in the compromise decisions produced by them for the Council. Finally, it seems that the traditional statement on the presence of the divinity in Christ's flesh after His death was inserted by the bishops to give the *Definition* of Hiereia traditional form without any attempts to integrate this concept into the entire Iconoclastic doctrine.

To sum up the results of our investigation: the adjective “ἄψυχος,” which could mean both “lifeless” and “unanimated,” in the usage of the Iconoclasts most likely bears a technical meaning “deprived of soul.” The failure of the Iconoclasts to render the soul on cultic images leads to several consequences. In formulating the Christological dilemma the Iconoclasts reversed the argument of Leontius of Byzantium, who accused the Nestorians and Monophysites of essentially the same error of not distinguishing correct unions and distinctions in describing the existence of natures in Christ. Yet the Iconoclasts' insistence on the mediating role of Christ's

²⁴ Theophanes' *Chronicle* in the entry of a.d. 740/41: “As for the false patriarch Anastasius, he swore to the people while holding the venerable and life-giving Cross, ‘By Him who was nailed to this, thus did the emperor Constantine say to me, namely, ‘Do not regard Mary's offspring, who is called Christ, as the Son of God, but as a mere man. For Mary gave birth to Him just as my mother Mary gave birth to me.’ When the people heard this, they cursed Constantine” (Mango–Scott, 576 of Theophanes, 415). See also the *Vita Nicetae Medicensis*: Constantine V took a sack with gold and demonstrated its worth to everybody; then he threw out the gold and presented the empty and worthless sack, saying that the Theotokos as well was worthy of honour only while Christ was in her womb (*Acta Sanctorum* April I, Appendix. p. XXVIIIcd, H. Hennephof, *Textus byzantinos ad Iconomachiam pertinentes in usum academicum*, Leiden 1969, 29; cf. Gero, *Constantine V*, 144–46). Patriarch Nicephorus in *Antirrheticus* I, 26, while reconstructing the theology of Constantine V makes a logical conclusion that the Iconoclasts must admit that the Word has come down from above through the Virgin “as through a tube (διὰ σωλήνος)” (PG 100, 269c).

soul suggests that the Dilemma presupposes the *tertium quid* – the medium in which the “correct” unconfused and unmixed union takes place, for which serves Christ’s human soul-mediator. In their doctrine of the rejection of artificial images on the basis of their soullessness, the Iconoclasts have affinity to the old Christian Platonist tradition, transferred into Christian theology by Origen, and developed by his followers. Our sources do not allow the claim for definite proof of the connection between Origenism and Iconoclasm, but it is clear that both theologies are not only compatible but consonant. Now perhaps we can not only speak of the “Platonism” of the Iconoclasts but even see what kind of “Platonists” they were – perhaps not so much interested in preexistence and *apokatastasis* but much more interested in the role of soul and intellect in salvation, building an elaborate Christology around the least material component of human nature they could find – Christ’s human soul.