

⁴ See my article "Unity and Autocephaly: Reality or Illusion?" *Festschrift for Metropolitan Barnabas of Kitros* (Athens, 1980), 313-20.

⁵ Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22, 23, 5:23; Col 1:18, 2:19.

⁶ Epistle 52 (*Ad Antonium*), and Epistle 65 (*Ad Rogatianum*).

⁷ *Contra Haereses* 5, 20, 1.

⁸ Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* 1, 6.

⁹ Apostolic canon 64, canons 12 and 13 of Nicaea I, and canon 56 of Trullo.

¹⁰ For a detailed account of these, see my article "The Primacy of the See of Constantinople in Theory and Practice," in *Primacy and Conciliarity* (Lewis Patsavos; Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1995), 1-30.

¹¹ Patsavos, "Primacy of the See of Constantinople," 1-6.

¹² Patsavos, "Primacy of the See of Constantinople," 8-12.

¹³ He was, of course, echoing the views of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as articulated in George Bebis, "Metaxakis in Profile," in *History of the Greek Orthodox Church in America* (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, 1984), 93-113.

¹⁴ The several pre-Conciliar, Pan-Orthodox Conferences which have convened periodically since 1976 have already provided the context for the discussion of this and other related issues. Once a consensus has been achieved, it is expected that a date can be set, at least in theory, for the convocation of the Great and Holy Council.

¹⁵ Ideally, this might be accomplished at a special session of the Great and Holy Council.

¹⁶ The creation of episcopal assemblies was in fact adopted as a viable model of ecclesiastical administration for the Diaspora as a first stage of normalization by the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission for the Great and Holy Council in 1993.

"A Spiritual Warrior in Iron Armor Clad": Byzantine Epigrams on Saint George the Great Martyr

NICHOLAS CONSTAS

Introduction

It is an honor for me to contribute to this volume of essays in memory of Professor George Pilitsis. I had the great privilege and pleasure of working with George during my tenure at Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (1993-1998). As is well known, those were difficult years for that institution, and in an atmosphere charged with mutual suspicion and mistrust, George was a true and much treasured friend. In calling to mind the moments of brightness which from time to time broke through the clouds of those dark days, I see George standing in the light: quick to smile, affable in conversation, earnest at the mention of Homer, and animated over a passage in a poem by Ritsos. That same smile greeted me when I saw him a few days before his death. Once again, light broke through the gloom, and, as so often happens, the living were comforted by those about to die. To honor the life, work and struggles of my beloved colleague, I gladly offer the following study of Byzantine epigrams on Saint George the Great Martyr, written by the Paleologan court poet Manuel Philes.

Manuel Philes

The poet Manuel Philes was the most renowned member of a Byzantine noble family which flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Philes was born in Asia Minor around 1270, and studied under the patriarchal official and

ecclesiastical historian, George Pachymeres.¹ Philes' literary gifts brought him to the attention of the aristocracy and imperial government, and he served as court poet under the Paleologan emperors Andronikos II (1282-1328) and Andronikos III (1328-41).²

Philes' poetry remains largely untranslated, and has yet to be fully appreciated by contemporary critics.³ Historians have mined his works for information on the social and cultural world of the late Byzantine period, but they have tended to minimize and even dismiss his poetical and aesthetic achievements.⁴ This is most unfortunate, for Philes' literary and artistic strengths, while occasionally compromised by his need to produce poetry on demand, are nevertheless formidable. To be sure, his poetic imagination is rich and labyrinthine, but it is no morass. He was, moreover, an immensely varied and productive poet, prompting Karl Krumbacher to rank him as the "most prolific writer of the Byzantine period."⁵

Comprising more than thirty thousand (surviving) lines written almost exclusively in twelve-syllable verse,⁶ Philes' poetic corpus covers a vast range of subjects, including poems on flora and fauna, such as his hymn to a rose, an ekphrasis on an elephant, and an ode to an ostrich. The natural world, refracted through the prism of Byzantine rhetoric, figures prominently in much of Philes' work, and is the subject of special poems including those on the four seasons, the earth and sea, and on the sun and the moon.

Also in his catalogue are dialogues between the soul and the body, praises of the emperor, consolatory and paraenetic poems, and dozens of funeral laments and epitaphs for members of the royal family and the aristocracy. In addition to the court, Philes was also in the employ of the church and its wealthy patrons, writing hundreds of short epigrams on gifts and votive objects, such as ecclesiastical textiles, painted icons, carvings, precious stones and pieces of jewelry (such

as the miraculous ring of St. Clement); and many more on liturgical books, eucharistic vessels, relics, reliquaries, icon-screens, churches and shrines.⁷

Philes produced additional poems on the great feasts of the Lord and the Virgin; on the Sundays of Lent and the period of Pentecost, along with an iambic "translation" of the Akathist Hymn. The books of sacred scripture, central to the Byzantine liturgy, are also the subject of Philes' poetry, and he wrote verses on the Biblical Odes, the Psalms, and on the Gospels and Epistles. Closely related to these are Philes' poems on patristic works, many of which were likewise read in church, such as the Orations of Gregory the Theologian, or the thirty "rungs" of John Climacus' *Heavenly Ladder*, each of which is the subject of a short epigram.

Epigrams on Saint George

Philes also produced a large number of epigrams on various saints, including more than a dozen on Saint George. Many of these are without title, but clearly have a particular image of the saint within view. Others were seemingly intended for inscription on an actual icon, or other devotional object, such as the two untitled poems which refer to images of Saint George carved in stone.⁸ The first of these makes a generic reference to the physical medium ("Though carved from stone, the martyr appears nonetheless to live and breathe"), as does the second ("The body of the martyr is the offspring of stones, a sign of the Creator's skill ... for He alone can raise children from stones"), alluding in the last verse to Matt 3:8-9 and Luke 3:8, where God is said to be able "from these stones to raise up children to Abraham." In a related poem, the Biblical reference to human offspring generated from stone is made explicit, and lends a double meaning to an image of Saint George carved on a "flesh-colored stone" from the church of Saint George in the Mangana

quarter of Constantinople.⁹

Another poem dealing with a carved image of the saint has a title which indicates that it was "inscribed on a marble column [having an image] of the Great Martyr George." Here, Philes relates the nature of the physical medium to the saint's sufferings, which included being crushed under a stone, and whose body was lacerated in a manner reminiscent of the incisions and cuts of the carving.¹⁰ It has been suggested that the large number of carved relief images of saintly soldiers reflects both their physical prowess and the expectations of their beholders: such figures had to be strong and solid, qualities virtualized by stone, unlike the relatively ethereal ascetic saints, for whom such a medium was not suitable.¹¹

Other poems are addressed, or otherwise relate, to what is most likely a painted image of the saint.¹² One of these has the following lemma: "On the Great George, clad in armor and seated before the city, drawing his sword from its scabbard." This depiction prompts Philes to surmise that the saint has "completed his contests, in which he has prevailed over the enemy of souls." Finding himself "at rest," the great martyr is "outfitted with armor, as the watchful guardian of the city, and brandishes his sharpened sword against her foes."¹³ Byzantine art historian Henry Maguire detects this same quality of watchfulness in a post-Byzantine fresco of St. George from Kastoria. Not unlike Philes, Maguire describes the image as follows: "Here Saint George sits in a shifting pose as if he were about to rise for combat, his legs turned to the right, his upper body facing the front, and his sword pulled half way from its scabbard."¹⁴ In another poem, Philes contemplates the iconographer's choice of color, noting that the saint's face is "painted with pale colors, and not with red," because the "warmth of his body was poured out with his blood." Philes suggests that, in this regard, Saint George follows the "graphic" example of Christ himself, who was a "pure, bloodless victim."¹⁵

The principal epigram under consideration in this study, the text of which appears below, was also most probably inspired by a painted icon or mural cycle. The use, in the first line, of the word "here" (ἐνθάδε) is Philes' customary rhetorical gesture toward a specific object, in this case an image of Saint George, upon which the poet is gazing (βλέπων).¹⁶ Moreover, the epigram's strong narrative content, signaled at the outset (μαρτυρικοὺς ἀγώνας ἐνθάδε βλέπων), moves deliberately through a sequence of the saint's tortures and miraculous survivals. These verses are a sustained meditation on suffering, and lead to a consideration of the martyr's status as a powerful intercessor. "Soaring aloft on the wings of miracles," the saint is present both to God and to those in need; having died in one place, he is now active throughout the world. The epigram reaches a crescendo as the poet marvels at the ability of corporeal human nature to triumph over bodiless demons. In so doing, the saint has imitated the incorporeal angels, thanks to a power infused in him by Christ.

The prominence of these narrative elements suggests that the icon in question may have been a depiction of the saint framed by various scenes from his martyrdom.¹⁷ On a literary level, the cumulative effect of these historical moments issues in the paradoxical contours of a timeless portrait, an inviolate figure in a landscape of torture. At the same time, the visual referent may also be a monumental mural cycle. In the late Byzantine period, Saint George appears in a large number of such cycles, nineteen of them dating precisely to the fourteenth century.¹⁸ In these, the most common scenes are those of the saint's interrogation and selected tortures, such as the crushing between stones, the wheel, and the miracle of the raising of the dead man, most of which are paralleled in Philes' epigram.

The contents of the epigram may be outlined as follows: the poet's encounter with the spectacle of martyrdom and

his admiration of Saint George (lines 1-2); the tortures and survivals of the saint (lines 3-11); the saint's disregard for the body, and the inner meaning of his physical appearance (lines 12-15); the saint as effective intercessor and his miracles (lines 16-22); the triumph of the visible over the invisible (lines 23-27); and concluding admonition to the spectator (lines 28-30).

Greek Text and English Translation¹⁹

Εἰς τὸν μέγαν Γεώργιον

Μαρτυρικοὺς ἀγῶνας ἐνθάδε βλέπων
Γεωργίῳ τέθηπα τὴν εὐανδρίαν.
Ἀνθίσταται γὰρ τοῖς βραβεῦσι τῆς πλάνης,
Νικᾷ δὲ παθεῖν εὐγενῶς ἡπειγμένους·
Εἰς πῦρ δὲ χωρεῖ καὶ τροχοῦ περιδρόμους,
Ποιεῖ δὲ κηρὸν τοῦ σιδήρου τὴν φύσιν·
Καὶ γὰρ τὰς ἀκμὰς τῶν βελῶν ἀντιστρέφει,
Καὶ θαυματουργεῖ καὶ τομῆς κρείσσων μένει,
Καὶ γίνεται μὲν πνευματικὸς ὀπλίτης·
Ἀνίσταται δὲ καὶ σφριγᾷ πρὸς τὴν μάχην,
Καὶ πῦρ κατ' ἐχθρῶν δυσμενῶν πνέει φλέγον.
Οὐ φεῖδεται γὰρ τῶν μελῶν τοῦ σαρκίου·
Στηρίζεται δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς ταῖς ἐλπίσι·
Φαιδρύνεται δὲ ταῖς ῥοαῖς τῶν αἱμάτων,
Στολίζεται δὲ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν μαρτύρων,
Παρίσταται δὲ τῷ Θεῷ στεφανίτης,
Κουφίζεται δὲ τοῖς πτεροῖς τῶν θαυμάτων·
Ἐφίσταται δὲ συμπαθῶς τοῖς ἐν λύπαις,
Ποιεῖ δὲ νεκροὺς ἐκ ταφῆς παλιμβίους,
Καὶ δείκνυται ζῶν πανταχοῦ γῆς καὶ πνέων,
Δεσμοὺς δὲ πυκνοὺς καὶ πλοκάς λύει βρόχων,
Συχνοὺς πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς δορυκτῆτους ἄγων.

Ὡ θαῦμα, καὶ πῶς εὐπαθῆς σὰρξ ἐνθάδε
Τὴν τοῦ Σατᾶν ἄσαρκον ἐκνικᾷ φύσιν,
Τῶν ἀγγέλων τὴν φύσιν ἐκμιμουμένη.
Πλὴν οἶδε Χριστὸς ἑξαμεῖβειν τὰς φύσεις
Τοῖς ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ μαρτυρεῖν προηγμένοις.
Ὡστε βλέπων, ἄνθρωπε, μηδὲν θαυμάσης,
Εἰ μαρτυρικῶς ἡ Γεωργίῳ χάρις
Τοιαῦτα ποιεῖν τοῖς βροτοῖς ἐξισχύσει.

On the Great Martyr George

Seeing here the contests of martyrdom,
I marvel at the manliness of George,
For he spurns the trophies of falsehood,
And with all speed triumphs nobly over suffering.
He journeys through fire and on the turning of a wheel,
But iron's cruel substance he melts into wax,
For he hurls back the razor-edged arrows launched against him;
And he works wonders, and survives the hewing of his body,
Becoming a spiritual warrior in iron armor clad.
Thus he rouses himself to arms and is braced for battle,
And to his hateful enemies he breathes flames of fire.
He takes no thought for his bodily members,
Taking his stand in the hopes of the soul.
Adorned in the streams of his blood,
And robed in the honor of the martyrs,
He presents himself crowned before God.
He soars aloft on the wings of miracles,
And with compassion draws close to those in pain;
He escorts the dead from their funerals back to life,
And in all the earth he appears alive and with breath;
He loosens unyielding bonds and the braided knots of nooses,
And frequently summons spear-bearing angels to our aid.
What a wonder! For how can but frail flesh here

Triumph over the fleshless nature of Satan,
 Imitating, as it does, the nature of the angels?
 Save that Christ knows how to exchange the natures
 For the sake of those who suffer foremost on his behalf.
 Do not marvel, then, O Man, upon seeing these things,
 If the grace which is George's in virtue of his martyrdom,
 Is able to work such wonders for mortal men.

* * *

With the scene of martyrdom placed conspicuously in the foreground, the epigram begins by locating the reader within the visual experience of the poet (1), who immediately declares his admiration for the saint (2). These opening lines encapsulate the basic themes of Philes' poem: the martyr's tortures and miraculous survivals, along with the exalted, praiseworthy status he attains as a result.

This concise prelude is followed by the saint's noble response to the contest set before him (3-4), followed in turn by a series of tortures and survivals (5-8). The martyr, thus far on the defensive, now rouses himself to battle and, in the midst of his sufferings, assumes the paradoxical status of a "spiritual warrior in iron armor clad" (9). Adding paradox to paradox, the saint breathes "flames of fire" upon his enemies, as if he were a fire-breathing dragon (10-11). These disjunctive images, which constitute the martyr's "objective" appearance, are mirrored by his differentiated attitude toward body and soul (12-13), a "subjective" turn which deepens the antinomies introduced above. In yet another reversal, the saint's bloodied garments appear as emblems of glory and honor (14-15).²⁰

Saint George is subsequently celebrated as a miracle-worker and intercessor, evidenced, for example, in the raising of the dead man, which is a standard scene in artistic and literary accounts of his martyrdom (16-22). Having explored

the intertwining of suffering and exaltation, Philes again expresses his admiration for the saint, although now in a more intense form than at the outset (23; cf. 2). The mystery of the martyr is revealed in the triumph of frail, human flesh over the fleshless nature of Satan, which is a sign of the saint's status as an honorary, bodiless angel (23-25; cf. 17). Philes attributes the martyr's miraculous transcendence of human limitations to an "exchange of natures" conducted by Christ, an allusion to the doctrine of the "communication of idioms" (26-27). This phrase denotes the exchange of human and divine properties in the person of Christ, although here it is applied to the martyr's appropriation of qualities proper to angels.²¹ This may also be an allusion to the dramatic transformations, including those of gender, which are widely attested in ancient accounts of martyrdom. As the epigram draws to a close, Philes returns to the language of the introduction (1-2), although now there is a shift in perspective, with the power of sight returned to the reader/holder, who is directly addressed by the poet (28). In an ironic play on words, virtualizing, perhaps, the rich ambiguities of the text, Philes admonishes the reader *not* to wonder (i.e., in the sense of doubt) at the remarkable grace given to Saint George (28-30).

Having considered Philes' epigram in some detail, we may now expand our frame of reference and proceed to a more general discussion of the Byzantine warrior saint, beginning with a few words on the larger social and historical context. As heirs to the political theology of the Old Testament, the Byzantines believed themselves to be God's chosen people; they saw their emperor as a new David, and christened Constantinople the new Jerusalem, which, like its predecessor, was perennially besieged by hostile armies.²² On a permanent war footing for more than one thousand years, Byzantium was a military society in which soldiers and officers enjoyed a favorable social status. In such a climate, it

is not surprising that military saints were likewise esteemed as protectors, intercessors and leaders to victory, not only in times of war, but also in defeat and under foreign occupation.

The Byzantine cult of holy warriors was established after the conversion of the warrior king Constantine (307-37), and the greatest number of churches and shrines dedicated to saintly soldiers was in the imperial capital. Although the majority of these saints were martyred under Diocletian (284-305) and Julian the Apostate (361-63), they proved to be enduringly popular.²³ Foremost among them are the two St. Theodores, St. Demetrius, St. Procopius, St. Mercurius and, in a kind of second battalion, Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, St. Eustathius, St. Kyrion, St. Hieron, St. Menas, St. Artemius, St. Arethas, St. Martin and St. Phanourios, to mention only a few. However, not all attained the same celebrity. In the firmament of Byzantine warrior saints, Saint George was, in the words of Christopher Walter, the "star."²⁴

According to tradition, Saint George (feast day April 23) was a young, aristocratic military officer from Cappadocia. He was martyred in Palestinian Diospolis (Lydda), during the reign of Diocletian (284-305), and the scene of his martyrdom soon became a center of pilgrimage. The earliest recorded visit to the site dates to the early fifth century, but the sanctuary itself was probably built during the second half of the fourth century.²⁵ In Constantinople, nine churches alone were dedicated to Saint George, although this seems a paltry number when compared to the forty churches and three monasteries dedicated to the saint in Egypt.²⁶ In the late Byzantine period, Saint George was invoked for protection against the empire's many enemies, and he appears frequently in apotropaic representations, near church entrances, guarding the gate of the sanctuary, at the entry of the apse, and generally at the head of the army of martyrs.

Encased in body armor, brandishing spears and swords, and

impaling fallen enemies or writhing dragons while mounted upon noble steeds, Byzantine warrior saints would seem to be rather unabashed symbols of masculine potency and military prowess.²⁷ Moreover, the virile qualities of solidity and hardness, as mentioned above, were often highlighted by depicting these saints in stone relief. One might therefore conclude that figures like Saint George and his bellicose companions are merely projections of idealized masculine energy, designed to reinforce the assumptions of a patriarchal society and ultimately legitimize aggression, violence and warfare. Such a conclusion, however, would not be entirely correct. A careful consideration of the iconography in question suggests that traditional, one-sided stereotypes of masculinity do not adequately describe the peculiarly complex aesthetics of the saintly Byzantine warriors. Many of these seemingly brutish figures are in fact highly androgynous, and, in the words of one writer, they are rather "resplendent in their boyish beauty ... elegant ephebes of the Oriental type, with slim proportions and romantic eyes."²⁸

The evident youth and refined beauty of these saints, with their fair skin, smooth chins and melting eyes, surely attracts us; but at the same time the austere, metallic architecture of their bodies keeps our desire at arm's length.²⁹ This curious coincidence of opposites – of alluring, feminine beauty encased in hard, impenetrable iron – embodies a visual hierarchy of forms that was intended to appeal to both the eye and the mind. As perfect anatomy and perfect geometry combined, the image of the warrior saint is a battlefield where different artistic languages fight for our attention.³⁰ The tension created by the juxtaposition of these discontinuous systems aims to provoke the mind to a higher awareness; such an image encourages movement from one place to another, from a particular focus to a letting go of that focus. As a result, the eroticized glance is both intimately engaged and effectively disavowed as the movement of our desire is

confronted and reconfigured by the tension displayed before us. The dragon of sensuality is, as it were, lured from its cave only to be lanced by the spiritual warrior, whose saving wound allows carnal impulses to be transformed into eros for the divine. The image can thus be seen as providing the conditions for a spiritual exercise, offering resistance to, and an opportunity for reflection on, the "razor-edged arrows" of desire "launched against" it. With vision thus transfixed, the beholder is led to a moment of self-encounter, a confrontation with the self in which consciousness is rendered visible, as the "arrows" of desire are "hurled back," transformed into objects of self-reflection.

Such a provocative, hybrid image emerged from a complex genealogy of influences and concerns, including the church's ambiguous attitudes toward war and military service; an ideal of male beauty formulated in the Hellenistic period; and the desire to assimilate the warrior saints to their celestial counterparts, especially the archangel Michael, the androgynous commander of the heavenly armies.³¹ The first and the third of these vectors, expressed aesthetically through the second, are closely related to the New Testament's deployment of military language as a metaphor for the Christian spiritual life. Long before the official canonization of the first saintly soldier, the Apostle Paul, loudly rattling his rhetorical saber, urged his Ephesian recruits to:

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devices of the devil, for our fight is not against human forces but against cosmic powers, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. Therefore take up the full armor of God, and stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist; covered by the breastplate of righteousness; your feet fitted with the readiness of the Gospel of peace; and take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one; take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is

the word of God (Eph 6:10-17).

The Apostle's battle cry to "put on the full armor of God" resumes an earlier theme of his Epistle, namely, the call to "put on the new man, created after the image of God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). Most of the metaphorical weaponry with which Paul subsequently arms the "new man" is derived from the symbolism of the Old Testament (cf. Isa 11:5, 52:7, 59:16-17; Wis 5:16), and had already become part of the Christian catechetical tradition (cf. Rom 13:12; 1 Thess 5:8). The "weapons" in question are not simply human virtues, but divine energies, participation in which alone enables victory in the fight against demonic powers. Paul's spiritual vision of the martial arts, in which human aggression is redirected against the onslaught of demonic attack, deeply influenced not only the discourse of martyrdom, but the literature of asceticism as well.

Here we shall cite but one or two examples which resonate with our epigram, focusing in particular on line 7, where Saint George "hurls back the razor-edged arrows (βέλη) launched against him." In his collection of monastic proverbs, the fourth-century ascetical writer Evagrius of Pontus judges that, "A 'flaming arrow' (βέλος πεπυρωμένον) ignites the soul, but the man of practical philosophy will 'extinguish' (κατασβέσει) it."³² For this operation, which is a defensive measure against demonic attack, Evagrius is indebted to Ephesians, where the "shield of faith" is said to "extinguish (σβέσαι) the flaming arrows (βέλη πεπυρωμένα) of the evil one" (Eph 6:16). In the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, moreover, Evagrius avers that "The intelligible arrow is the evil thought which rises up from the passionate part of the soul" (VI, 53), a process he describes in his 27th letter:

Nothing else "extinguishes the flaming arrows of evil" (Eph 6:16) like the knowledge of God. For a "flaming arrow" is a demonic thought which excites the desiring part of the soul

through unseemly things. The enlightened mind does not receive this arrow; or if it does receive it, it quickly throws it away, because knowledge carries it up as if on wings and separates it from the world.³³

Evagrius provides us with a clear example of how Paul's symbolic discourse was taken up by ascetic writers, who reflected on and refined the Apostle's military rhetoric.³⁴ In so doing, the desert father describes the ascetic's struggle against temptation in terms which strongly recall the martyr's struggle against torture. Moreover, the phenomenological analysis of desire and its transformations enacts a spiritual exercise which is closely related to the anagogical functions of the iconography mentioned above. At the outset, Evagrius frames his analysis by opposing the "flaming arrow" to the "knowledge of God." This is not, however, a binary opposition between mind and body, for the "arrow" in question is itself a cognitive phenomenon, namely, the mental representation of a physical object. Thus the struggle is not against "flesh and blood," but against the "spiritual forces of evil" (Eph 6:12), which have corrupted the faculties of perception and thereby obscured the knowledge of God. Evagrius affirms that corrupt, sensual thoughts have their origin in the demonically inflected perception of certain objects ("unseemly things"). But the "enlightened mind," like a seasoned warrior, dodges and deflects such thoughts, or, if struck by one, quickly dislodges it and casts it aside. Ultimately, that which alone is able to "extinguish" these "flaming arrows" is the "knowledge of God," which is not simply the mental disposition or intellectual content of the knowing subject, but rather a living divine reality to which the mind is united. As the lower, disordered impulse is rejected and set aside, the mind is correspondingly raised – as if on the wings of angels – and "separated from the world."

Paul's spiritual reconfiguration of physical combat provided an authoritative foundation for the development of ascetic

psychology. It also provided a ready framework of symbolic interpretation for the martyrdom of early Christian soldier saints. Like Paul's first-century converts, as well as the fourth-century monks of the Egyptian desert, Saint George had "hurled back" the "razor-edged arrows launched against him," becoming a "spiritual warrior in iron armor clad." In a related function which additionally aligns the military saint with the army of angels, the martyr is also a demon fighter, opposing himself to the "fleshless nature of Satan," over whom he miraculously triumphs, "frail flesh" though he be. Moreover, warfare against demons was not simply a later monastic invention, but part of the fabric of early Christian martyrdom, for the persecutions were believed to have been set in motion by the slander of demons.³⁵ Thus the notion of "unseen warfare" became a central and indeed defining concept among the armies of early Christian ascetics and later Byzantine monks, who surrounded the walls of their monastic churches with battalions of holy warriors.³⁶ And this was not done in order to promote or otherwise glorify armed conflict, but rather to contemplate vivid images of physical endurance and noble self-mastery as metaphors for the discipline of the mind.

Manuel Philes' epigram on the Great Martyr Saint George is a poetical witness to the Christian vision of the self transformed. The paradoxical image of the warrior saint – a delicate youth in earthly armor assimilated to the nature of the angels – is the symbolic form of a new society, a type of the "new man" (cf. Eph 4:24), whose aggression is directed not at other human beings, but only at harmful thoughts arising within the mind. "Anger," in the words of Evagrius, "is given to us so that we might fight against the demons, who strive to incite us – contrary to our nature – to fight against our fellow man."³⁷

NOTES

¹ K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, vol. 2, (Munich, 1897), 774-80; and H. Hunger, *Die Hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 2, (Munich, 1978), 118-19, place Philes' birth in Ephesus around the year 1275. However, G. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenmetaphrase* (Vienna, 1992), 15-17, argues convincingly that the precise location of Philes' birthplace, while probably somewhere in Asia Minor, is unknown, and pushes the year of his birth back to 1270 (p. 21); see pp. 243-72 for a conspectus of earlier bibliography.

² The majority of Philes' epigrams were published by E. Miller, *Manuelis Philae carmina*, 2 vols (Paris, 1855-57). Additional poems were published by E. Martini, *Manuelis Philae carmina inedita* (Naples, 1900); and E. Gedeon, "Μανουήλ τοῦ Φιλῆ ἱστορικά ποιήματα Ἐκκλησιαστικῆ Ἀλήθεια 4.3 (1882-83), 215-20, 244-50, 652-59.

³ See, however, S. Takács, "Manuel Philes' Meditation on an Icon of the Virgin Mary," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990), 277-88; A.-M. Talbot, "Epigrams of Manuel Philes on the Theotokos tes Peges," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994), 135-65; and N. Constanas, "Gregory the Theologian and a Byzantine Epigram on the Resurrection by Manuel Philes," in *Rightly Teaching the Word of Truth* (Brookline, 1995), 263-81.

⁴ See, for example, C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* (Toronto, 1986), 244: "Our chief literary source for the artistic production of the aristocracy in the fourteenth century, the poet Manuel Philes, poured out a stream of doggerel verse concerned with icons, liturgical and secular vessels, funerary portraits, etc. . . . The content of his poems is, however, seldom interesting to the art-historian, consisting as it does either of clichés or the praises and lineage of his noble patrons." See also Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, 778-79: "Die meisten seiner Machwerke ermüden aber durch den übermässigen Schwulst, durch die Überhäufung mit Metaphern, Wortspielen, und Allegorien, auch durch sonstige Geschmacklosigkeiten."

⁵ Krumbacher, *Geschichte*, 775.

⁶ On the meter, see P. Mass, "Der Byzantinische Zwölfsilber," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 12 (1903), 278-323; and D. Kominis, *Τὸ Βυζαντινὸν ἱερόν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ οἱ ἐπιγραμματικοί* (Athens, 1966), 50-100.

⁷ Especially the church of the Zoodochos Pege, on which see Talbot, "Epigrams." The large number of epigrams on works of art prompted Krumbacher to remark that: "So gewährt uns Philes eine förmliche Bilder und Skulpturengalerie seiner Zeit" (*Geschichte*, 777).

⁸ Miller, vol. 1, pp. 34-35 (= nos. 76 and 78); cf. idem, vol. 2, p. 35 (no. 78). The stone in question is likely steatite (i.e., soapstone), but may also have been bloodstone, marble (cf. below, n. 10), or some other material.

⁹ Ibid., p. 210 (= no. 34); the first line reads: παῖς Ἀβραάμ ὁ μάρτυς οὗτος ἐκ λίθων. On the Monastery, see R. Demangel and E. Mamboury, *Le quartier des Manges et la première région de Constantinople* (Paris, 1939); and R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1969), I/III, 70-76.

¹⁰ Εἰς τὴν ἀπὸ μαρμάρου στήλην τοῦ μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου ἡ Λίθος πονηθεῖς εἰς γλυφὴν στεφανίτου, τὸν εἰς πόνους ἄκαμπτον ἐμφαίνει τόνον· οὐκ ἦν γὰρ εἰκὸς ἐντυποῦσθαι ταῖς χροαῖς, τὸν εἰς βάθος φέροντα σαρκὸς τὰς ξέσεις (Miller, vol. 1, p. 34 = no. 75); cf. I. Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Icons in Steatite* (Vienna, 1985), vol. 1, 79-85. The *vita* of the seventh-century saint, Theodore of Sykeon, mentions an image of St. George painted on a column in his church in Lydda. See e.g., A.-J. Festugière, ed., *Vie de Théodore de Sykeon* (Brussels, 1970), 268. There is a similar painting on a column in Bawit (north church), Egypt, which is also the oldest extant image of the saint, dated to the sixth century. cf. J. Clédat, "Baouit," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. 2, (Paris, 1907), 221.

¹¹ H. Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1996), 78.

¹² Such as the epigram "On an icon of the Great [Martyr] George," which notes that the "hand of the painter infuses the forms with the power of breath, marvelously capturing the expressions of the soul," Miller, vol. 1, p. 317-18 (= no. 126).

¹³ Τῆς μαρτυρικῆς συμπλοκῆς πεπαυμένης, ἐν ἣ τὸν ἐχθρὸν τῶν ψυχῶν κατειργάσω, ἐπὶ σχολῆς ἐμφροντις εὐρέθης πάλιν. ὡς γὰρ φύλαξ ἀγρυπνὸς ὠπλίσθης, μάκαρ, καὶ νῦν ἐπ' αὐτῆς τῆς καθέδρας φαιδρύνῃ, καὶ παραγυμνοῖς τὴν στομωθεῖσαν σπάθην θαρσῶν κατ' ἐχρῶν ἐξ ἀπόπτου δυσμάχων (Miller, vol. 1, p. 119 = no. 226).

¹⁴ Maguire, *Icons of their Bodies*, 76, fig. 66. The fresco is from the church of St. George of the Mountain.

¹⁵ ὁ μάρτυς ὡχρὸς, οὐκ ἐρυθρὸς ἐγράφη· ἡ γὰρ ζέσις ἐρόυσεν ἐκ τῶν αἱμάτων· ἐχρῆν δὲ Χριστοῦ ζωγραφεῖν τοῦτον τύπον, ὃς αἵματος πλὴν θῦμα σεπτὸν εὐρέθη (Miller, vol. 1, p. 137 = no. 283). The image of a "bloodless victim," together with the word "warmth" (ζέσις), which is invoked over the warm water poured into the eucharistic chalice, suggests an additional, sacramental level of meaning. Miller notes that, elsewhere in the codex, this same poem is addressed to St. Demetrius; cf. ibid., vol. 1, p. 131 (= no. 260), on an icon of St. Deme-

trius: μὴ θαυμάσης, ἄνθρωπε, λευκὸν με βλέπων· ἐκπλύνομαι γὰρ εἰς τὰ ρεῖθρα τῶν μύρων, εἰμὶ δὲ φαῖδρός τὸν Σατὰν καταισχύνας καὶ τῆς ἀμοιβῆς μὴ στερηθεὶς τῶν πόνων.

¹⁶ Thus, on an icon of Saint Luke, writing his Gospel: ἐνθάδε τὸν σὸν μυστικὸν σπόρον βλέπων (ibid., vol. 1, 18); on a *panagiaron*: ἐξ οὐρανοῦ τὸν ἄρτον ἐνθάδε βλέπων (ibid., vol. 1, 39); on a paten (*diskos*): οὐρανια τράπεζαν ἐνθάδε βλέπων (ibid., vol. 1, 197); on an image of David: σύννους κεικυφῶς ὁ προφήτης ἐνθάδε (ibid., vol. 1, 52); on a reliquary of St. Stephen: ἐν ὁστέῳ βλέπω σε μικρῷ τὸν μέγαν (ibid., vol. 1, 31); on an image of Moses giving the law to the Israelites: ἐνταῦθα Μωσῆς καὶ Σινᾶ θεῖος τόπος (ibid., vol. 1, 53); on an icon of Zacharias: κἀνταῦθα κωφὸν τὸν Ζαχαρίαν βλέπω (ibid., vol. 1, 58); on an icon of the Baptism: ὁρῶν Ἰησοῦν σαρκικῶς λελουμένον (ibid., vol. 1, 6); on an icon of the Raising of Lazarus: κἀνταῦθα Χριστὸς ἐξεγείρει τὸν φίλον (ibid., vol. 1, 7); on an icon of the Crucifixion: ἐν ὀργάνῳ βλέπων σε κακούργων, Λόγε (ibid., vol. 1, 7).

¹⁷ Examples of which include (1) an early thirteenth-century icon from Mt. Sinai, with 20 scenes; cf. N. Ševčenko, "Saint George with Scenes of His Passion and Miracles," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, (ed. H. Evans; New York, 2004), 372-73; (2) a thirteenth-century icon from Kastoria, of sculpted wood and painted, with 11 surviving scenes (3 others are unidentifiable); cf. M. Acheimastou-Potaminaou, *Icons of the Byzantine Museum of Athens* (Athens, 1998), 26-28; and (3) an early fourteenth-century icon, with 15 scenes, in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg; cf. V. Lazarev, *The Russian Icon* (Collegeville, 1997), 368, fig. 30. For discussion, see N. Ševčenko, "The *Vita* Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), 149-65.

¹⁸ There are 78 mural cycles extant from the tenth through the seventeenth century, along with an additional 35 cycles on icons dating from the twelfth to the eighteenth century; cf. T. Mark-Weiner, "Narrative Cycles of the Life of St. George in Byzantine Art" (PhD diss., New York University, 1977), cited in Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 135. For a thoughtful reading of the fourteenth-century St. George cycle at Staro Nagoričino, see Maguire, *Icons of their Bodies*, 186-93.

¹⁹ The Greek text is from the Escorial codex, edited by Miller, vol. 1, pp. 28-29 (= no. 49).

²⁰ Note that in ecclesiastical parlance, the "streams of blood" (ῥοαῖς τῶν αἱμάτων) designate the border work on a clerical garment, similar to the Roman *clavus*, a vertical stripe decorating the tunic, which may be an allusion to an image of the saint dressed in courtly attire. In seeing honor and glory in the ostensible marks of shame and weakness, Philes'

description of St. George closely parallels patristic interpretations of the suffering of Christ, similarly garbed in a blood-soaked robe, see N. Constas, "The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative," *Harvard Theological Review* 97 (2004), 139-63.

²¹ On the christological doctrine, see John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* 3.3 (PG 94.993D). Maguire, *Icons of their Bodies*, identifies a number of intriguing parallels between the martyrdom of St. George and the passion of Christ in the iconographic cycles of Staro Nagoričino (see above, n. 18). See also the epigram cited above (n. 15), where the suffering saint follows the "type" established by Christ.

²² C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot, 2003), 9-12, 41, and passim.

²³ The genre did, however, undergo certain changes, on which see A.F.C. Webster, "Varieties of Christian Military Saints: From Martyrs under Caesar to Warrior Princes," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 24 (1980), 3-36.

²⁴ Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 109. Walter catalogues a list of 53 such saints, although several of them are in pairs, and other listings include entire squadrons and echelons, such as the 40 Martyrs of Sebasteia; the Holy 5 martyred with St. Orestes; the 40 Defenders of Gaza, and so forth.

²⁵ This, and related accounts, are collected in P. Maraval, *Récits des premiers chrétiens en Proche-Orient* (Paris, 1996), cited in Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 112, n. 14.

²⁶ Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 113-14.

²⁷ For a detailed description of the armor and accoutrements, see P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, vol. 1, (New York, 1966), 252-53, who notes that the "costumes worn by the military saints are clearly derived from Hellenistic and Roman sources," and had become a "well established feature of the iconographic program by the tenth century."

²⁸ Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 285, who here is citing M. I. Rostovtzeff's description of the Palmyrene gods of Parthian art. In an epigram on St. Nestor, Philes, in a comparison between bodily mass and arrogance, cautions the martyr to "disregard the massive size of his opponent, for the giver of prizes looks only to the humble" (τὸν ὄγκον αὐτῷ τῶν μελῶν μὴ θαυμάσης· τοῖς γὰρ ταπεινοῖς ὁ βραβεὺς ἐπιβλέπων) (Miller, vol. 1, p. 136, = no. 279).

²⁹ Note that even though the ancient cuirass was frequently molded in form to reproduce the muscular structure of the male torso, none of the warrior saints wear the "muscle" type of cuirass, but rather an idealized version of it flattened into an abstract, decorative surface; cf. Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, 255.

³⁰ Such a synthesis was largely realized in the iconography of Alexander the Great. To signal the advent of a new world order and the power of its youthful king, Alexander's official bronze-casters merged the genres of warrior-hero with youthful freshness poised in the expansive posture of the gods. The novel type proclaimed Alexander's unique charisma, dynamic personality, superhuman status, and undisputed supremacy. In so doing, it "sent out mixed signals about man and god," cf. A. Stewart, *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics* (Berkeley, 1993).

³¹ In addition to the obvious military parallels and shared physiognomies, both the archangel Michael and St. George are depicted with bare, exposed toes; or, in other cases, with a missing sandal (*monosandalos*), cf. Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, 254. Compare also the fourteenth-century icons of St. George and the archangel Michael in the Byzantine Museum; Acheimastou-Potaminaou, pp. 50, 36 (nos. 11 and 8) (above, n. 17).

³² *Ad Monachos* 70; Greek text, translation, and commentary in J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos* (New York, 2003), 301-303.

³³ *Ibid.*, 303; cf. Evagrius, *On Thoughts* 34: "When the mind is under violent attack, let it flee to the Lord; 'putting on the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, drawing the sword of the Spirit, and raising the shield of faith' (Eph 6:14, 16-17). Let the monk polish the sword (cf. Ps 7:13) with fasts and vigils, for he will suffer affliction in the warfare and become the target of the enemy's 'flaming arrows' (Eph 6:16)," trans. R. Sinkewicz (Oxford, 2003), 177.

³⁴ Note that Paul's military and athletic imagery are part of the same general phenomenon, inasmuch as the exercises of the gymnasium were a preparation for the battlefield.

³⁵ The renunciation of Satan at baptism is frequently linked to the notion of martyrdom as a baptism in blood, usually incurred after the refusal to worship demonic idols; see, for example, the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* 25, 57 (ed. H. Musurillo [Oxford, 1972], 68, 84); *Martyrdom of Apollonius* 47 (*ibid.*, 102); *Martyrdom of Pionius* 14 (*ibid.*, 154-56); and the *Martyrdom of Dasius* (*ibid.*, 274-76). See also the Latin account of Fructuosus and his companions: "The martyrs were clad in the 'breastplate of faith and the helmet of salvation' (Eph 6:14, 17), and crowned with a diadem that does not fade, for they trod underfoot the devil's head (cf. Gen 3:15)" (*ibid.*, 184). According to Justin Martyr, the motivating forces behind the persecution of Christians are demons, the same ones who killed Socrates, cf. *Apology* 5, 9, 23, 57, trans. L. W. Barnard (New York, 1997), 25-26; 28; 39; 63-64.

³⁶ The shift from martyrdom to asceticism is already evident in Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, composed during the persecution of Maxi-

minus Thrax in 235. Among other things, Origen speaks "not only of the outward martyrdom, but of the martyrdom which is in secret," trans. R. Greer (New York, 1979), 55; cf. P. Brown, "Martyrdom, Prophecy and Continence," in *The Body and Society* (ed. P. Brown, New York, 1988), 65-82.

³⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos* 24, trans. Sinkewicz, 24.