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HOW TO BECOME A SAINT IN ELEVENTH CENTURY BYZANTIUM

The best, safest and most undisputed way to become a saint at any time is to be a martyr of the faith –whatever faith. But martyrdom is not always easily available; and as martyrdom is obviously very uncomfortable and inherently unattractive, it tends to be marginalised as a method, at least inside a Christian state. Also it is useless: in flourishing Byzantium of the first half of the 11th century, there was no point in showing to others that one really believed strongly in something that was commonly accepted. Decidedly the way of martyrdom was, in those times, open to others, Muslims and the other enemies of the emperor: the Christian Bulgarians would certainly see that point very well.

Furthermore, society was then becoming more and more permissive and tolerated situations which would have provoked public outcry in other, stricter, times. The Empress Zoe married her lover, the future emperor Michael IV, on the very day of the assassination of her previous husband, Romanos III, with no visible consequences; Constantine IX brought to the palace his mistress Maria Skleraina; although there was some minor protest at that, it concerned mainly the security of the reigning empresses not the moral scandal. The time of the great moralists, like Theodore of Stoudios of the 9th century, was gone, and this left few opportunities for 11th century Constantinopolitans to occupy the moral high ground and make a successful bid to become “confessors”.

Yet, every affluent society, every reigning ideology, needs its heroes, and promotes them as models with its subjects or the faithful. Eleventh century sanctity could be the confirmation of remarkable acts in spiritual or monastic exploits, which always kept their prestige among christians. The foundation of successful monasteries was very favourably viewed. And, of course, some wonder-working, especially miraculous cures, was a must in order to attract general acceptance and adoration.

Sanctity has always been unselfish –at least in this world, where it was won. No one has ever been declared a saint in his lifetime. The prospective saint himself could get satisfaction from his devoted disciples, who followed his example and teaching, from the creation of a major institution, which would

perpetuate his ideals, and from the respect and admiration of outsiders. He was a hero, and public recognition, if and when it came, might make him feel better for having been successful in his endeavours. But his legacy to his successors carried much more weight. The monastery of a recognised saint commanded a different kind of respect and attracted a different kind of support from the public. His teaching, which his pupils held from him directly, or as close to directly as possible, was a theory to be reckoned with by all the faithful, including the other monks who belonged to different schools of thinking or of acting, and who consequently might well take exception to his sanctification. His followers had every reason to promote his example and turn him, from a successful organiser, into an emissary of God.

To put it bluntly: the personal exploits of the hero were the result of his personal drive and faith and mentality; they might flatter his ego, but gave him little material gratification; his *post mortem* sanctification was the work of his followers, who expected from it important and tangible advantages, spiritual and material, but had to face the eventual opposition of competitors.

In fact, if one wants to identify better what was necessary for a canonisation, one has to examine the problem from both ends: what were the arguments put forward in order to create a saint? And what were those used to block such a canonisation?

If one goes back to the 11th century, one knows what was the normal procedure for declaring someone to be a saint. We all know that Byzantium had no official canonisation procedure and that a saint was recognised by being the object of an existing cult, a cult which grew up slowly and went beyond its initiators¹. The final consecration would be for one to be mentioned in the Constantinopolitan *Synaxarion* or *Heortologion*, a book composed in the 10th century as a part of the great codifications which affected hagiography as well as all other aspects of Byzantine knowledge. It was a real “who is who among saints”, the oldest existing manuscripts of which were written shortly after 956², but which contains the *Life* of St. Loukas of Steirion, who died on 7 February 953³. It was an instant success: the so-called menologion of Basil II (976-1025)

1. A(lice)-M(ary) T(albot), *ODB* 1, 372; A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 3, 1828; R. T. T(aft), *ODB* 3, 1991.

2. R. T. T(aft), *ODB* 3, 1991; cf. *Synaxarium CP*, p. XII-XIII.

3. *Synaxarium CP*, 449.16. But the *Synaxarion* ignores the translation of Loukas' relics which occurred in the late 10th century, on a 3rd of May: this date, more convenient because of the weather conditions, was to become the main panegyris of the monastery: N. Oikonomides, *The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas*, *DOP* 46 (1992), 254.

shows that some decades after its first composition, the *Synaxarion* was considered so important that the Emperor had commissioned a richly illuminated copy for himself, a copy that most probably was executed towards the year 1000⁴.

The saints who came after the composition of the Constantinopolitan *Synaxarion* could hardly be introduced into it *a posteriori*. It was possible to introduce a *Life* or a short *Synaxarion* of a new saint in one manuscript, usually the one that the person interested possessed, but this manuscript was bound to remain accessible to a limited milieu. All the saints who came after the compilation of the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* could no longer aspire to "national prominence". The medieval saint, especially the monk or hermit, was a local phenomenon, the benefactor of his followers and of their people and clients.

Let us now turn to some concrete examples.

a) *An unsuccessful attempt to de-sanctify an established saint.* Sanctity could be contested with the best or less than the best intentions. This means that sanctity could be revoked after it was granted.

An addition to John Skylitzes⁵ gives a telling example of such a practice in 1043/4. Its hero was Patriarch Michael Keroularios (25.3.1043-2.11.1058), well known for his strong personality and for having contributed to the schism of 1054⁶. I quote:

"The patriarch Michael, soon after his consecration, crossed out [the name of] the pope of Rome from the diptychs; to explain this act, he raised the question of the unleavened bread, the azyma; in this he was supported by Peter the patriarch of Antioch and Leo the archbishop of Bulgaria and all the elite of the Church. As he was in conflict also with the then hegoumenos of Stoudios, Michael surnamed Mermentoulos, he also crossed out Saint Theodore Stoudites from the synodikon which was read in the churches [on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 13 March 1044]. But Mermentoulos could not bear this and went to denounce the affair to the emperor [Constantine IX Monomachos]. Following an imperial order, the synodikon was read [in church once again] on the Sunday of the Samaritan [22 May 1044]. This [second and unexpected] reading proceeded according to the custom, but the patriarch himself stood up and pronounced

4. I. Ševčenko, On Pantaleon the Painter, *JÖB* 21 (1972) (= H. Hunger – M. Restle (eds), *Festschrift für Otto Demus zu 70. Geburtstag*), 241-249.

5. Skylitzes (*Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum*, ed. J. Thurn [CFHB 5], Berlin-New York 1973), 433-434.

6. A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 2, 1361.

with a loud and deafening voice the name of the great Theodore [of Stoudios]. Thus the revolt of the monks and of Mermentoulos against him was calmed down”.

Keroularios was antagonising the Church of Rome, which he accused of liturgical errors; to be consistent, he could not but contest any Byzantine saint who in the past had supported the primacy of the Pope: this was the case of Theodore of Stoudios, who, in his interminable quarrels with the Byzantine authorities, had often sought and praised the support which he obtained from Rome⁷. Keroularios’ previous conflicts with the abbot of Stoudiou only made easier his decision to eliminate from the *synodikon* the mention of Theodore Stoudites.

Up to now, we have a decision inspired by ideology and secondarily serving the patriarch in a personal conflict. But the reaction of the Stoudites was no longer ideological –no one in 11th century Constantinople would defend Western practices or the Roman primacy. The abbot’s reaction was political and very violent, and in this he had behind him the monks of the most populous and prestigious monastery of the Byzantine capital. The political influence of the Stouditai, of whose ranks came the predecessor of Keroularios, patriarch Alexios (1025-1043) prevailed first with the emperor and then, with his support, with the new patriarch, who was dragged into reversing his decision in a most humiliating way.

Three points to retain: (a) contesting an established saint is the business of the patriarch; (b) the saint’s defence is undertaken by those who had most to lose by his eventual fall; (c) the conclusion of the affair depends upon the political clout of the parties involved.

And one fourth point, no less important: Stoudiou, which from a monastery that contested authority in the early 9th century, ended by embodying the powerful establishment in the 11th century. There are further indications that Stoudiou constituted a threat to new monastic tendencies, so much so that lay authorities had to grant to innovative monks special protection⁸.

b) *An unsuccessful attempt to elevate a deceased monk to sainthood.* The information comes from the *Life* of Symeon, known as the New Theologian (written by Niketas Stethatos)⁹ and concerns his attempt to elevate his spiritual

7. Idem, *ODB* 3, 2044-2045.

8. N. Oikonomides, Το δικαστικό πρόνομο της Νέας Μονής Χίου, *Symmeikta* 11 (1997), 49-62.

9. *Life of Symeon the New Theologian* (BHG 1692), ed. I. Hausherr – G. Horn, *Un grand mystique byzantin. Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien (949-1022) par Nicétas Stéthatos*,

father, also called Symeon and surnamed Eulabes or the Stoudite, to sainthood. In order to avoid confusion in what follows, we shall call the one “the New Theologian”, the other “Eulabes” and we shall refer to the text as the *Vita*.

The New Theologian, the greatest Byzantine mystic of the 10-11th century, moderately educated (he never went beyond the study of grammar), started his monastic career in the monastery of Stoudiou; he was expelled from there, joined St. Mamas, where he was elected hegoumenos, renovated the monastery and spent there a good part of his career, until he was sent into exile.

The New Theologian had a spiritual father, a monk of Stoudiou, also named Symeon and surnamed Eulabes (because of his piety? or was it a sarcastic appellation of his enemies?) whom he had met and resorted to since the time when he was still a layman. Eulabes was a man of limited education (*ἀγράμματος*¹⁰), but exerted extraordinary influence upon his pupils and especially upon the New Theologian; he wrote “a whole book of spiritual improvement” under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost¹¹; he also performed some miracles and healings and died in 986 or 987. His admirer, the New Theologian, who was then hegoumenos of St. Mamas, decided that his exemplary life and charisma should not be ignored but should rather serve as an example for others. So he wrote his whole *Life* (*τὰ κατὰ πλάτος γεγραμμένα ... ὄλον τὸν βίον*) as well as hymns (*ᾠμνοῦς*) and praises (*ἐγκώμια*) about him and, in order to induce others to imitate him, he had his icon painted and every year he celebrated his memory on All Saints’ Day¹².

[Orientalia Christiana 12]. Rome 1928 (henceforth *Vita*). On Symeon the New Theologian, see A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 2, 1987 (with bibliography); esp. B. Krivochéine, *Dans la lumière du Christ: Saint Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, 949-1022: Vie, spiritualité, doctrine*, Chevetogne 1980; H.J.M. Turner, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood*, Leiden 1990. For the chronology of events, which has minor importance for our purposes, I am following Hausherr.

10. *Vita*, §72.13.

11. The motif of the illiterate man who, inspired from above, writes a whole important book comes back in the works of the New Theologian: *Katecheseis* (*Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, Catéchèses*, ed. B. Krivochéine – J. Paramelle, I-III [SC 96, 104, 113], Paris 1963-1965), no. 6, l. 193-195 (II, p. 30).

12. *Vita*, §72. That the celebration took place on All Saints’ Day (ninth Sunday after Easter, one week after Pentecost), is stated in his *Life* (*Vita*, §72.25: *μετὰ πάντων λαμπρῶς ἐόρταξε τὸν ἁγίων*) and is indirectly confirmed by the New Theologian himself, who wrote one *Katechesis* (no. 10: II, p. 138) on the occasion of Eulabes’ celebrations which had as its main topic the Holy Spirit, something quite normal for a discourse read one week after Pentecost. The choice of this date cannot be the result of ignorance; it looks like a deliberate choice, maybe due to the fact that Eulabes’ grave (in the Stoudiou monastery) was not readily available; or, maybe, in order to avoid

These are the prerequisites for elevating one to sanctity: a) the hero has died leaving a spiritual legacy in the form of a book; b) he has performed some “healings and miracles”: this was an essential element in order to show that the hero had received God’s grace, but it is mentioned without much conviction in the *Vita*.

The motivated disciple of the hero, the New Theologian, did what was necessary on his part: he provided the historical foundations by writing the *Vita*; he provided what was necessary for the aural promotion of Eulabes among the faithful (hymns and praises¹³); he provided what was necessary for his visual promotion by having an icon painted [and, probably later, by having several frescos with Eulabes’ portrait painted on the walls of his own monastery, together with representations of Christ¹⁴]; and, putting into use all the above, he organised a celebration every year, with lavish fragrance and candle-lighting (*μύρροις καὶ κηροῖς*¹⁵) in the church, and with food distributions to the poor. The *Life* of the Eulabes was read¹⁶ and his example was set forth in the sermon that the New Theologian would read for the occasion¹⁷. This started in ca. 987 and we are told that it went on for 16 years, until 1003, “without hindrance”¹⁸.

This statement of the *Vita* is only partially true. The new cult probably did not attract much attention in its first years, under patriarch Nicholas Grammatikos (†991). During the years of its development, there were long periods during which the patriarchal throne remained vacant: four and a half years between 991 and 996, another three years between 998 and 1001. But we

an anniversary that would fall during Lent (if his hero had died, say, in February or March): this would not allow the celebrations that the New Theologian had programmed in order adequately to honour his hero.

13. It is possible that some of the texts referred to here are among the works of the New Theologian which have come down to us. But I suppose that there must also have been a poetic kanon, which would be essential for the development of the cult. Usually such kanons (*prosomoioi*) were composed on the basis of an already existing melody (*heirmos*) and thus automatically provided the music necessary for the celebrations. That no such work of the New Theologian survives should not impress: we do not have the *Life* of Eulabes either.

14. *Vita*, §89.

15. *Vita*, §79.11.

16. *Katechesis*, no. 10, l. 37 ff (II, p. 140). See also *Katechesis*, no. 4, l. 6 (I, p. 312): it seems to me that in this passage the second interpretation proposed by the translator is more probable; see p. 312, note 3. The phrase *ἃ ἐκείνος ἐξέθετο* seems to refer to the acts of Eulabes.

17. Such sermons seem to have been the *Katecheseis*, no. 4 and 10.

18. *Vita*, §73.

know that already during the short patriarchate of Sisinnios (12 April 996-24 August 998) quarrels broke out in St. Mamas for reasons unknown to us and the patriarch summoned the New Theologian and looked into the matter¹⁹. It is not impossible that this upheaval was related to the cult of Eulabes, because, as we shall see, it continued to provoke strong reactions among part of the brotherhood at St. Mamas. The next patriarch, Sergios (July 1001-July 1019)²⁰, shortly after his consecration, showed interest in the activities of the New Theologian. He examined the texts and tried to form a personal opinion by visiting the celebrations, as did several other members of the synod²¹. The unauthorised activities of Symeon the New Theologian were provoking a certain reaction at the highest level of the Church hierarchy – at the level of the patriarch²².

Shortly afterwards, in 1003, the real difficulties started in a procedure which reminds one of a real canonisation trial. The “number two” of the patriarchate, the synkellos Stephanos ho tes Alexines, ex-metropolitan of Nikomedeia and a man of high learning and a close collaborator of the patriarch, started to censure the New Theologian for his actions²³. The *Life* says that he did so because of personal jealousy; but it is also certain that his actions reflected the attitude of the patriarch, whose main assistant he was²⁴. The positions of the synkellos were supported by a considerable number of monks from inside St. Mamas²⁵, as well as by many people from outside, laymen, monks, priests, and bishops²⁶.

In the six years that followed, the affair was hotly debated and, from 1005 onwards, repeatedly brought before the synod. To begin with, the patriarch

19. *Vita*, §38, 39.

20. A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 3, 1878.

21. *Vita*, § 79.

22. Cf. the remarks of A. Kazhdan, *Predvaritel'nye zamečanja o mirovozzrenii vizantiiskogo mistika X-XI vv. Simeona*, *Bsl* 28 (1967), 8-10.

23. Stephanos is attested in 976 as being a confidant of the palace. Cf. V. Laurent, *Le corpus de sceaux de l'empire byzantin, VI/1: L'église*, Paris 1963, 378. There has been speculation that his opposition to the New Theologian concerning the sanctification of Symeon Eulabes was due to the fact that he was involved in the composition of the *Menologium* of Basil (Hausherr, p. LV). This is not impossible, but it is not necessary.

24. See *Katechesis*, no. 29 (III, p. 179) in the apparatus scholion: ἔλεγον πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον οἱ τηρῆ-καῦτα ἀρχιερεῖς, Σέργιος ὁ πατριάρχης, Στέφανος ὁ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρειας καὶ τινες τῶν ὁμοφρόνων αὐτῶν.

25. *Vita*, §78.

26. That his positions were opposed by a vast spectrum of Byzantine society is also stated by the New Theologian himself in his fourth epistle: Krivochéine, *Dans la lumière*, 57.

proposed a compromise: Eulabes' cult would be allowed to continue, but only inside his monastery of St. Mamas, with participation of the monks only, not of people from the city²⁷. The New Theologian did not comply, and he had to appear again and again in front of the synod.

Then came the question of the icons, which were at the centre of the synkellos' attacks²⁸. Some monks of St. Mamas who opposed the New Theologian took to the patriarchate the icon of Eulabes, on which Christ was depicted: I suppose this was an icon with a central figure, Eulabes, and with a small icon depicting Christ, maybe with other saints, at the top²⁹. After much discussion, the synod returned the painting to the New Theologian but obliged him to erase from it the word "the saint" (ἅγιος), turning it thus from an icon into a simple portrait. As a continuation of the same operation, all frescos in St. Mamas where Eulabes was depicted together with Christ were either completely removed by destroying the plaster, or blackened or whitened out.

The New Theologian still refused to stop his activities and declared this publicly³⁰. So he was condemned on 3 January 1009 and sent into exile away from his monastery and from Constantinople³¹. He was to return to his monastery later, thanks to the intervention of some aristocrats who happened to be his spiritual children, among whom is mentioned the patrikios Genesisios³². But he was under the condition of respecting the patriarchal guidelines, which meant renouncing the public cult of his spiritual father (in 1010 or 1011)³³. Thus he did not stay for long and went again into voluntary exile, where he died on 12 March 1022.

In the *Vita*, the whole affair is represented as being motivated by personal antagonism. This is not impossible, but it is not certain either. After all, modern theologians have wondered how the New Theologian was not accused of heresy,

27. *Vita*, §82.

28. *Vita*, §§87-93.

29. I imagine something similar to the VI/VII century icon of St. Peter from Mount Sinai, in the upper margin of which are depicted Christ in bust, between the Virgin and a saint; or to the XIth century icon of the same collection with Sts Prokopios, Demetrios and Nestor standing, with the bust of Christ depicted at the centre of the upper margin of the icon. See G. and Maria Sotiriou, *Εἰκόνες τῆς Μονῆς Σινᾶ*, Athens 1958, nos. 1 and 47.

30. *Katechesis*, no. 6, l. 249 (II, p. 36): *περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου ἔπτον Συμεὼν καὶ λέγων οὐ παύσομαι ...*; no. 10, l. 45-47 (II, p. 142).

31. *Vita*, §94.

32. *Vita*, §102.

33. Cf. *Vita*, §103: *εἰ βούλεται καὶ τοῖς ἑμοῖς ἤξει λόγους*.

especially of Messalianism³⁴, as his teachings could give grounds for such accusations. In my view, the absence of such accusations just shows that there was no personal vendetta, and, consequently, that the clash should be seen as part of a broader ideological and political conflict between two different mentalities or different traditions. So we must turn to the arguments which were put forward.

The synkellos brought accusations concerning the “honour and celebration” which the New Theologian was granting to Eulabes³⁵. His argument is based on moral grounds: he felt that Eulabes was not worthy of distinction and, more, that he constituted a negative example. He based his contentions on information that was accepted as true by the partisans of Eulabes, although it was interpreted differently. Eulabes, who was said to have controlled completely the weaknesses of the flesh, pretended during his lifetime to retain an interest in carnal matters; his partisans said that he did this out of modesty³⁶ and also in order to be able to save those who were in danger of perdition. But the synkellos deduced from the above that Symeon the Eulabes was just a sinner. He also censured him for his general behaviour, for his eating and drinking habits and for the people that he consorted with – something that gave to the New Theologian the opportunity to compare Eulabes with Christ himself, who had also been accused of eating and drinking and keeping company with publicans and sinners³⁷. And so the synkellos denounced the New Theologian for trying to turn this sinner into a saint³⁸ and represent him on icons together with Christ, which was an insult³⁹.

On his part, the patriarch raised a more general point, i. e., whether Symeon had the right to attribute to his spiritual father the virtues and the honours that belonged, according to tradition, to the saints of yore, who lived under different conditions and in a different context⁴⁰. The patriarch was asking a fundamental and oft-repeated question: can new saints exist and how?

The synkellos, who played here the role of the Devil’s advocate, insists only on questions of substance from the moral point of view: is the candidate for

34. Krivochéine, *Dans la lumière*, 62 and note; Turner, *St. Symeon*, 66-69.

35. *Vita*, §78.

36. I. e., he did not want to attract public praise for the degree of *ἀπάθεια* that he had attained: *Vita*, §81.6-8.

37. This motif comes back in the discourses of the New Theologian. See *Katechesis*, no. 6, l. 300 (II, p. 40).

38. *Vita*, §81.

39. *Vita*, §87.

40. *Vita*, §§82.20-23.

sainthood good enough, did he lead a life exemplary enough to deserve such honours? His answer is negative. His appreciation could result either from a candid evaluation of Eulabes' acts or from a different perception of what a saint should be. In other words, the synkellos could well (and in my view did) belong to a different "school of thought" from the New Theologian. He represented the cenobitic establishment, as opposed to the anarchic, mystical spirituality, which was making new beginnings around the year 1000.

It is true that Symeon Eulabes had been the black sheep in the Stoudiou monastery. He was a "part-time holy fool" frequenting taverns and even less commendable establishments (as many other holy fools did, from Symeon of Emesa to the legendary St. Andrew of Constantinople) in order to influence those living in sin. It is stated that he did not feel shame in front of nude people or if he was seen nude himself⁴¹. He had many spiritual children in Constantinople whom he visited frequently, thus increasing the suspicions inspired by his behaviour.

The New Theologian had first met him when he was a young layman and it was then that he received most of his influence. Then he went as a monk to the monastery of Stoudiou and immediately became attached to the Eulabes, but this created considerable reaction in the community. The hegoumenos Peter, supported by other monks, summoned the New Theologian and tried, using the stick and the carrot, to persuade him to abandon his spiritual father⁴². They told him that his efforts were wasted as long as he followed this fraud and deceiver (Eulabes), who claimed to perform miracles; and they suggested that he should join some merciful people [the mainstream monks], who are ready to give him rest, food and good care⁴³. He refused these propositions and he was expelled from Stoudiou, to go to the monastery of St. Mamas. It is obvious that the candidacy of this "black sheep" for sainthood would not please the authorities of the all-powerful Stoudiou.

41. *Hymnes* (ed. A. Kambylis, *Symeon Neos Theologos, Hymnen* [Supplementa Byzantina 3], Berlin-New York 1976), no. 15.207-209.

42. *Vita*, §16: τῆς προθέσεως αὐτοῦ μεταστῆσαι καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸν πνευματικὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα ... ; *Vita*, §21: ὑποσχέσεαι ... ἀπειλαῖς ἔπειθον ἀποσπάσαι αὐτὸν τοῦ διδασκάλου ...

43. *Katechesis*: Eucharistia II, l. 102 ff. [III, p. 338]: καθ' ἐκάστην λεγόντων μοι τί ματαιοπονεῖς ἀφρόνως ποιῶν, καὶ τῷ ἐμπαίκτη τούτῳ καὶ πλάνῳ ἀκολουθεῖς, ἀναβλέψαι ματαίως καὶ ἀνωφελῶς προσδοκῶν; ... τί δὲ μὴ μάλλον ἐλεήμοσι προσέρχῃ παρακαλοῦσι τοῦ ἀναπαύειν καὶ διατρέφειν καὶ καλῶς θεραπεύειν σε; ... πόθεν γὰρ ὁ ἐμπαίκτης αὐτὸς ἀνεφάνη ἄρτι θαιματουργός; ... ;

The New Theologian's arguments⁴⁴ are different in nature and insist much more on the personal relationship and on the power of the example. First he showed that what he did (writing a *Life*, painting an icon, praising his spiritual father) was well within the traditions of the Church. To the accusations concerning the moral value of Eulabes, he replied that it was everyone's duty to honour his parents and, even more, his spiritual father, to whom he owed so much; and he presented his own activities as a simple commemoration of his deceased spiritual father; he insisted on the importance of setting forth the exemplary lives of men of the past because these constitute the best model for the generations to come⁴⁵; he reminded his audience that Christ himself was also accused because of his behaviour and his acquaintances. In other words, he was sidestepping the main accusation of his opponent and was trying to move the discussion to ground familiar to him. When the problem of the icon was raised, he replied by a diatribe on the icons and on how the veneration given to them passes to their prototype, once again without touching on the essence of the matter. His only straightforward answer concerned the basic problem, that of a possible distinction between old and new saints: he insisted that new saints can be in every way equal to the old ones, since they all have the grace of God⁴⁶. These arguments appear again and again in his works: he declares that the Eulabes "was praised as much as possible because he deserved these praises"⁴⁷. "What do I gain or what does my father gain from the praises which I sing of him?" he writes. "I only kindled the fervour of my audience"⁴⁸. He made efforts to convince his monks that Eulabes' example was worth following and in this he reminded his audience of the accusations which had been pronounced against Christ himself: "You think that Symeon is a fool and you are ashamed of following his example? Then follow the example of Christ..." etc.⁴⁹.

44. The New Theologian has also compiled a speech with scriptural and patristic quotations in order to support his point of view and placed it under the suggestive title *κατὰ ἀγιοκατηγόρων*. Prof. S. Paschalides (Ἐὐ ἀνεκδοτος Λόγος τοῦ Νικηῖτα Στηθάτου *κατὰ ἀγιοκατηγόρων καὶ ἡ ἀμφοβήτησις τῆς ἀγιότητος* στὸ Βυζάντιο κατὰ τὸν 11ο αἰῶνα, in the present volume, 493-518) discusses also the case.

45. *Vita*, §83-86.

46. The problem of the comparison of new saints with the saints of yore is brought up in the works of the New Theologian, always with the position that there is no substantial difference between the two. See *Katechesis*, no. 6, tit., l. 168 (II, p. 12, 28); no. 10, l. 37 ff. (II, p. 140-142).

47. *Katechesis*, no. 10, l. 45-47 (II, p. 142).

48. *Katechesis*, no. 6, l. 244-247 (II, p. 34).

49. *Katechesis*, no. 6, l. 300 (II, p. 40). Cf. *Vita*, §81.

These were the arguments. The opposition was clear: on one side the rational official Church, caring for all the faithful and for their life and happiness in a well-organised society; on the other, marginal anarchic spirituality, caring for the few who can have the mystical and direct approach to the divine, ignoring in the process all social conventions, albeit without ever contesting the authority of the official Church. The 11th century synod sided with the official church and refused sainthood to Eulabes and forbade his cult altogether.

How is this decision enforced?

1. First comes the neutralisation, one way or the other, of the icons. This was probably because of the power of the medium. The icons, especially after the end of iconoclasm, were the main object of cult for all the faithful, literate or illiterate. Their adoration meant the personal participation of the individual in a specific, oft-repeated, act, which tied him symbolically and emotionally to the object and to the person represented therein. It is interesting to note that there is nothing in our sources concerning the destruction of any written material related to the cult: Eulabes' *Vita* has not come down to us but many hymns written for Eulabes are preserved in the works of the New Theologian, and there may have been others; and the disappearance of some of these texts may well be due to the fact that the cult of Eulabes never took off the ground.

2. The second measure of enforcement was the removal of its initiator from the place where the cult was observed and from the chain of command which made it possible for him to organise the celebrations. The exile of the New Theologian meant the end of Eulabes' cult. In the monastery where he went he did not have followers, he did not have any authority, and it was practically impossible for him to continue the cult of his spiritual father. The cult, a group phenomenon, was only possible in a given milieu and under certain circumstances.

Two concluding points: a) it is remarkable that after all this long quarrel, the patriarchate took the measures necessary to stop an unauthorised activity but did not take any measures to punish its stubborn initiator. This is important in evaluating Byzantium of the 11th century. One can simply remember what the punishment used to be in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance when crimes related to faith and religious practice were concerned.

b) After the 11th century, the spiritual approach to religion progressed and finally, after some fresh quarrels, it became the official dogma of the Eastern Church in the 14th century. Gregory Palamas and many other hesychasts were elevated to sainthood. The New Theologian himself, who had his life written in the mid-eleventh century, is close to sainthood, through being the predecessor of

the successful mystics of the 14th century. But no one has ever thought of going back to the cult of Symeon Eulabes, the New Theologian's mentor and hero. Someone, the New Theologian, tried for him; he insisted and forced a negative decision. And no one has ever contested or could possibly contest the official Church and its decisions. This was the 11th century Byzantine approach to sainthood.

c) The power of the picture. The third part of this paper is inspired by the fact that in the previous story, we recognised how important icons were for the establishment of a new cult. We were also faced with the problem of the distinction between old and new saints, and the merits that the cult of the latter might have.

We shall now turn to a famous monument, the mosaics in the katholikon of Hosios Loukas in Greece, and we shall concentrate on one aspect of it: the representations of monk-saints, which has been discussed several times⁵⁰, and is the subject of the paper of Nancy Ševčenko⁵¹.

This church was built to be the conventual katholikon of the renovated monastery, inaugurated probably in 1011 under abbot Philotheos and becoming a major place of pilgrimage in Greece. It was decorated in the mid-11th century, under the abbot Theodosios Leobachos, perhaps with the assistance of Constantine Monomachos (1042-1055) by one or two teams of mosaicists who worked simultaneously in an obvious effort to create one ensemble corresponding to a well-studied ideological and aesthetic plan. The quality of the mosaics is not always of the first order and it has been pointed out that in this ensemble, the individual figures prevail; but the wealth of the decoration has led scholars to postulate that this was an imperial gift (there is a legend on this point which might well be true) and that it was executed by artists who came from the capital.

In this vast ensemble, there are several representations of monk-saints, as this is normal for a conventual church. First, one should mention the mosaic icon of the founder⁵², situated in the north transept, close to his tomb; it is a very realistic portrait of the man, whose face we also know from frescoes. The function of this mosaic is very specific, and consequently, we do not consider it part of the general decoration.

50. A fine recent publication with beautiful photographs and a clear *status questionis* together with all the relevant literature: Nano Chatzidaki, *Ἅγιος Λουκάς*, Athens 1996.

51. Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, Three Saints at Hosios Loukas, in the present volume, 459-472.

52. Nano Chatzidaki, pl. 36.

The monk-saints of the decoration, the largest known ensemble of representations of monastic saints that we know, are concentrated in two groups, occupying the upper level at the western part of the naos, on either side of the main entrance from the narthex. They cover the arches, the groin vaults and the walls and they are arranged according to a specific plan, based on the idea that the beholder will turn to them after having visited the main part of the naos. Thus in each group of monk-saints, the central position, i. e., on the western wall facing the beholder who looks west from the naos, is occupied by two new saints with their hands raised in prayer:

The one, on the south side, is St. Nikon Metanoieite [ὁ ἄγιος Νίκων ὁ μετανοεῖται], originated from the Pontos, who founded a monastery in Sparta, and died ca. 997. His *Life* has been preserved and thus we know much about him. He did not make the *Synaxarion*, but he is mentioned on the 26 November in the *Menaia* of Venice⁵³.

The other one, on the north side, is the mysterious saint Loukas o Gournikiotes [ὁ ἄγιος Λουκάς ὁ Γουρνικιώτης]⁵⁴. I wonder whether his name of origin (no doubt the name of the place where he lived as a hermit) is related to place-names such as Gornica (Macedonia), or Gournitsa (Lakonia) or to the name of the wild-pear tree, Gkortziā, in Bulgarian gornica⁵⁵. He may be identical with the hermit Loukas, who died on a 27th of June according to a *Synaxarion* copied in the year 1301 for a protos of Mount Athos containing several revisions and inclusions of modern saints⁵⁶. What is sure, though, is that here we have another new saint, one who left fewer traces for us than Nikon.

These two new saints are represented in monastic habits. Their portraits seem to be realistic. They are each surrounded by twelve old-time saints in monastic garb, who are depicted in medallion-busts on the side walls and on the groin vaults, while six are standing along the arch giving access to the central nave. It is as if they were accompanying the main figures. A symbolism suggesting that the new saints were based on the centuries-old monastic tradition and its saints is obvious. But what is very remarkable is that all these

53. *Ibidem*, pl. 38. Cf. *Synaxarium CP*, 260.48.

54. Nano Chatzidaki, pl. 37.

55. M. Vasmer, *Die Slawen in Griechenland* [Subsidia Byzantina Lucis Ope Iterata 4], Leipzig 19702, 215, 166, 167.

56. *Synaxarium CP*, 776.45: Λουκάς ὁ ἐρημίτης ἐν εἰρήνῃ τετελειώται. For the manuscript, see *ibidem*, p. XLI.

monastic saints of old times, with their mostly white and mostly pointed beards, seem to me (and to others) completely devoid of any personal characteristics. Most of them are represented holding a crosslet in their right hand and keeping their left hand open in front of their chest: I cannot find a rational explanation for the presence of the crosslet, which is the symbol of martyrs, and which is placed here in the hands of persons most of whom had never known martyrdom. A few of them carry no cross but have both hands open in front of their chest, while only one, St. John Kalybitis, who lived in the 5th century, is represented beardless and holds the “golden gospel” which played a role in his life and is mentioned in his *Synaxarion*⁵⁷. All the others could easily replace each other without any difficulty. As Charles Diehl put it, “figures d’ascètes ... où le même type monotone se répète à l’infini”⁵⁸. Even Theodore of Stoudios’ portrait, although following the general lines of the tradition, presents “no real differentiation .. [from] those of the rest of the monastic saints depicted in the same church”⁵⁹.

These monotonous portraits represent the saints of yore. And they come from all periods of Church history and from all possible regions. At the side of St. Nikon Metanoicite, we have the portraits of the following saints, whom I mention in approximate chronological order: Pachomios (†346)⁶⁰, Makarios of Egypt (†ca 390)⁶¹, John Kalybitis (5th century)⁶², Poimen the Egyptian (†?)⁶³, Euthymios koinobiarches (†473)⁶⁴, Theodosios koinobiarches (†529)⁶⁵, Sabbas (†532)⁶⁶, John Klimax (†650)⁶⁷, Martinianos (from the Constantinopolitan

57. *Synaxarium CP*, 393.6.

58. Ch. Diehl, *Mosaics byzantin de saint Luc*, in: *Monuments Piot*, III, Paris 1896, 238. Cf. E. Diez – O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece. Hosios Lucas and Daphni*, Cambridge Mass. 1931, 80.

59. Doula Mouriki, *The Portraits of Theodore Studites in Byzantine Art*, *JÖB* 20 (1971), 249-280, here 259.

60. *Synaxarium CP*, 662.29, cf. J. T(rilling) – A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 3, 1549-1550.

61. *Synaxarium CP*, 401.13, cf. J(anet) A. T(imbie), *ODB* 2, 1271.

62. *Synaxarium CP*, 393.6. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 39.

63. *Synaxarium CP*, 392.2. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 39.

64. *Synaxarium CP*, 405.7, cf. A. K(azhdan) – N(ancy) P(atterson) Š(evčenko), *ODB* 2, 756-757.

65. *Synaxarium CP*, 383.22, cf. A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 3, 2053.

66. *Synaxarium CP*, 281.2, cf. A. K(azhdan) – N(ancy) P(atterson) Š(evčenko), *ODB* 2, 1823.

67. *Synaxarium CP*, 571.19, cf. A. K(azhdan) – R. S. N(elson), *ODB* 2, 1060-1061.

quarter ton Areobindou)⁶⁸, Abramios (†?)⁶⁹, Stephanos the Younger (VIII century)⁷⁰, John Kolobos (†883)⁷¹.

At the side of St. Loukas Gournikiotes there are the following saints (also in approximate chronological order): Hilarion (IVth century)⁷², Sisoës (†?)⁷³, Antonios (†356)⁷⁴, Ephraim (†373)⁷⁵, Neilos (†430)⁷⁶, Arsenios (†445)⁷⁷, Theoktistos, presumably the companion of St. Euthymios (Vth century)⁷⁸, Daniel of the Skete (†post 576)⁷⁹, Dorotheos (†560/580)⁸⁰, Maximos the Confessor (†662)⁸¹, Theodore Stoudites (†826)⁸², Ioannikios (846)⁸³.

It is clear that the selection of the monks was made with the desire to represent all tendencies and periods from the beginnings of monasticism to the late 9th century – barely one century before Nikon Metanoieite's lifetime. Also, most of the monks represented here, are major figures of orthodox monasticism – it would suffice to see in the footnotes how many have an article devoted to them in the *ODB*. It is not impossible that the core of this selection was a register of Theodore of Stoudios, as is suggested by Nancy Ševčenko⁸⁴.

68. *Synaxarium CP*, 694.27. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 40.

69. *Synaxarium CP*, 97.17 or 173.4. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 39.

70. *Synaxarium CP*, 261.24: he was a martyr. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 40.

71. *Synaxarium CP*, 208.57, cf. A(lice)-M(ary) T(albot), *ODB* 2, 1138. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 39.

72. *Synaxarium CP*, 153.7; but he could as well be Hilarion of Pelekete (*Synaxarium CP*, 564.5) or of Dalmatou (*Synaxarium CP*, 731.7). Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 37.

73. *Synaxarium CP*, 801.2.

74. *Synaxarium CP*, 397-398, cf. J(anet) A. T(imbie) – A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 1, 125-126. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 37.

75. *Synaxarium CP*, 429.2, cf. B. B(aldwin) – N(ancy) P(atterson) Š(ěvčenko), *ODB* 1, 708-709.

76. *Synaxarium CP*, 217.4, cf. B. B(aldwin) – A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 1, 1450.

77. *Synaxarium CP*, 665.22, cf. A. K(azhdan) – N(ancy) P(atterson) Š(ěvčenko), *ODB* 1, 187-188.

78. *Synaxarium CP*, 9.18. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 37.

79. Hardly mentioned in *Synaxarium CP* but known from other sources: A. K(azhdan) – N(ancy) P(atterson) Š(ěvčenko), *ODB* 1, 584.

80. There are several martyrs by the name of Dorotheos in the *Synaxarium*, but none of them is a monk. I suspect that here is meant the author from Gaza, on whom see B. B(aldwin), *ODB* 1, 654.

81. *Synaxarium CP*, 409.2, cf. A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 2, 1323. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 37.

82. *Synaxarium CP*, 214.6, cf. A. K(azhdan), *ODB* 3, 2044-2045. Cf. Chatzidaki, pl. 42.

83. *Synaxarium CP*, 191.34, cf. A. K(azhdan) – N(ancy) P(atterson) Š(ěvčenko), *ODB* 2, 1005-1006.

84. Patterson Ševčenko, *Three Saints at Hosios Loukas*, infra, 467-468.

It is obvious that the artists who made these mosaics had no models to copy from. It is true that in all Hosios Loukas there is limited variety in the representations of saints and that sometimes the poverty of gestures is striking⁸⁵. We find other non-monastic but minor saints, whose representations seem to have been produced without models and who are also monotonous. See for example Sts Cyrus, Marcus, Elpidiforos and Anempodistos⁸⁶. But this is not at all the case when major saints are concerned. One can recognise at first glance, for example, St. John the Baptist⁸⁷, or St. John Chrysostomos⁸⁸, or St. Theodore⁸⁹ or St. Panteleimon⁹⁰, or St. Peter⁹¹, who are depicted according to their traditional type and can be easily identified by the spectator, even the modern spectator.

It appears to me that we have here a patron with a strong theological and hagiological background, who laid down a detailed plan, full of symbolisms, for the decoration of the katholikon, but who employed a team of artists who did not have the necessary background and, probably, did not possess the relevant iconographical models. As long as the major christological feasts were concerned, they knew the necessary. The same was true concerning the major saints of the calendar, those who are represented in all churches. But when they were asked to depict lesser saints, they were short of models, and when they came down to the monk-saints, they were completely deprived of any particulars. One wonders whether they could not have really been a constantinopolitan team of artists which came to the province with a view to executing a detailed plan of mosaic decoration for a monastic centre. How did they not have at their disposal models for almost all the above-mentioned saints? Would it be possible to imagine that the team of mosaicists which decorated Hosios Loukas could have been a local enterprise, used to decorating provincial churches with the basic christological scenes and the basic saints? And when faced with a much bigger task, conceived by an educated monk and possibly financed by the emperor, produced a result that was proportionate to their real capabilities?

85. See Diez-Demus, *Hosios Lucas and Daphni*, 80.

86. Diez-Demus, *ibidem*, pls 48, 49.

87. Chatzidaki, pl. 27.

88. Chatzidaki, pl. 44.

89. Chatzidaki, pl. 48.

90. Chatzidaki, pl. 33.

91. St. Peter appears three times on the walls of Hosios Loukas, and is always easy to recognize: Chatzidaki, pls 11, 21, 23.

Let us return to the monk-saints. This absence of models did not affect the new saints. Hosios Loukas, the founder, had his own portrait in the monastery, and the mosaicists reproduced it. The same happened with Nikon Metanoite and Loukas Gournikiotes, whose official portraits must have served as models for these mosaics. As they were new saints, they had to prove that their image was a faithful rendering of their looks, as they were in their lifetime. We know of several cases where in lives of saints it is described in much detail how, usually by a miraculous appearance of the saint, his faithful portrait was made by a painter and recognised by the spectators (e. g., of Nikon Metanoite, of Athanasios Athonites, etc.) – and this in spite of the fact that with our modern taste we may find even these personalised medieval portraits deficient in rendering the heroes' personalities⁹². Such portraits of monks, which bear witness to their sanctity, are the central ones in Hosios Loukas. The depictions of the saints of yore, those who were already contained in the *Synaxarion*, did not need such care because their sanctity was generally accepted. Their depictions were symbolic, stressing the tradition that supported the new saints of the region. The complex of the monastery of Hosios Loukas was in itself a very successful consecration of a new saint, the founder; with its decoration it propagated the cults of two more new saints related to the broader region, pinpointing the fact that new saints were not only possible but also very real. All this was possible away from the conservative centre of Byzantine monasticism. It reflected the attitude of ever-changing spirituality and of variable models of life that the New Theologian was defending without success in Constantinople, but which was prevailing with time and with some support from the supreme authorities, the emperor and the patriarch, on the periphery, as is shown by Hosios Loukas and by Nea Moni on Chios, the foundation of which was also related to unconventional monasticism that attracted the blows of the constantinopolitan conservatives.

In the 11th century Byzantine monastic ideals were changing. Together changed the ideals and the conception of sainthood. The *koinobion*, that was imposed with great pain by the Stouditai, became an all inductive formality, deprived of imagination and not satisfying the spiritual ambitions of the few and

92. See Konstantina Mentzou-Meimari, 'Απεικονίσεις δημοφιλῶν ἁγίων, in: Christina Angelidi (ed.), *Ἡ καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο: Τομὲς καὶ συνέχειες στὴν ἑλληνιστικὴ καὶ ρωμαϊκὴ παράδοση* [Πρακτικά τοῦ Α' Διεθνoῦς Συμποσίου τοῦ ΚΒΕ/ΕΙΕ], Athens 1989, 587-602; A. Kazhdan – H. Maguire, Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art, *DOP* 45 (1991), 1-22; and G. Dagron, Holy Images and Likeness, *DOP* 45 (1991), 23-33

select; but it controlled things and, most importantly, controlled the official church and had the means to enforce its ideas. New ideals, closer to the old tradition of the hermits and their anarchic adoration of God, were coming again to the surface, but now mainly in the provinces, where the control of the central authorities was less strict. Sainthood was easier to achieve in the province than in the capital.