

while the bride show in the Life of Theodora may not reflect objective reality, it does serve the rhetorical objectives of the Life for, by validating Theodora's sovereignty, it validates the sovereignty of orthodoxy and with it Theodora's claim to sainthood.

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LIFE WITH ENCOMIUM OF THE BLESSED AND HOLY  
EMPERESS THEODORA

Lord, give your blessing.<sup>18</sup>

1. We are going to praise the empress Theodora even if some unscrupulous person is liable to subject us to the greatest possible disparagement for having undertaken these words of praise for the sake of personal aggrandizement and not as a way<sup>19</sup> of benefiting others. After all, the present praise cannot possibly curry favor with her, since this encomium <comes> after her death, nor will my account have in its audience the man who is being praised.<sup>20</sup> There is thus no advantage to be gained nor material reward to be had from <relating> events that are worthy of praise and narration.<sup>21</sup> She, of course, has now taken her place with the heavenly choir above, adorned and illuminated with the beauty of the Godhead, while he is tuning his lute to the strain of his past triumphs<sup>22</sup> and summoning to piety and salvation<sup>23</sup> those who praise piety and virtue. But let us enjoy the account, all those of us who have the highest admiration for her <accomplishments>, and her passing, that is, her death, will be observed on our part as a feastday. Since you have assembled with such enthusiasm and request an account because of your yearning, I shall set before you the story of her life so that together you may well enjoy the account, while I will have the very great satisfaction of having benefited you.

2. Now then, the homeland of Theodora, that truly blessed and holy

<sup>18</sup> For this invocation, see n. 20 at the beginning of the *Acta* of David, Symeon, and George.

<sup>19</sup> The variant ποτόν is read here.

<sup>20</sup> That is, Theodora's son and co-emperor, Michael III.

<sup>21</sup> Regel's text (δυνήματα) is read instead of δυνήματα (Markopoulos).

<sup>22</sup> Regel's correction (κατορθομένους for κάτω πεομένους) is read instead of that of Markopoulos (κατηγμένους), but the precise meaning of the text remains uncertain.

<sup>23</sup> Markopoulos obelizes the words τὰλὰ καὶ σωρηίωψ to indicate the uncertainty of the reading. Regel is even more cautious, printing ἐναλαίτιστα . . . ], which indicates loss or severe damage to the text.

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queen, was Paphlagonia<sup>24</sup> that provides the Queen of Cities with the necessities <of life> and all the other parts of the world with its own special bounty, bestowing useful items of various kinds upon various <regions>. Her parents, the most blessed Marinos and Theoktiste, expended a great, indeed endless, amount of effort in their pursuit of goodness and mercy. Many are the tales of their goodness and great was their zeal on behalf of piety, but out of this multitude I shall give only a few brief examples. There was a great persecution<sup>25</sup> and the champions were not ignoble nor was the contest over trivial issues or for small prizes but rather about the kingdom of heaven and the good things that last forever. To be sure, the stadium [p. 258] and the track streamed with blood from the contest, but it was piety that was at stake and the prize was the kingdom of heaven and the good things there prepared for those who have suffered or are suffering or will suffer for their sake. The religious issue involved nothing less than the destruction of images and the abolition of icons. These were not <images> of the kind whose destruction results in no great peril or even little harm; on the contrary, they were the <images> whose installation was a mark of pious zeal and whose abolition was a bitter form of tyranny. As a result, church thought was perverted, books were altered, sanctuaries demolished, churches were stripped of decoration, priests replaced, innocent men subjected to legal investigation, criminals placed in positions of power and the most illustrious sees. Nor was this all: whole regions were torn by civil strife, monasteries were deserted, people took to the hills, their family property confiscated by the state. This is how far the heresy of the iconoclasts went. Some people were intimidated by <this climate of> fear and looked to play it safe on the question of their religious belief, while others were subjected to harassment by<sup>26</sup> members of their own families. For a great many individuals chased even their own relatives away and refused to share the same roof with people who would not obey the imperial decree. But in the face of such cruel and inhuman behavior, what did they do, that truly

<sup>24</sup> Paphlagonia was a theme or province located on the southern coast of the Black Sea in north-central Asia Minor. According to *TheophCont* 89.15–22, Theodora came from a town called Eibissa and her father Marinos was an army officer, either a *drungarios* or a *tourmarches*.

<sup>25</sup> This was the second phase of iconoclastic persecution, which began in 815.

<sup>26</sup> Regels's reading "by" (*ὅτι*) is accepted here instead of Markopoulos' "because of" (*μερῶ*).

noble and divine couple who gave birth to the blessed Theodora in both body and piety? When they saw people endangered because of their piety—some lacking the necessities <of life>, others worn out by the multitude of their sufferings, others still gasping for breath like those who are harried and terrified by their opponents in the arena—they opened up the storerooms of their heart and, *becoming all things to all men*,<sup>27</sup> some they skillfully anointed for the contests in the arena, while they tended to the wounds of others and filled the bellies of yet other unfortunates with the necessities <of life>. And as for those who lost their cities and homelands against their will, one home willingly took them in and welcomed complete strangers like members of the family. This is how some people, after receiving a helping hand, survived the persecution, while others not only found new courage to face their persecutors but also inspired piety in the rest. This was the first triumph of the religious devotion of the blessed Theodora's parents; this is the very first of the famous stories about them.

3. And so, having obtained both her birth and her education from these righteous and thrice-blessed <parents>, the holy and blessed Theodora was brought up [p. 259] in all piety and *admonition of the Lord*.<sup>28</sup> But when she reached marriageable age, her parents began to consider when and to whom she should be given in marriage since she was much sought after because of her natural beauty. In fact, she was so <beautiful> that she was fit even for marriage to an emperor. <And so> Theophilos, the emperor of the Romans at that time,<sup>29</sup> sent couriers to bring her to the Queen of Cities. And not just Theodora, but many other <girls> who were noted at that time for their youthful beauty and figures were also summoned to the palace for inspection. The emperor lined them all up to inspect and judge their beauty. Then the emperor Theophilos, after evaluating them in this way and picking out seven of the girls, gave each of them an apple and sent them off to their rooms. The next day the emperor had them brought back for an audience and, to test their virtue, asked each one of them for the imperial apples but they were nowhere to be found. What a disaster! Such a disaster! At that moment by

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor. 9:22.

<sup>28</sup> Eph. 6:4.

<sup>29</sup> Theophilos had been crowned co-emperor with his father in the spring of 821 at the age of eight and succeeded as sole ruler upon his father's death on 2 October 829. See Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," 167.



the will of God the blessed Theodora, who was standing behind the <other> six like a rose among thorns, cupped her hands like a lily and gave the emperor Theophilus a second apple in addition to the imperial one.<sup>30</sup> The emperor conducted a careful inquiry into this miraculous development in an effort to learn the truth. One could not help but notice the confidence in her voice, coming as it did from a pure heart, when she spoke of her success in <winning> the imperial crown. "The first apple, my lord, the talent entrusted to me by God, I give back to you undamaged and intact; it is my virginity and chastity. The second one is like the denarius and <represents> the son I will bear for you: do not refuse it."<sup>31</sup> But the emperor and his courtiers pressed on in their effort to know the truth. "Where did you get this prophecy from? What is the source of this mysterious revelation?"<sup>32</sup> To the emperor she replied, "My lord, the whole way here I was continually subjected to cutting remarks from brazen tongues. I was terribly upset, but endured it with never a word to anyone. Instead, I steeled my soul with tears that welled up within me and prayers

<sup>30</sup> In a different but essentially parallel version of the episode recounted by the sources known collectively as Symeon the Logothete (Leo Gramm. 213, ps-Sym. Mag. 624-25, and George Mon. Cont. 790), there is only a single golden apple; Leo and George add the anachronistic detail that the contest was held in the Triclinium of the Pearl. In this variant, the center stage is held not by Theodora but by Kassia, who, in the course of a verbal exchange likewise based on biblical allusions (to Eve and Mary), so humiliates Theophilus with her witty retort that he immediately proceeds to choose Theodora in her place. Unlike our Life where the bride show serves to glorify Theodora, the object of the chroniclers is to denigrate or blame Theophilus: by having a woman get the better of him. Kassia, who subsequently became a nun and poet of some renown, is used because her name is easily recognizable. For an exhaustive review of the literature on this question with a similarly skeptical conclusion, see I. Roehow, *Studien zu der Person, den Werken, und dem Nachleben der Dichterin Kassia* (Berlin, 1967), 5-19. For an English translation of Kassia's poetry, see Kassia: *The Legend, the Woman, and Her Work*, trans. and ed. A. Tripolitis (New York, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> Theodora alludes first to the parable of the talents found in Mt. 25:14-39; the choice is not particularly apt since the servant who received the single talent was sharply criticized for burying it in the ground instead of lending it out at interest: The denarius, or "penny" of the King James Version, figures in the lesson on taxation at Mt. 22:15-22, Mk. 12:13-17, and Lk. 20:20-26, which concludes with the famous line, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Here again the allusion is of questionable taste since it emphasizes the great gulf that exists between the emperor and God.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Rom. 16:25.

to the Lord our God. And when I learned of a certain holy man<sup>33</sup> who was enclosed in the tower at Nikomedeia—after all, his lofty and virtuous way of life was famous everywhere—when I drew near the place, I went up to him, for a star shone upon me as of old on the Magi in Bethlehem<sup>34</sup> making <me> feel worthy to pay homage to him there. [p. 260] That holy and thrice-blessed man looked at me and said, "Be of good courage, my daughter, and do not be upset by the tribulations you have suffered on your journey; for an angel of the glory of the Lord is crowning you empress of the Christians and *the hand of the Lord is upon*<sup>35</sup> your head. Take the apple that I give you in addition to the one you are going to receive from the emperor's hand. Then, after the <girls> who say mean things about you have been driven out of the palace doors in tears, give them <both> to the emperor. <In this way>, clad in purple you will be seated above all women on the imperial throne in a golden-roofed chamber."<sup>36</sup> The emperor Theophilus then took the two apples from the hand of Theodora who is held in everlasting remembrance and, in full view of the senate, gave her a gold ring to mark the imperial betrothal. Immediately after this, the ladies-in-waiting of the empress Euphrosyne, the emperor's mother,<sup>37</sup> whose lives were a model of propriety, took her <into their

<sup>33</sup> The saint Theodora visited was the Isaiah mentioned by the *De Theophili imperatoris absolutio* (ed. Regel, *Analekta*, 25), as living in the tower of St. Diomedes in Nikomedeia. Our Life specifies that he was "ἐγκεκελευμένος;" that is, an *enkletos* or secluded monk. Isaiah is alleged to have subsequently played a role in the restoration of Orthodoxy. See also Janin, *Eglises Centres*, 89, and n. 77 below. A similar motif of a young virgin visiting a holy man en route to Constantinople for a bride show is found in the *vita* of Irene of Chrysobalanton; cf. v. *Iren. Chrysobalant.* 8-10.

<sup>34</sup> Mt. 2:1-12.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 13:11.

<sup>36</sup> The "golden-roofed chamber" or Chrysostriklinos was the throne room of the Great Palace located in the southeastern part of Constantinople. Theophilus is famous for "redecorating" this room with mechanical birds and lions made of gold, which appeared to sing and roar when their movements were coordinated with the playing of two massive organs, also made of gold. See Treadgold, *Byz. Revivul.* 283-85.

<sup>37</sup> Euphrosyne was actually Theophilus' stepmother; his real mother was Thekla, his father's first wife. After her death, Michael II married Euphrosyne, a daughter of Constantine VI and Maria who, like Theodora, is also said to have become empress by means of a bride show. In order to marry, Euphrosyne first had to be released from her convent on the island of Prinkipo near Constantinople where she had been living as a nun with her mother. See Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire*, 80 and 111.



care > and attended her with decency, decorum, and the respect that was her due. Twenty-two days later, the aforementioned Theodora was crowned along with the emperor Theophilus by Antony the falsely named and accursed patriarch, or should I say chief conspirator,<sup>38</sup> who ought to have been strung up for miserably and insanely dishonoring the holy and venerable images.<sup>39</sup> The same Theodora became the emperor's consort and ruled piously after being crowned in the all-holy and venerable church of St. Stephen the Protomartyr in Daphne.<sup>40</sup> Large numbers of clergy and government officials joined in applauding and congratulating the imperial couple on their coronation. To show her generosity, the empress gave fifteen pounds of gold to the patriarch, fifty pounds to the senate, and fifteen pounds to the clergy; while those who had helped with or participated in the coronation itself she received in a fit and gracious manner.

4. After these events had taken place in the manner described, the Augusta Euphrosyne, the mother of Theophilus, having spent ten months living in the palace, felt a desire to be relieved of her many cares and worries and longed for the untroubled and contemplative way of life. And so by her own choice and not under any compulsion, she left the palace voluntarily and of her own free will and entered the Gastria monastery.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The term "chief conspirator" (φρασιδότης) contains a pun on the word "patriarch," which literally means chief father in the sense of head of a family or people. The hagiographer also puns on the name of Antony (Αντώνιος), calling him ἀντώνιος, or "fit to be hanged."

<sup>39</sup> Antony I Kassymatas was instrumental in laying the theological groundwork for the iconoclastic synod organized by Leo V in 815. He was appointed patriarch of Constantinople by Michael II in 821 and died sometime before 21 April 838, when he was succeeded in office by John VII Grammatikos. On the date of John's accession to the patriarchate, see Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," 178–79.

<sup>40</sup> Since Theophilus had already been crowned emperor by his father in 821, the "crowning" of Theophilus and Theodora must refer to the marriage ceremony that took place on 5 June 830 (Pentecost), when Theophilus was seventeen (?) years old. Theodora's coronation will have followed shortly thereafter. For the date, see W. T. Treadgold, "The Problem of the Marriage of the Emperor Theophilus," *GRBS* 16 (1975), 327–28. The church of St. Stephen, located within the Great Palace complex, was the traditional site of imperial weddings and coronations; see Janin, *Eglises CP* 473–74.

<sup>41</sup> Euphrosyne left the palace in the summer of 830 but there is some debate as to whether she voluntarily went to the Gastria monastery as indicated by our Life, Leo

5. And so the emperor Theophilus, once he began to wield imperial power, took up in turn the unlawful, wicked, cruel, and soul-destroying heresy of the triply damned and insane Kopronymos<sup>2</sup> [p. 261] and his beastly and bestial <cohorts><sup>42</sup> Furthermore, once he took up this <heresy>, he proved to be every bit their equal in sheer wickedness and tyrannical behavior. For, in a display of evil-mindedness and mental derangement, the fool revived this <heresy> and, imitating the madness of the previous empty-headed and murderous iconoclasts, a form of insanity with roots stretching back to the pernicious tyranny of Manes, he personally rekindled a relentless persecution against the church of God.<sup>44</sup> He had as his adviser, confederate, and accomplice in the soul-destroying heresy and guide to perdition John,<sup>45</sup> the chief conspirator or rather chief sorcerer and chief demon, in actual point of fact a new Apollonios or Balaam<sup>46</sup> who evilly reappeared in our own day to work

Gramm. 214.6–8, George Mon. Cont. 790.21–23, and ps.-Sym. Mag. 628.8–11, or whether she was forcibly returned to her original convent on the island of Prinkipo as alleged by *TheophCont* 86.9–11. What has given credibility to the account of *TheophCont* is that the Gastria convent was reportedly founded by Theodora's mother Theokiste (*TheophCont* 90.2–4), thus making it, in the eyes of some scholars, a highly unlikely destination for the empress' mother-in-law. Whatever the truth may be, it is undisputed that Theodora and her family enjoyed a special relationship with the Gastria monastery: it was to this convent that Theodora retired after leaving the court and it was here that she was buried along with her mother, her brother Petronas, and her daughters Thekla, Anastasia, and Puleheria. See Const. Porph., *De cer.* 1:647–48 (bk. 2.42), and Grierson, "Tombs and Obits," 27, n. 85. The Gastria convent was located in the southwestern part of Constantinople, on the site of the Sanakkar mosque. For further discussion and bibliography, see Janin, *Eglises CP*, 67–68, Markopoulos, "Theodora," 276, and Treadgold, *Byz. Revival*, 271 and 310.

<sup>42</sup> On Constantine V Kopronymos (741–775), see General Introduction, x–xi.

<sup>43</sup> The literal meaning of this phrase is "those who both bore the name of and acted like beasts." It is no doubt an allusion to the iconoclast emperors Leo III and Leo V, whose name means "lion"; cf. n. 185 to the Life of David, Symeon, and George, above.

<sup>44</sup> Manes was the founder of Manicheism, a dualist heresy that originated in Persia during the 3d century A.D. The persecution of Theophilus began in late 832–early 833.<sup>45</sup> On John VII Grammatikos, patriarch of Constantinople from 838 to 843, see n. 299 in the Life of David, Symeon, and George, above.

<sup>46</sup> Apollonios of Tyana was a pagan wonder-worker and Neopythagorean philosopher of the 1st century A.D. whose travels and adventures are chronicled in a biography written by Philostratos. Apollonios' ability to perform miracles, especially healing, invited comparison with Christ and he eventually came to be regarded in the Christian tradition as



wickedness and perform divination from dishes of water.<sup>47</sup> For once the wretch had been undeservedly put at the helm of the patriarchal throne, he proceeded to scuttle the ship of the church of God. It was this crafty expert and author of monstrous lies and every act hateful to God who taught poor, simple-minded Theophilos his letters and, by treacherously bombarding his mind with bad advice, wormed his way in and turned him into a true and loyal servant and fit instrument of the devil. The sheer perversity of it! The stupidity and everything else of the kind! The ridiculous fantasies of the impious and unholy iconoclasts including the rulers themselves had no grounding in reality whatever; on the contrary, their writings and rejoinders were chock full of gibberish, thoroughly fictitious nonsense<sup>48</sup> and irrelevant quibbling. Dangling <this stuff> like bait on a hook the sorry wretches hauled in the simpler and less educated folk; in fact, *their throat was an open sepulcher* and smoky haze, and their words *darkened the eyes*<sup>49</sup> of their unwitting victims. For, priding themselves on the baselessness of their lies, they became strangers to the truth. But while the enemies of truth were thus engaged in this presumptuous course of action, the venerable and holy congregation of the orthodox saw what was going on, and the fact that people considered to be Christians were acting like this made them angry and very upset. They said to one another, "What kind of impious and depraved person could reach such a height of willful arrogance as to presume to undermine the principles <of our faith> laid down by the most eloquent, divinely instructed, and far-famed holy Apostles and the seven holy ecumenical councils [p. 262] or to tamper with just *one tiny jot*,"<sup>50</sup> as these accused iconoclasts are doing, when he ought rather to embrace and gladly

an evil sorcerer. The story of Balaam is told in Num. 22-24, where he is rebuked by his ass as he makes his way to curse the Israelites at the behest of the Moabite king Balak. At Rev. 2:14 he is held up as a prototype of the false teacher for inducing the Israelites to eat sacrificial meat and commit fornication; cf. also 2 Pet. 2:15 and Jude 11.

<sup>47</sup> This allusion to the practice of *lekonomanteia* combines the twin insults of paganism and sorcery. John is elsewhere alleged to have engaged in this (and other forms of) black magic; see, for example, Georg. Mon. 2:798-22; Duffy-Parker, *Synodikon Vetus*, chap. 155.6; and John Scylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. H. Thurn (Berlin-New York, 1973), 72.66, 85.3 and 9, 86.44. Accusations of sorcery were often made against highly educated individuals in both the Byzantine East and Latin West. See Lemele, *Byz. Humanism*, 154 and n. 106.

<sup>48</sup> Regell's correction (*νευδεντακάστρον εικαταμυθίας*) is read here.

<sup>49</sup> Ps. 5:9; cf. Ps. 68 (69):23.

<sup>50</sup> Mt. 5:18.

keep quiet in the face of their divinely inspired and soul-saving teaching? Anyone who presumes to do such a thing or to teach another should be excommunicated from the Church and estranged from the Kingdom of heaven." So high did feelings run on this issue. Meanwhile, the sorry wretch Theophilos remained incorrigible and condemned many of the orthodox to exile after subjecting them to countless cruel punishments, tortures, and abuse. At the sight of this, those who were conducting themselves in an upright and pious manner and pursuing a dignified way of life that is pleasing to God and who were adorned with virtue and orthodoxy, bore it nobly and with good grace, asking God for deliverance from their misfortunes. For orthodox belief is the prime virtue.

6. In those days there shone forth remarkable, God-fearing men who were filled with divine zeal and wisdom. Among them were Ioannikios, the great standard-bearer,<sup>51</sup> a marvelous and thrice-blessed man, who was found worthy to receive from God the great and truly remarkable gift of seeing and knowing the future through the illumination of the all-holy and life-giving Spirit and when asked often foretold what was to be. There were as well Nikephoros,<sup>52</sup> the sanctified patriarch honored by God; Theodore,<sup>53</sup> the famous superior of the Stoudios monastery; Methodios,<sup>54</sup> the thrice-blessed and divine confessor and fervent supporter of the orthodox faith; Michael,<sup>55</sup> the great confessor and equal of the angels; the admirable and sanctified confessor

<sup>51</sup> For the *vita* of Ioannikios, see above, 243-351. The word *semetiophoros*, here translated as "standard-bearer," may also mean "thaumaturge" or miracle-worker. See *v. Ioannic. a Perr.* 401A, 403C, and 409B, and *v. Perr. Arr.*, chaps. 59, 11 and 85.29.

<sup>52</sup> For the *vita* of the patriarch Nikephoros I, see above, 25-142.

<sup>53</sup> Theodore (759-826), the hegoumenos or superior of the famous Stoudios monastery in Constantinople, led the monastic opposition to iconoclasm.

<sup>54</sup> On Methodios I, patriarch of Constantinople from 4 March 843 until his death on 14 June 847, see nn. 285 and 289 in the *Life of David*, Symeon, and George, above.

<sup>55</sup> Michael was the *synkellos*, or adjutant, first of the patriarch of Jerusalem and later of Methodios I. Sent to Constantinople on a diplomatic mission around 815, he was persecuted along with Theodore and Theophanes, fellow monks from the Lavra or monastery of St. Sabas outside of Jerusalem, during the reigns of both Leo V and Theophilos. In 836, Theodore and Theophanes suffered the additional indignity of having their foreheads tattooed with scurrilous verses, thus earning them the nickname "Graptoi." See the *vita* of David, Symeon, and George, above, Chap. 23, for a description of this event.



Theophanes,<sup>56</sup> <founder> of the Megas Agros monastery; the brothers Theodore and Theophanes whose foreheads were tattooed,<sup>57</sup> and many, many more champions of virtue and the orthodox faith. All of these were manning their positions in defense of the truth and faith of their forefathers and beating back the enemy onslaughts and taking up their positions against the entire phalanx of heretics. For to offset <this> great tide, the governor of the universe, Christ our true God, had provided captains and guardsmen, and positioned them to resist the violence of the enemy forces, <and> from His goodness and bounty provided a healing remedy for the evil temper of the times. The venerable and most pious lady Theodora, on the one hand, secretly honored the orthodox and received them graciously, while on the other she despised and rejected the empty-headed iconoclasts who were despised by God. She was deeply troubled and worried [p. 263] and felt sick at heart over her subterfuge.<sup>58</sup> Yet she feared her husband's angry and irascible disposition, his foul moods, his implacability in matters of punishment, the vehemence of his anger, the harshness of his voice, how very ferocious he looked when little by little he screwed his face up into a knot. So, in terror of him, she held her tongue. Still, she kept looking for a suitable opportunity to reveal and bring out into the open her devout character and pure orthodox faith. But God the humane and merciful, Who ever and always cares for the salvation of mankind and in His providence manages everything for the good, did not overlook her good intention but soon revealed through her the blameless and soul-saving orthodox religion and restoration of the holy and venerable images as will be shown more clearly below.

7. In the fifth year of the reign of Theophilos, who was no friend to God,<sup>59</sup> the utterly abominable and unclean Hagarenes<sup>60</sup> came in full force to

<sup>56</sup> On Theophanes the Confessor, see n. 208 in the Life of David, Symeon, and George, above.

<sup>57</sup> See n. 55.

<sup>58</sup> Combets' text (Θιαφράζατο) is read instead of Regel's correction (Θιαφράζατο for Θιαφράζατο).

<sup>59</sup> The Greek text contains a pun on Theophilos' name, which means "dear" or "friendly to God." The invasion actually took place in 838, or the tenth year of Theophilos' reign.

<sup>60</sup> The term Hagarene (or Agarene) originally denoted a descendant of Hagar, whose story is recounted in Gen. 16:1-16 and Gal. 4:21-31, and later came to mean Saracene or Arab, in the present case, those of the Abbasid dynasty.

his homeland, I mean Amorion.<sup>61</sup> Finding the city well secured by massive fortifications and defended by eight generals along with their elite units and regular infantry forces, they captured it in the month of August after a fifteen-day siege and took everyone prisoner. A vast multitude of Christians was executed while a second multitude of prisoners of war, including the holy and glorious forty-two new martyrs for Christ,<sup>62</sup> was transported to Syria. Similarly, multitudes of their ships came out and laid waste to the islands of the Cyclades and took over Crete and Sicily.<sup>63</sup> Constantinople suffered intensely from the cold and the lengthy and very hard winter.<sup>64</sup> It was indeed a long winter, extremely brutal and harsh, and there was a terrible famine; no rain fell, flames appeared in the sky, atmospheric conditions were unhealthy, and the weather was unpredictable. On top of all this, there was a succession of horrible earthquakes that provided tangible proof of the emperor's great, indeed unlimited, depravity and heresy. For the emperor drifted into such great hostility toward God<sup>65</sup> and mindless folly that he surpassed even the thrice-cursed Koprionymos and his beastly <cohorts><sup>66</sup> in the wickedness that is hated by God.

8. And so the wicked sinner Theophilos, after acting and behaving like this for the twelve years and three months that he reigned, [p. 264] came down

<sup>61</sup> Amorion in central Asia Minor was the birthplace of Michael II, the founder of the Amorion dynasty, whose last representative was Michael III. Hence its capture, on 15 August 838, was particularly humiliating for Theophilos, especially since he had barely escaped with his life after a previous defeat at Dazimon in Armenia on 22 July. See Treadgold, *Byz. Revival*, 297-305.

<sup>62</sup> The Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorion were actually taken to Iraq rather than Syria. They were put to death in 845, after a long period of captivity during which they resisted conversion to Islam. See *ODB* 2:800-801.

<sup>63</sup> There was actually a ten-year interval between the Arab raids on Sicily, Crete, and the Cyclades (which began in the period between 824-828) and the capture of Amorion in 838. The conflation of these events also occurs in Georg. Mon. 2:798. Crete was in Arab hands by 828 but the conquest of Sicily was not completed until the early 10th century; cf. Treadgold, *Byz. Revival*, 248-58, 333, and 452, n. 454, and *ODB* 1:546 and 3:1892.

<sup>64</sup> The unusually cold winter was that of 832-833. See Treadgold-*Byz. Revival*, 279 and 435, n. 385.

<sup>65</sup> The Greek again contains a pun on the name of Theophilos.

<sup>66</sup> See n. 43 above.

Crete captured  
Greece taken

Theophilos



with dysentery and departed this life in the following manner.<sup>67</sup> As he was dying, his mouth gaped so wide you could see all the way down his gullet, and while he lay painfully struggling to breathe, the Augusta Theodora lamented over him. Then, she dozed off for a while and saw the supremely holy Mother of God holding in her arms the infant <Christ> with His cross and a terrifying ring of beautiful angels violently reproaching the emperor Theophilus and beating him without cessation because of the holy and venerable icons. This went on for some time. Meanwhile, the emperor Theophilus babbled, tossing his head endlessly from one side to the other and saying over and over in his anguish, "Woe is me, wretch that I am! Because of the icons I am being beaten, because of the icons I am being flogged." The sound of it was a fearful and strange thing for the mourners there to witness. The emperor spent the whole night crying out and saying things like this while the empress kept vigil, dedicating her heart and mind to fearful intercession with the supremely holy Mother of God. Then Theoktistos, who served as *kanikleios*,<sup>68</sup> hurriedly put on the *enkolpion*<sup>69</sup> that he had been keeping hidden out of fear of the emperor. The emperor was in great distress, being subjected for a long time to incessant

<sup>67</sup> The chronology of the Life is accurate on this point, as Theophilus acceded to the throne on 2 October 829 and died on 20 January 842.

<sup>68</sup> Theoktistos illustrates the powerful role played by eunuchs in the Byzantine court. The *kanikleios* kept the pen and purple ink used to sign imperial decrees. Theoktistos also held the very important position of *logothetes tou dromou*, the official in charge of the imperial post whose responsibilities included oversight of foreign relations and internal security. Theophilus appointed Theoktistos to serve as regent during Michael III's minority (*TheophComt* 148.9–11). After Theophilus' death, Theoktistos played a vital role in the restoration of orthodoxy: the (preliminary) meeting of the Council of 843 is said to have taken place in his home. See Duffy-Parker, *Synodicon Iensis* chap. 156.4; C. Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photius," in Bryer-Herrin, *Iconoclasm*, 133–34; and n. 367 in the Life of David, Symeon, and George, above.

<sup>69</sup> In both form and function an *enkolpion* was much like a religious medal or crucifix. During the 9th century, image-bearing *enkolpida* served as a vehicle for expressing anti-iconoclastic sentiments. Theoktistos' *enkolpion* is suspended from around his neck by means of a *tenantion*, here translated as "necklace." This *tenantion* comes from the Greek *tenno* and should be distinguished from the *tenantion* that is a loanword from the Latin *tenere* and means a pin to fasten clothes. See A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, N.J., 1986), 116–25, and M. P. Vinson, "The Terms *εγκόλιον* and *ρεπτόριον* and the Conversion of Theophilus in the *Life of Theodora* (BHG 1731)," *GRBS* 36 (1995), 89–99.

beating<sup>70</sup> in full view of the mourners on every side. He saw the necklace with the *enkolpion* bearing<sup>71</sup> the holy and unchanging image of the Most High on his [Theoktistos'] neck. The emperor repeatedly pointed his finger at him and vigorously nodded at him, commanding <Theoktistos> to come toward him. Although he [Theoktistos] tried to flee in terror because of the holy icon, he was overpowered by other hands and, with no opportunity to cover up the sacred object, was brought before the emperor in a state of great terror. The others decided that <the emperor> was asking to tear out his [Theoktistos'] hair so they put strands of it in his hands. Meanwhile, he [Theoktistos] thought that he was going to lose his head, but instead the emperor touched the necklace with his finger and drew it to his lips. Well, when the necklace, that bore, as was said, the holy and venerable image of our Savior and God, had been put to his lips and mouth, suddenly—what an unexpected miracle!—those lips of his that had gaped wide apart, the ones that had debased the teachings of the Church and babbled a lot of nonsense against the holy and venerable images, came together and were closed. After this extraordinary and astonishing miracle occurred, the wild, guttural noises he had been making abruptly stopped and the emperor's physical appearance and features returned to normal. His screams fell silent [p. 265] as did the unbearably painful torments and punishments. Whereupon he fell asleep at once, firmly convinced that it was a very good and spiritually beneficial thing to adore and honor and venerate the holy and venerable image of the Lord our God and Savior Jesus Christ and His all-holy mother and all His saints as the first step on a journey to Godhead that ends in revelation.

9. A few days after these developments, the emperor Theophilus breathed his last and died peacefully. Following the death of Theophilus, his son Michael, who was five and a half years old, became emperor along with his mother Theodora.<sup>72</sup> During Michael's reign, Apodinar, the tribal chieftain of

<sup>70</sup> Combefis' text (συνεχόμενῳ τῷ τῦτρεσθαί) is read here instead of συνέχοντ . . . τῦτρεμένῳ (Μαρκοπουλός).

<sup>71</sup> Combefis' text (επιθέποντος) is read here instead of ἐπιφαίνοντα.

<sup>72</sup> Michael III was actually born on 19 January 840, thus making him two years old, not five and a half, at the time of his father's death on 20 January 842. Our Life (Chap. 11) also misstates Michael's age at his assassination: he was twenty-seven, not twenty-nine. See C. Mango, "When was Michael III Born?" *DOP* 21 (1967), 253–58, and L. Rydén, "The Bride-Shows at the Byzantine Court—Fact or Fiction?" *Etanos* 83 (1985), 182 n. 30.



the accursed and God-forsaken Hagaranes, after many years' preparation launched an all-out assault on the divinely protected city of Constantinople with a fleet of four hundred awesome and terrifying ships.<sup>73</sup> In the end, though, this miserable wretch was completely wiped out and destroyed thanks to the mighty and invincible Trinity, omnipotent and consubstantial, the single God-head and sovereign authority through Whom all things, both visible and invisible, are not only brought safely through danger but are also managed for the best in a masterful way, and through the power and effective intercessions of Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of God. All those awesome and terrifying ships were wrecked together with all their crews off the cape of Kibyrrhatoi, in the so-called Chelidonia.<sup>74</sup> Only seven safely reached Syria, where they reported the victory that saved the Romans and the defeat that brought their own ruin.

10. And so the emperor Michael, after succeeding to his father's throne with his mother Theodora, as was mentioned above, abolished and condemned on the one hand the accursed and soul-destroying heresy of the iconoclasis that was hateful to God, while on the other he strengthened and confirmed the divinely ordained, holy, soul-saving, and most orthodox faith that has long been dear to God by openly proclaiming his strong support for it at the urging, encouragement, and instruction of his venerable and holy mother Theodora. For even though in chronological age the emperor Michael was

<sup>73</sup> On this incident, recorded by no other Greek or Arab source except George the Monk (Georg. Mon. 2:801.7-14), see the introduction to this Life. A. A. Vasiliev accepts the historicity of the attack, dating it to 842, and attributes the silence of the Arab sources to the relative unimportance of the expedition. See his *Byz. Arabes* 1:192-93; in the "Notes complémentaires," 407. M. Canard suggests that the tribal chieftain Apodinar may have been Ahmad-ibn-Dinar. Markopoulos ("Theodora," 250) is more sceptical about this episode, characterizing it as the only miracle (of which saints were supposed to perform many) in the entire Life. Even so, the miraculous defeat of the Arab forces is not specifically attributed to Theodora, but rather to the Trinity and the Virgin Mary.

<sup>74</sup> Kibyrrhatoi was a naval theme or province located on the southern coast of modern Turkey. The Chelidonia, also known as the Chelidoniae, were a group of rocky islands off the ancient Hieria Akra or Sacred Promontory in Lycia; this is the modern Cape Gelidonya, southeast of Finike, at the entrance to the Gulf of Antalya. The Chelidonian islands are mentioned in both Lucian, *Navigium*, chap. 7, and Pliny, *Natural History* 5.35.131, as posing a serious hazard to navigation. Cf. G. F. Bass, *Cape Gelidonya: A Bronze Age Shipwreck* (Philadelphia, 1967).

still a babe—after all, as mentioned above, he was only five and a half years old—still God Himself. Who out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hath furnished praise,<sup>75</sup> enabled <one even so young as> this [p. 266] to celebrate and demonstrate and affirm with brilliant clarity the truth of the divine doctrine to the praise and glory of the Word of God Who became flesh because of His infinite mercy and loving kindness and was seen on earth and lived among mankind. Consequently, thanks to an imperial decree and divinely guided decision of all the holy and orthodox fathers acting in concert with God's advocates the monks and confessors, the thoroughly wicked and evil heresy of the ungodly and impious iconoclasts was refuted and their vacuous and disgusting ravings were demolished point by point, and religious freedom and orthodoxy shone forth throughout the entire universe. And the pernicious beasts were obliterated and throughout the entire world there sprang up as if from dark holes and corners and virtually inescapable labyrinths a definitive statement of orthodoxy; and, on the first Sunday of Holy Lent, orthodoxy became a reality for all who piously honor and venerate the holy and revered images.<sup>76</sup> For the grace of the true knowledge of God sprang up throughout the whole world and a period of justice, peace, and kindness to others was ushered in for everyone everywhere, and it was decreed by the great and orthodox rulers and by the holy and thrice-blessed fathers, I mean Ioannikios and Arsakios, Isaiah and Methodios,<sup>77</sup> and many others who met for this purpose at that time, that tranquility and calm should dwell in the land for all time to come.

It was then, too, that the aforementioned John, the prime leader and exponent of the ill-famed and soul-destroying heresy, that miserable and wretched chief sorcerer, was deposed from the patriarchal throne in disgrace

<sup>75</sup> Ps. 8:2.

<sup>76</sup> The formal restoration of icons took place in the church of St. Sophia on 11 March 843. The Feast of Orthodoxy is still commemorated in the Greek Church on the first Sunday in Lent. For further details, see n. 398 in the Life of David, Symeon, and George.

<sup>77</sup> According to the *De Theophili imperatoris absolutione* (ed. Regel, *Analecta*, 24-27), Arsakios and Ioannikios (on whom see previous vita), hermits from Mt. Olympus in Bithynia, were prompted by a divine revelation to visit the same Isaiah of Nikomedea that Theodora had previously stopped to see. Isaiah, at the direction of the Holy Spirit, enlisted their aid in successfully urging Theodora and Methodios to restore the veneration of icons. See also Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire*, 147, n. 1 and n. 33 above.



and anathematized, rightly and in accordance with the judgment of God, along with his like-minded henchmen and agents of persecution who ravaged the flock like savage and destructive beasts. By the grace of God and the providence of Christ our true God and by unanimous vote of all the orthodox he was succeeded by Methodios, the famous confessor and defender of orthodoxy; he confirmed and proclaimed our blameless orthodox faith after demolishing in its entirety, using the clearest and most forceful arguments, the pernicious scheme against the holy images (the work of the devil, who is always casting a malignant eye over our people) and the unholy drivell of the heresarchs and their disciples in viciousness<sup>78</sup> and insanity. It was for this that he had in the past endured many other persecutions and dangers as well as many painful situations and punitive tortures at the hands of the unholy iconoclasts and the wicked Theophilos. These things he bore with noble patience as befits a martyr, [p. 267] giving thanks to the merciful God. For who could count the many different persecutions and ordeals that he endured one right after the other, the bottomless pits, the dark and filthy conditions of solitary confinement, the stifling and hellish prison cells,<sup>79</sup> the deprivation not only of the necessities of life but of friends, family, and fellow-believers as well? All of this the blessed man endured nobly and even eagerly, providing for those experiencing hardship a conspicuous example of patient endurance and silent encouragement. In this way, then, Methodios, the marvelous and sainted man of the church, by the favor of the merciful God and with the assistance of the most pious empress Theodora and, as we said, the holy fathers, took into his keeping the flock of Christ and led it to the pastures of eternal life. And the house of God and the community of the orthodox began its forward progress, rejoicing in holiness, justice, and the power of God and was clearly strengthened and shone forth. But as for the assemblage of impious and ungodly heretics, in point of fact a Jewish sect and clique, it was discredited and completely stripped of power, being conspicuously muzzled and refuted on a daily basis. Whereupon by imperial decree all the fathers who had been exiled or subjected to harsh imprisonment were immediately recalled and released from their chains, together with large numbers of monks and further, quite a few pious

<sup>78</sup> Regel's correction (*κακονομία*) is read instead of *κακονία*.

<sup>79</sup> Regel's correction (*κατακλείσεις*) is read here. On Methodios' imprisonment, see the Life of David, Symeon, and George, above, 199–200 and n. 289.

laymen whom the impious Theophilos had banished after high-handedly confiscating their property and mutilating them, not to mention others whom he ordered to be punished with harsh confinement for refusing to obey his treacherous and insulting commands. All of these lived forever after in peace and joy, praising and glorifying God.

The venerable and virtuous empress Theodora, seeing the orthodox faith of the Christians shining forth in full flower, was happy and perfectly delighted, and was filled with joy and gladness. The *logothetes* Theoktistos, who also served as *kamikeios*, shared the empress' happiness and joined her in applauding these <developments> since he was a fervent supporter of the orthodox faith. But Bardas, the caesar and brother of the most pious empress Theodora crowned of God, hated him and killed him unjustly.<sup>80</sup> So after that the holy and religious empress Theodora took pity on a number of men who came to her for protection and helped them out of her natural goodness and virtuous character and compassionate nature, a woman resplendent with virtue in many forms.

11. And so the blessed Theodora lived in the palace for fourteen years<sup>81</sup> after she assumed imperial power with her son Michael, managing the affairs of her subjects in this meet and fitting manner. [p. 268] She fell out with Bardas, her aforementioned brother, who had become caesar, because of his unjust murder of the likewise aforementioned *logothetes* Theoktistos, and involuntarily and against her will left the palace for the Gastria monastery with her four daughters Pulcheria, Thekla, Anastasia, and Anna. The emperor Michael tonsured three of her daughters and clothed them in the holy garb of monastic life, assigning them to the Karianos monastery. His mother, on the other hand, the most pious lady Theodora, along with her daughter Pulcheria he ordered to take up residence in the previously mentioned Gastria monastery.<sup>82</sup> This is

<sup>80</sup> Theoktistos was murdered on 20 November 855, a casualty of the alliance formed between Bardas and Michael III to depose Theodora and establish Michael as sole ruler. Normally, only the sons of a reigning monarch held the rank of caesar, the highest dignity or honorific title after that of emperor. Bardas became caesar in April 862, several years after Theodora's deposition in 856. See also nn. 367–68 in the Life of David, Symeon, and George, above.

<sup>81</sup> That is, from 842–856.

<sup>82</sup> Both the location of the Karianos monastery and the sequence of events here are problematic. For a discussion of the convent's location, see Janin, *Eglises CP*, 278, who



what happened during those years. Michael ruled alone for fourteen years and was murdered at the age of twenty-nine in the palace of St. Mamas by his *parakoimomenos*. Basil the *patricios*.<sup>83</sup>

12. But how did that truly good mother and wise preceptor <respond> to these <developments>? She did not delay her retirement from imperial life, nor did she seek to regain the sovereignty that her husband had entrusted to her even though a substantial portion of the senatorial order wanted her to. On the contrary, she asked her son to come see her and expressed to him the following views with regard to the state and provided her son with expedient advice as well. "Child of mine and gift of God," she said, "now that I am free from the responsibility of providing for the people, I shall be content to keep to myself, praying for you and my other children. As for you, consider how you have been found worthy by God of the dominion <you have> over the people, and understand quite clearly that we are called for their sakes rather than they for ours, and generously grant appropriate rewards to the deserving while at the same time piously passing judgment on the guilty. This is all I have to say. Now may God on high, Who is the source of your sovereignty, grant that this sovereign voyage be brought well and safely to port, with you at the helm, guiding this earthly ship with the rudder of righteous-

places it in Blachernai, a region in the northwestern part of Constantinople, and more recently Treadgold, *Byz. Revival*, 310 and 446, n. 426, who considers it part of the Great Palace complex. As for the chronology, Bury (*Eastern Roman Empire*, 469-71) and Karlin-Hayter ("Eludes," 469-74) posit an interval during which Theodora remained in the palace after her deposition from power, an event dated to 856 by our Life and further specified by Bury as 15 March. Karlin-Hayter (473-74) posits a second interval between Theodora's expulsion from the palace and her tonsure as a nun, which resulted from her complicity in a plot against Bardas. See *TheophCont* 174, ps.-Sym. Mag. 658, and Leo Gramm. 237. On Theodora's tonsure, see also Theognostos, *Li-bellus*, PG 105:857A and *v. Ignat.*, PG 105:505A. One should note that in both sources the emphasis is on the patriarch Ignatios' refusal to tonsure the empress rather than on the actual tonsure itself, which is explicitly attested only by *TheophCont* 174. On the Gastria convent, see above, n. 41.

<sup>83</sup> On the chronology, see above, n. 72. After the death of Michael III on 23-24 September 867, Basil became emperor and founder of the Macedonian dynasty. *Patricios* was a dignity or honorific title indicating very high status. *Parakoimomenos* literally means someone who "sleeps at the (emperor's) side," but by the late 9th century this office had expanded far beyond its original function of imperial bodyguard. The palace of St. Mamas was located on the European side of the Bosphoros, across the Golden Horn from Constantinople.

ness, filling <its sails> with the fair wind of salvation." After fortifying her son with this maternal advice and endowing him with prayers as with any other maternal legacy, she made her home outside the palace as a private citizen. Then, after she was free from the cares of empire—the marvel of it—just as she had once set an example for emperors, so now too she served as an example for everyone else and won renown after leaving imperial life. What lady was so widely esteemed as she for her service to the monastic community [p. 269] or participated with her children so fully in their [the monks'] prayers? Who set a richer table for the poor than she or graced the sick with visits or emptied more prisons or clothed with tunics a greater number of the naked or forgave more loans or recalled her own people from a foreign land? Who devoted her eyes and ears and her other senses more completely to God and, like Israel, prepared her mind to see God<sup>84</sup> and raised herself up as a deathless monument and living icon?<sup>85</sup> For the young, she set up the image<sup>86</sup> of her own youthfulness, while for those of middle age, the image of her final years, and again for the elderly and those advanced in age, her own wisdom mature beyond her years. She provides corn with Joseph,<sup>87</sup> and guards her chastity and receives with Abraham the Trinity,<sup>88</sup> that does not overshadow the dwelling but dwells within her heart, with Job<sup>89</sup> she opens her doors, and with David she hymns night and day the ordinances of the Lord,<sup>90</sup> and she washes the feet of the disciples<sup>91</sup> and preaches the gospel with the apostles,<sup>92</sup> and participates in the struggles of the martyrs, sharing the martyrs' suffering without bloodshed, and she is justified by Christ,<sup>93</sup> and she obtains the incorruptible crown in heaven, having gained Christ in the end.

But now that I have mentioned the end of her life, it would be good to

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.9, PG 8:341c.

<sup>85</sup> Regell's text, which includes "and" (καί), is used here.

<sup>86</sup> The textual variant ἀναστροφῶν is read here.

<sup>87</sup> Gen. 47:12.

<sup>88</sup> Gen. 18:1-15. The emendation proposed by A.-M. Talbot (ἐνοικιζόμενη) is accepted here.

<sup>89</sup> Job 31:32.

<sup>90</sup> Ps. 17 (18):22 and 118 (119):54.

<sup>91</sup> Jn. 13:5. Regell's text (ἕντρα) is read here.

<sup>92</sup> Mk. 16:15.

<sup>93</sup> Gal. 2:16.

goodness of Theodora



include as well some mention of what was said at the time, all the words of advice she offered her children and all the edifying remarks she made to the members of her household at the very hour of her passing. She spoke to her children<sup>94</sup> first. "My children and glorious offspring of my womb," she says, "Lo! the time of my departure is at hand.<sup>95</sup> Lend me your ears and hear now my last words. For my tomb is ready and my burial garments are in the hands of those who are going to lay me to rest. A tear of sympathy wells up, shed before my very eyes, and choirs of loved ones stand around in a circle tragically lamenting my death. The whole household has stationed itself at my bedside, wailing bitterly and beating the breast at my imminent departure. Dearest children, remember my many efforts and exertions and the daily teachings with which I brought you up. Remember the moans from my heart in its deep distress, how many tears I shed propitiating God, how many times I stayed up all night in prayerful supplication that you might go forward in God. I kissed the feet of saints and I never stopped sending out prayers of intercession in all directions [p. 270] in order that you might obtain the intercession of the elect. And, just as you were bound by your birth to obey me while I still remained in this life, so now I entreat you to abide<sup>96</sup> by my words and instructions after my death as well. Do not fail in your love for God nor abandon your customary prayers. Do not neglect your relationship with your neighbor; do not lift up against your neighbor your hands to do wrong nor your tongue to revile. Even if you have had your fill of every advantage and have enjoyed the pleasures of imperial life while at the same time you were resplendent with gold and decked out with precious jewels and vast sums of money and slaves have been given to you for your personal use, know that this present life comes to an end for every individual, but that the everlasting pleasures of the angels are promised to us if only we carry out God's ordinances. For this reason, turn your gaze upward and seek the kingdom of heaven, scattering your wealth among the needy so that you may have the wealth that is gathered in heaven. For the previous kingdom with its empty glory and glittering wealth has conferred no benefit on us at all; indeed, it has rather subjected us to tyranny and distracted our minds from divine content-

<sup>94</sup> The use of feminine adjectival forms in the passage that follows indicates that Theodora is addressing her daughters.

<sup>95</sup> 2 Tim. 4:6.

<sup>96</sup> Regal's text (*επιτηνικωρε*) is read here.

plation and on numerous occasions may very well have even brought misfortunes upon us. You yourselves are witnesses to this. But what I never stopped saying in the past, I urge upon you now as well: be at peace with yourselves and with all mankind, the peace given by God that I have cherished above all else. Strengthen one another; rouse one another to the good; carry one another's burdens so that a desire for glory does not destroy your unity. Through peace let the last be more exalted than those ahead of him and through love let the first be more lowly than those behind him.<sup>97</sup> Let there be one law among you, the will and fear of God, neglecting none of His undefiled commandments so that you may *bring forth fruit unto God*,<sup>98</sup> being offered up to Him as the most appropriate kind of gift and first fruits of my fertile womb, endowed with reason. It is my hope that, if you follow the words of advice I have given you and live your lives accordingly, you may obtain Christ in the end and will become heirs of the bliss in that other realm, to the renown of myself, the mother who bore you and brought you up, and to the glory of God Who put you into my arms." With these words and more the blessed lady strengthened her children. "May God," she continued, "grant that you, too, manage your affairs in this life aright and obtain the object of your hopes in the other. This shall be the reward for your ready obedience to His people; this is why you were put on this earth as our sons and daughters and for the same reason we, too, became a mother."

Now Michael himself, her son and emperor, [p. 271] paid a visit with his consort to express their sympathy at her death.<sup>99</sup> To them, too, she made a

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Mt. 19:30, 20:16; Mk. 9:35, 10:31; Lk. 13:30.

<sup>98</sup> Rom. 7:4.

<sup>99</sup> The visit of Michael III and his wife Eudokia of Dekapolis to Theodora's death-bed presents a serious problem, since in the tradition represented by Symeon the Logothete (Leo Gramm. 252-20, ps.-Sym. Mag. 686.7) it is Theodora who survives to lament over her son's corpse after his assassination. Karlin-Hayter ("Theodora," 207-8) has recently attempted to resolve the difficulty by positing the following interpolation: "<Michael> himself <her son and> emperor." The "emperor himself" would then be Basil I, who was married to Eudokia Ingerina. This is a truly ingenious suggestion, but the rationale behind it, namely that it is odd for Theodora to address the "emperor" separately from her other "children" as she does a little further on in the passage, does not take into account the rhetorical context of the Life. For example, the distinction between emperor and (female) children is not meant to reflect a lack of maternal feeling on Theodora's part, but rather her deference to proper, that is, male, authority. As such, it is of a piece with her earlier refusal of the senate's invitation to resume power and



dying bequest, praying that they should govern their subjects in the best possible way and obtain the kingdom in heaven. Then, after speaking individually with each of her children, the emperor, and her household staff, on 11 February she gave her holy soul into the hands of the God Who made her. Her last words were, "*Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.*"<sup>100</sup>

How noble the birth and upbringing that produced such a flower! How praiseworthy her marriage and admirable her widowhood! How edifying her sound advice and words of wisdom! She honored virginity, glorified marriage, preserved her husband, led a multitude of humanity into the light, ascended to heaven, through hope gained the object of her hopes, was illumined by the light of heavenly radiance, became a light unto God in every respect, gained free access to God, intercedes on behalf of those below, purified by God, perfected by God, giving thanks to God, praising and glorifying Him in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because to Him belongs glory, power, honor, now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

the way she subsequently limits her involvement in Michael's life to praying for him and urging him to seek the kingdom of God through his just rule on earth. This is the behavior of an exemplary woman, one who knows her place and does not interfere in the affairs of men except under the most extraordinary circumstances, such as when the emperor is a child of two (or five). Hence, despite Karlin-Hayter's ingenuity, the discrepancy between our Life and the Logothete does not seem to admit of an easy solution. Rhetorical analysis is of limited value here since in the end the question boils down to whether a dutiful but grieving mother is more credible than a dutiful but grieving son: there is little to choose between them. A secure date for the Life might help, but one should caution that mere proximity to events is no guarantee of an author's veracity. One suspects that final resolution of this question will come only from "hard," that is, nonliterary evidence of the kind that Mango used so successfully to establish the date of Michael III's birth in the face of similarly contradictory evidence (see above, n. 72). For a discussion of Michael III, Basil I, their consorts, and concubines, including Thekla who was allegedly given to Basil for this purpose by her brother, see C. Mango, "Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty," *ZRYV* 14-15 (1973), 17-27 and more recently the extremely perceptive analysis of Karlin-Hayter in "L'enjeu d'une rumeur," *JÖB* 41 (1991), 85-111.

<sup>100</sup> Ps. 30 (31):5; Lk. 23:46.

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