# ECCLESIASTICAL PENANCE IN THE CHURCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE: A STUDY OF THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE TO 983 A.D.

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D. Phil.

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The present study provides for the first time a systematic and comprehensive examination of the evidence for ecclesiastical penance found in the vast corpus of pre-Metaphrastic Byzantine hagiography. The value of the thesis lies primarily in the body of evidence which it makes available and interprets within the context of what can be known of the historical development of penitential practice among the Byzantine laity and of the nature and limitations of hagiographical evidence.

The evidence is arranged chronologically in four sections (330-451, 451-692, 692-843, 843-983), and a distinction is made within each section between evidence which reflects a Constantinopolitan milieu and evidence taken from other areas of the Greek-speaking Christian world.

The cumulative weight of the evidence supports the following conclusions about the history of Byzantine penance: 1) ecclesiastical penance did not cease to exist in the Byzantine churches following the "Nectarius incident" of 391/2; 2) monastic influence upon the outward form and inner understanding of ecclesiastical penance spread gradually from the fourth century onwards and was not a sudden phenomenon provoked by the events of the Iconoclastic age; 3) the constitutive elements of the modern Greek practice of confession can be found in the practice of Byzantine lay people already in the fifth and sixth centuries, but the Lives of the saints nowhere suggest that confession was ever an obligation upon the laity in the period under survey or that a majority of the Byzantine faithful had recourse to the institutions of ecclesiastical penance as a normal or routine part of their religious practice; 4) the phenomenon of unordained monks consciously exercising the apostolic power of binding and loosing was not, as Holl asserted, a central and informing element in the history of Byzantine penitential practice; 5) enthusiasm for hagiographical sources as privileged reflectors of the Byzantine popular milieu must be tempered by a realistic appreciation of the limitations inherent in the narrative forms and techniques of hagiography.

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The present study seeks to contribute to a future and definitive history of penance in the Byzantine church by providing a systematic and comprehensive examination of the evidence for ecclesiastical penance to be found in the corpus of pre-Metaphrastic Byzantine hagiography. The value of the work must lie primarily in the worth of the body of evidence which has been collected here for the first time and is interpreted within the context of what is already known about the historical development of Byzantine ecclesiastical penance and about the literary and historical characteristics of the hagiographical sources.

Chapter One (Introduction) provides four sets of preliminary considerations. The first of these sketches the history of scholarly interest in the topic of Byzantine ecclesiastical penance and points up the various factors which have inhibited research in this area, in particular the tendency to consult Eastern experience only within the established terms of Protestant-Catholic theological polemic. The second explores the nature of Byzantine saints' Lives as historical sources, taking note of the modern enthusiasm for hagiography as a privileged means of access to more popular milieux, and observing that the pre-Metaphrastic hagiographical corpus constitutes a body of evidence for the place of penance in Byzantine church life before penance itself became a conscious focus of theological debate in the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian. The third set of preliminary considerations deals with the difficulties of determining what can be known about the nature of Early Christian penance, and distinguishes the meaning of the term "ecclesiastical penance" used in the title of the thesis ("any form of penitential rite or discipline that

brings the Christian sinner into contact with, or under the supervision of, an official minister of the Christian church") from the private acts of penance assumed by individual Christians and also from monastic penance. A fourth and last section provides justification for the chronological, geographical and linguistic limits adopted in this study and for the choice of a chronological rather than a thematic display of the evidence. The thesis is intended to serve as a survey of the entire corpus of Byzantine hagiography before the time of Symeon the New Theologian, and any exceptions or omissions within this corpus are noted and explained.

Chapter Two (From Constantine to Chalcedon: 330-451 A.D.) contains a brief preliminary presentation of the issues and themes known from other sources to have been of particular significance in the history of Byzantine penance during the same period and also furnishes a brief review of the theme of ecclesiastical penance as it appears in the literary precursors of the Byzantine saints' Lives: the primitive Passiones of the martyrs and the apocryphal Acts of the apostles. The chapter then discusses the hagiographical evidence for the period under review. Special attention is paid to the Lives of Athanasius (BHG 186) and Antony of Egypt (BHG 140) as representing distinct episcopal and monastic models or approaches to the presentation of hagiographical evidence for penance. Other Lives discussed at greater length include the Dialogus of Palladius (BHG 870), the Constantinopolitan Life of Hypatius (BHG 760), the Antiochene hagiographical homilies of John Chrysostom and important early monastic documents (Pachomiana, Historia Monachorum, Historia Lausiaca, Historia Religiosa and the Life of Syncletica BHG 1694). General conclusions drawn at the end of the chapter indicate that evidence for ecclesiastical penance is not at all abundant in the hagiography before Chalcedon and that the Lives contain scant if any reflection of elements normally thought central to the history of Byzantine penance (the "Nectarius incident", development of the Bussstufen or penitential stages). The Lives do attest, however, the beginnings of monastic

influence upon the patterns of penitential piety and practice among lay people. Observation of the narrative techniques at the heart of Byzantine hagiography also leads to the conclusion that the Lives cannot be treated as mirrors which reflect faithfully and unselfconsciously the penitential practices of the society which produced them.

Chapter Three (From Chalcedon to the Trullan Canons: 451-692) is in large measure an account of the growth of monastic influence on penitential practice among the laity. The episcopal perspective on penance (Lives of Porphyrius BHG 1570 and Eutychius BHG 657) continues to be found alongside the monastic perspective (Lives of Auxentius BHG 199 and compositions of Cyril of Scythopolis), and the Pseudo-Amphilochian Life of Basil the Great (BHG 247-261) is interpreted as a mixing of the two models, a change which probably reflects the increasing monastic penetration into the episcopacy. During this period the quality and quantity of hagiographical evidence for penitential practice improves sharply by comparison with the pre-Chalcedonian Lives (Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger and the various specialized monastic narrationes dealing with penance and the problems of particular kinds of penitents).

This period also reflects the rise in importance of ἐπιτίμια or "penances" which vary according to the nature of the sins or sinners involved. Although analogous in use to the penalties imposed by the fourth-century disciplinary canons, the ἐπιτίμια have more obvious roots in the rules governing discipline within the monastic ecclesiola. The Lives also reflect the continued use of excommunication as a means of ecclesiastical discipline (although this is restricted in practice to clerics and heresiarchs) and the appearance of most of the constitutive elements of the modern Orthodox practice of ecclesiastical penance: confession, ἐπιτίμια, absolution, deathbed reconciliation, the spiritual father. The hagiographical evidence does not, however, witness to any obligation incumbent upon the laity to avail themselves of these elements of ecclesiastical penance

nor does it suggest that recourse to ecclesiastical penance was a normal or routine part of the pattern of ordinary Byzantine Christian piety. The claim that it was customary at this period for the laity to confess their sins and secure pardon from unordained monks is not sustained by a careful examination of the hagiographical evidence.

Chapter Four (From the Trullan Canons to the Triumph of Orthodoxy: 692-843) covers a period when hagiographical sources are in general decline, although some important Lives can still be found such as those of Gregory of Agrigentum (BHG 707), Stephen of St. Sabas (BHG 1670) and the hagiographical writings associated with the name of Theodore of Stoudion. The evidence for penance reflects a more significant increase in monastic influence upon the laity than has been seen before and a new emphasis on the importance of the very act of confessing one's sins: ἐξαγόρευσις. There is still no sign, however, that lay people were obliged to confess their sins or that unordained monks were consciously challenging the episcopal control over the power to bind and loose.

Chapter Five (From the Triumph of Orthodoxy to the Death of Patriarch Antonius III Studites: 843-983) deals again with a period rich in hagiographical documents some of which are of particular importance to the history of Byzantine penitential practice: Lives of Joannicius (BHG 936, 935), Peter of Atroa (BHG 2365), Eustratius (BHG 645), Euthymius (BHG 651), Andrew the Fool (BHG 117), Luke the Stylite (BHG 2239) and Paul and Luke the Younger (BHG 1474, 994). The evidence shows that the modern Greek practice of confession was operative during this period although it was still not considered obligatory by many ordinary people guilty of serious sins. Recourse to the clergy and to the institutions of ecclesiastical penance was only one of many courses open to the sinner. Evidence for the practice of unordained monks hearing the confessions of lay sinners and granting them absolution finally appears in this period, but only at the end of the tenth century (Life of Paul the Younger) does the hagiographical tradition provide any

approximation to the views about penance contained in the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian, especially the notion that apostolic powers belong to a monk in virtue of holiness rather than office. Nothing in the Lives suggests that Laienbeichte as understood and interpreted in this sense by Holl and Hörmann was anything more than a passing episode in the history of Byzantine penitential practice.

Chapter Six (Conclusion) resumes the contributions made by the hagiographical sources to the history of Byzantine penance and dwells especially on the matter of the relationship between Charisma and Amt in the sphere of penitential practice and sacramental theology, arguing that in large measure the distinction is foreign to the texts. More careful analysis of what is actually found in the texts leads to the judgement that the Lives of the saints do not substantiate Holl's view that penance was a focal point for a hostile struggle between Charisma and Amt throughout the period under review. The study concludes with a caution that because of its inherent narrative limitations and monastic Tendenz, hagiographical evidence requires integration with the findings from canonical and liturgical sources before its full value to the writing of the history of Byzantine penance can be given its true and final appraisal.

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of

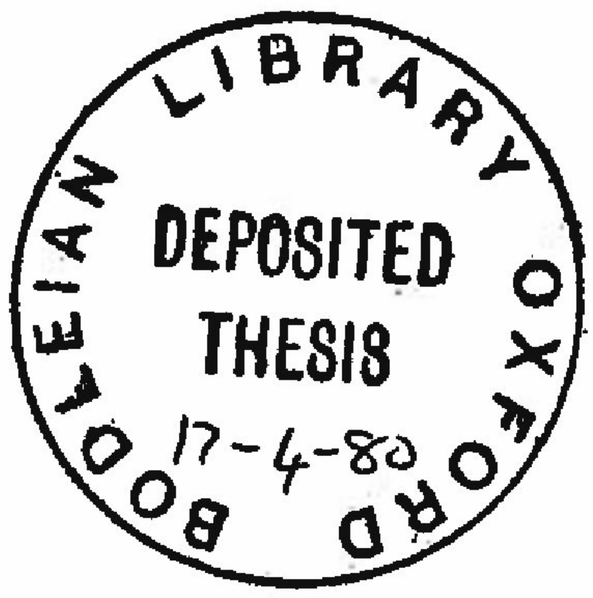
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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

# I THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

Critical historical scholarship in the West has never given the Greek church the same sustained attention that it has devoted to Latin Christianity. This neglect of the East - out of sight, out of mind - has left its mark on histories of Christian pastoral care in general and on the history of penance in particular.[1] By providing a systematic and comprehensive examination of the hagiographical evidence for Byzantine ecclesiastical penance during the period from 330 to 983 AD,[2] the present study seeks to compensate, at least in part, for this past neglect of Eastern Christian experience, and to make some contribution to the history of penance in the Christian church as a whole.

The reasons behind this neglect are not hard to find. The Reformation debates on the nature of penance and on the practice of auricular confession led both Protestants and Catholics to re-examine the historical foundations of penance in the Greek East as well as in the Latin West, but the theological presuppositions and the polemical demands governing these debates effectively restricted the interest of historians to the first four Christian centuries. Scant if any attention was paid to the Christian East after the time of John Chrysostom.[3] In the seventeenth century positive theology showed more concern for Byzantine church history, but even here circumstances conspired to inhibit further research into the history of Byzantine ecclesiastical penance.[4] The monumental Commentarius historicus of Jean Morin carried the history of Eastern penitential institutions down past the fifth century and provided an historical and theological interpretation of penance in the Greek church.[5] However, Morin's mistaken acceptance of the Liber poenitentialis of John the Faster as a sixth-century text persuaded him that Byzantine penitential institutions had remained virtually unchanged from the period of late antiquity down to the seventeenth century.[6] As a result, the interest of Morin and that of other qualified historians was diverted from the study of the Eastern traditions towards the resolution

of other problems in the history of penance.[7]

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that a work comparable in importance to that of Morin appeared. This was Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum by Karl Holl, the first Western historian of penance to make the Greek evidence his principal concern instead of treating it merely as an appendix to the study of Latin penitential theory and practice.[8] Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt remains to this day the most accessible and influential account of the history of penance in the Byzantine church, and although many articles and studies relevant to Eastern penance have appeared since its publication in 1898, no new effort of research, synthesis and interpretation has been undertaken in the West on a similar scale.[9]

Apart from the number of new texts to which he drew attention, Holl's great contribution was to advance a clear thesis, dependent on the Epistula de Confessione of Symeon the New Theologian, about the meaning of ecclesiastical penance within the Greek church and about the origins and historical development of confession and private penance in the Byzantine world.[10] This thesis may profitably be summarized here.

According to Holl the Early Christian penitential system of public penance and public reconciliation continued in force in the Eastern church right down to the end of the Byzantine empire.[11] This penitential system was not designed, however, to respond to any desire for growth in Christian holiness on the part of the faithful, and when the monastic way of life, which was centred on precisely such a desire, emerged in the fourth century, it soon developed its own penitential institutions to meet its own particular spiritual needs. Within the confines of their monasteries the monks were sovereign over the administration of penance; higher standards of moral perfection and rigour prevailed, and the practice of confessing one's sins and temptations was promoted and even made obligatory.[12]

Holl derived the practice of private confession among the Greek laity from this monastic institution of confession, in which a monk disclosed the state of his soul to a spiritual father or director.[13] Confession as a

normal practice of Christian life first began to spread among the Greek laity during the Iconoclast period when many monks were forced out of their monasteries and so brought into closer contact with Greek lay life.[14] As a result of this contact Greek Christians began to imitate the monastic custom of confession and to seek confessors or spiritual fathers (πατέρες πνευματικοί) from among the monks, most of whom would not have received priestly ordination.[15]

Holl adduced three reasons to explain the attraction to confession among the laity. In the first place, the Greek layman had a great and even an exaggerated notion of and reverence for the personal holiness of monks. The mere fact that a man wore the monastic habit was enough to confer upon him spiritual authority in the mind of the Greek layman, and it was this spiritual authority that the layman looked for in a pneumatikos.[16] In the second place, confession provided an attractive alternative to a public penitential system which, although still theoretically in force, was perceived by laity and clergy alike to be wholly inadequate to the existing conditions of Christian life.[17] Finally, confession was able to spread among the laity because in an age when many people were sharply critical of their clergy, the practice of private confession to monks renewed the charismatic and enthusiastic dimensions of Christian life as these had once existed among the primitive Christian communities. It thus represented, at least implicitly, a judgement brought against the understanding of church office, and indeed against the understanding of the whole nature of Christian life, implicit in the institutions of the Byzantine church.[18]

Holl located the focus of this charismatic challenge in the ministry of penance. The Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian asserted that the right to hear confessions and to absolve from sin, in other words, the Bussgewalt or apostolic power of binding and loosing, ought to be exercised and indeed could only be exercised by those who possessed the grace of the Holy Spirit. The mere fact of holding office in the church could not of itself make up for the absence of this grace.[19] Thus it was upon

the charismatic order of monks rather than upon the priests and bishops that the office of confessor had rightfully devolved in the course of time. Starting from these views of Symeon, Holl went on to argue that neither the public penitential system administered by the bishops and secular clergy nor the practice of confessing one's sins to a monk (who would normally not be a priest) was ever thought to be "sacramental" in the Eastern church prior to the advent of a strong Latin influence on Orthodox theology in the thirteenth century.[20]

Holl's interpretation of Byzantine penance thus continued the Reformers' denial of the existence of any private ecclesiastical penance before the mediaeval period and, more fundamentally still, their denial of any sacramental character to ecclesiastical penance as a whole. He introduced a new theme, however, when he depicted monasticism not as the organized perversion of Christian freedom nor as a huge and sad irrelevancy, but as the real, though largely unconscious, vehicle of primitive Christian charismatic enthusiasm in its persistent and prophetic opposition to the doctrines and practices of an entrenched Katholizismus.[21]

Among scholars in the West Holl's work quickly attracted both critics and defenders, but it would appear that none of these had done enough original research to be able to propose a different but equally coherent account of the evidence. The Catholic reaction to Holl was swift and at times searching, but no Catholic historian could do more than dispute Holl's interpretation of individual texts.[22] The historical questions remained as Holl had formulated them, and the corpus of evidence as he had collected it.[23]

One place, however, where Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt did not have the character of a pioneering study was Russia.[24] Holl's book could fill no scholarly vacuum there, for from about 1870 down to the time of the Great War, Russian canonists and church historians were producing a long and important series of articles and monographs dealing with the history of penance in the Byzantine church and in particular with the penitential materials ascribed by tradition to Patriarch John the Faster.[25] Little notice was

taken of these works in Western Europe at the time, and to this day they remain in large measure unread and unassimilated by Western historians of ecclesiastical penance.[26]

The contribution of these Russian studies to the history of ecclesiastical penance in Byzantium took two forms. In the first place they provided a number of valuable texts from the early mediaeval period unavailable elsewhere in print.[27] Secondly, through the disputes and debates to which the publication of these texts gave rise, progress was made in interpreting the course of the historical development of Byzantine penitential institutions.[28] Of particular interest in this regard are the writings of N. S. Suvorov and S. I. Smirnov who put forward new models of the history of ecclesiastical penance in the Greek East.[29]

Suvorov asserted that the historical development of ecclesiastical penance in the Eastern church fell into three distinct stages.[30] The first stage took in the whole period before the first Council of Nicaea, and during this time the sacrament of penance was celebrated only in the form of public penance. The second stage embraced the age of the ecumenical councils (325-787) and during this period private confession was slowly developing alongside the public penance as a kind of supplement to it. The third stage, finally, began after 787 when private confession replaced public penance almost exclusively, and this third stage represented the beginning of the modern Orthodox practice.[31] At the end of this process private confession, neither by nature nor by origin a disciplinary institution, was forced to assume certain of the indispensable disciplinary functions that had been part of the now-supplanted public penance. According to Suvorov, it was this mixing of two quite distinct traditions within the one institution that was responsible for some of the structural anomalies of medieval penitential practice, such as the existence of two separate moments of absolution.[32]

The researches of Smirnov into the practice of private confession in the Eastern monasteries served both to complement and in part also to cor-

rect the main lines of the historical picture drawn up by Suvorov.[33] Smirnov accepted the view that during the period from 325 to 787 private confession developed alongside a continuing public penance, but against Suvorov he argued that this private confession existed only in the monasteries and denied that it was sacramental either in origin or in practice.[34] According to Smirnov this monastic confession was first recognized as sacramental by Patriarch Nicephorus the Confessor at the beginning of the ninth century, and then only as a temporary expedient occasioned by the extraordinary needs of the times. Because this decision was never abrogated at any later time, however, it served in fact as the foundation of monastic dominance in the ministry of ecclesiastical penance.[35]

During the eighty years since the publication of Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt there has accumulated a number of useful studies, often of limited scope but touching directly and indirectly on the history of Byzantine penance.[36] It might seem, therefore, that the moment is now opportune for a new account of this history which would be able to incorporate not only the most recent scholarly advances but also the earlier Russian sources noted above.[37] The present study originates, however, from a different conviction, namely, that this opportune moment has not yet in fact arrived.

The real criticism that must be levelled against Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt is not that it is now out of date and in need of revision in many important particulars, but rather that it was premature from the very beginning.[38] A valid synthesis of the history of Byzantine penance can only be built when solid foundations have first been laid beforehand. These foundations must take the form of comprehensive reviews of the canonical, liturgical, theological and hagiographical traditions and of their relation to penitential theory and practice. In the absence of such studies the interpretation of evidence from these sources, which are so important to the history of penance, must remain in large measure only a matter of general impression or of uncertain extrapolation from a few familiar but perhaps unrepresentative texts.[39] It was unfortunate that Holl did not have these

necessary Vorarbeiten at his disposal. It would be all the more unfortunate today to hazard a new historical synthesis while they are still lacking.

Such is the conviction upon which the present study rests. It aims, therefore, at contributing to a future and definitive Bussgeschichte of the Byzantine church by laying one of the necessary foundation stones, in this case, a systematic and comprehensive examination of the evidence for ecclesiastical penance to be found in the corpus of pre-Metaphrastic Byzantine hagiography.

## II BYZANTINE HAGIOGRAPHY AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

The choice of hagiography as the field of investigation for a study of this kind recommends itself on several grounds. The first of these is that the unique value of the Lives of the saints has now come to be recognized by Byzantine historians of all kinds. Recent studies have shown interest not only in the contribution made by the Vitae to theological and political questions but also in their relevance to questions of social history, anthropology, sociology and even psychology.[40] While the literary and historical works emanating from court and learned circles reflect the Byzantine reality only through a "distorting mirror", hagiography seems to afford the rare opportunity of coming into contact with the lives and perspectives of ordinary people.[41] The mirror of the hagiographer has its own peculiar distortions, of course, and attention has recently been drawn to the difficult problems which must be faced in the use and interpretation of the Lives, especially to the distinction between the conscious literary and religious intentions of the (usually monastic) hagiographer and the unconscious reflection of both his society and his own mentality in the things that he writes.[42]

These recent studies of the signific ance of the Vitae differ, however, in their methods of analysis and in their points of view. They criticize limitations inherent in the traditional approach of the eccle-

siastical historian, but in their own analyses they emphasize sometimes only the nature of the social relations that obtain between the characters portrayed in the Life and at other times only the psychological motivations and patterns evident in its author or authors.[43] What these different approaches do share, however, both as method and, at least to some extent, as parti pris, is the conviction that analysis should always move from the conscious to the unconscious level. This conviction does not always avoid the danger of dismissing the conscious motives and explanations offered by those directly involved (the hagiographer, his audience and the characters in his narrative) as meaningless "...since they [sc. these conscious elements] are not intended to explain the phenomena but to perpetuate them."[44]

In the light of this new interest in the Lives of the saints the present study should make clear at the beginning how these sources will be treated, for hagiography is perhaps the single most important kind of evidence for the religious practice of ordinary Byzantine Christians. The brief discussion above already suggests that both the church historian and the social historian or social anthropologist have an interest in the topic of ecclesiastical penance: the former because the historical development of ecclesiastical penance in the Byzantine church remains only very imperfectly described; the latter because the understanding of sin, its role within a society, and the means adopted by any society to deal with sin are among the most valuable signs of the particular character and underlying structures of any human group.[45] Although few now dispute that the task of the historian and that of the social anthropologist have much in common, the two tasks are not yet identical, nor is it possible to follow satisfactorily two distinct methods of analysis at the same time. For these reasons the present study will restrict its aim to the presentation of hagiographical evidence that touches directly or indirectly on the development of ecclesiastical penance in the Byzantine church, and to a literary and theological appreciation of the worth of this evidence. It is hoped that more specialized and perhaps more ambitious kinds of analysis

will benefit from the existence of a complete account of the evidence. Moreover, a complete study is all the more necessary inasmuch as previous use of the Lives of the saints to illustrate the history of penance and other related topics has suffered from haphazard citation and the absence of coherent principles of selection and interpretation.[46]

A further reason for choosing hagiography as the field of investigation is that while no systematic account of the contribution of hagiographical sources to the history of Byzantine penance exists, such an account is by no means impossible. In contrast to the study of Byzantine canon law or liturgy, the study of hagiography is well provided with the tools required to make it accessible to the ecclesiastical historian. Of these the Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca of Père Halkin is the indispensable instrument de travail.[47] Moreover, the centuries-long labours of the Bollandists and their more recent collaborators have gone far towards establishing reliable criteria for dating hagiographical texts, identifying literary genres and penetrating safely into the maquis of the manuscript tradition.[48] Thus over the centuries a special kind of collective sensitivity to hagiographical pitfalls and commonplaces (topoi) has been passed on from one generation of Bollandists to the next. Today, it constitutes a precious critical resource that is placed at the disposal of all.[49]

A final reason for the choice of hagiography is suggested by a happy coincidence. Due to the success of the Metaphrastic collection and the growth of the synaxaria, the decline of Byzantine hagiography as a creative literary genre virtually coincides with the appearance of ecclesiastical penance as a topic of conscious theological debate in the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian.[50] The practical result of this circumstance for the student of penance is that the pre-Metaphrastic Lives of the saints now form a coherent body of evidence spanning a period of about 600 years that is coterminous with the transition of Byzantine penance from its Early Christian form to one scarcely dissimilar to that of the modern Greek Orthodox use.[51] The Lives may profitably be examined by

the ecclesiastical historian, therefore, to see what reflections they contain of the practice and understanding of ecclesiastical penance in the Byzantine church before penance became a matter of theological discussion and debate, and before the Lives themselves might come to be used as vehicles for such a debate.[52] A systematic examination of the hagiography of this period will thus be worthwhile not only as a contribution to some future Bussgeschichte of the Greek church, but also as a kind of model project to test the methods proper to the appreciation of hagiographical evidence in general, and to gauge in a particular way what value the Lives of the saints are likely to have in studying other aspects of Byzantine pastoral care.

## III THE SHAPE OF BYZANTINE ECCLESIASTICAL PENANCE

The overriding problem for the historian of Byzantine penance is the fact that so much disagreement still attaches to the history of penance in the Early Christian church. In practice this means that the student of Byzantine penance possesses no generally accepted model of the shape of Early Christian penance that might serve as a solid foundation on which to build his own picture of penance in the later period.[53] The validity of the distinction between public and private penance, the validity of the distinction between penance as a sacrament and penance as ecclesiastical discipline, the debate as to whether ecclesiastical penance was ever repeated for the same individual, the extent to which the various penitential stages (Bussstufen) mentioned in the fourth-century canons were actually in use in the various sections of the church - these and other related problems are still disputed by church historians, and their interpretations still tend to divide along confessional lines.[54] The recent Catholic return to the theological understanding of penance as reconciliation with the church only serves to complicate this debate even more.[55] Part of the value of a study like the present one will be to provide a different perspective from which to approach these older disputes.

By way of introduction, however, it will be well to define the term "ecclesiastical penance" as used in the title and throughout the whole of the present study. The term has been chosen expressly to avoid so far as possible the traditional disagreements about the nature of penance, and as used here it denotes any form of penitential rite or discipline that brings the Christian sinner into contact with, or under the supervision of, an official minister of the Christian church (bishop, presbyter or deacon). As thus understood ecclesiastical penance may be distinguished from two other sets of phenomena: a) from penitential acts and exercises undertaken on the initiative of the sinner himself as a means of showing his remorse for sin and/or seeking forgiveness from God (for example, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimages); and b) from those personal relations between Christians which, though linked directly to the fact of sinfulness, do not imply any necessary presence of someone holding public office within the church (for example, correptio fraterna, intercessory prayer, spiritual counsel and spiritual direction - even when this last may involve, as it certainly did in the case of monks, the disclosure or confession of sins).[56] "Ecclesiastical penance" is thus a descriptive rather than an analytical term. It is aptly used to indicate the kinds of penitential institutions to which rigorist groups of the stamp of the Montanists or the Novatianists objected, but it applies equally to penitential institutions as diverse in form as the private episcopal interview (ἔλεγχος or νουθεσία), the regime of the priest-penitentiary (ὁ πρεσβύτερος ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς μετανοίας) mentioned by Socrates and Sozomen, or the system of Bussstufen familiar from the canons.[57] Of itself, however, the expression "ecclesiastical penance" is not intended either to prejudge or to settle the very difficult questions relating to the nature of the penance and penitential practices so described, that is to say, whether penance is or is not "sacramental" in the sense in which this word is commonly accepted of Baptism and the Eucharist. Indeed it may be hoped that the adoption of a more neutral term will encourage a fresh and dispassionate approach to the evidence.

Known landmarks in the history of ecclesiastical penance in the Byzantine church are few. Of these the most significant is certainly the appearance of a series of penitential documents ascribed traditionally to the sixth-century Patriarch John the Faster of Constantinople but now dated by Herman to the ninth and tenth centuries.[58] These documents describe the practice of confession involving an assignment of "penances" (ἐπιτίμια) and the granting of absolution in a manner very similar to the modern use of the Greek Orthodox church.[59] What remains unclear is the way in which the practice so described is related historically to the penitential discipline which prevailed, in whatever form, in the Greek churches of the fourth century. Did the Kanonarion of Pseudo-John the Faster develop organically out of the earlier penitential forms, and if so, how and through what stages? Or did it rather replace the earlier penitential system, and if so, was this an abrupt or a gradual process? Moreover, are there any indications as to how these forms of penance were understood by those who actually came into contact with them? The hagiographical evidence for penance must be reviewed with these questions in mind.[60]

Another important dimension of penance throughout the Byzantine period is the distinction between ecclesiastical penance as defined above and what may be called monastic penance.[61] The distinction is fundamental but not always easy to locate.

Monastic penance certainly includes the kind of correptio fraterna and spiritual direction distinguished above from ecclesiastical penance and is found in various monastic circumstances: between older and younger monks, between anchorites on the occasion of mutual visits, between the abbot of a monastery and his monks.[62] A real ambiguity arises, however, where one of the parties to these monastic penitential démarches was ordained, and was also, therefore, an official minister of the church. Did a certain kind of conduct that would not be thought of as ecclesiastical penance if it involved only laymen, automatically become ecclesiastical merely because one of the parties to it was ordained? More subtly, was monastic penance,

which seems to have operated in very large measure within the limits of the monastery and without reference to the authority of the bishop, deemed to be "ecclesiastical" inasmuch as the bishops knew of the monastic penitential customs and, at least tacitly, recognized their validity?[63] The hagiographical evidence may be expected to cast light upon these questions too.

A related theme worthy of special attention is the matter of unordained confessors, a problem central to Holl's presentation of the significance of Byzantine penance.[64] Inasmuch as the disclosure of one's state of soul (λογισμοί) and the confession of sin was a normal part of monastic spiritual direction, it is not at all unlikely that unordained "confessors" were common in Byzantine monasteries throughout the period under discussion.[65] But did lay Christians approach such unordained monks in order to confess their sins and receive forgiveness, and if so, when did such a practice begin and how common was it? Can it be known from the evidence what understanding penitents and confessors may have had of what they were doing? Was confession to an unordained monk thought to be the same thing as approaching a bishop or priest? Here again, the Vitae may be expected to shed valuable light on the realities of Byzantine practice and the extent to which the views expounded by Symeon the New Theologian in his Epistula de confessione may have reflected the actual practice of Byzantine Christians.

Given the prospect hagiography holds out of bringing the reader into contact with at least some aspects of the real life of ordinary Byzantines, one of the central concerns of this study will be to determine the penitential practices of ordinary Byzantine Christians by contrast to that of monks or clerics. Deductions about such practices from canonical, theological and even homiletical sources are always perilous, but the more narrative nature of the hagiographical genre offers some hope that certain questions might be answered. For example, what proportion of the ordinary Christian population actually came into contact with the institutions of ecclesiastical penance? Did this proportion change over the years? Was

such contact repeated or frequent for the same person? Were there preferred occasions when such contact would be made? Did ecclesiastical penance ever form part of a routine of ordinary Byzantine religious practice? Was it ever an obligation? How was it understood by ordinary people? Such questions will inform the investigation of the Vitae undertaken in this study.

## IV LIMITATIONS AND METHODS OF THIS STUDY

Hagiographical sources are numerous and diverse enough that any fruitful examination of them will demand a good deal of structure. In order to provide this the present study will restrict its scope in a number of ways. The definition of the term "ecclesiastical penance" has already been discussed; evidence for other aspects of Christian penance and penitence will be noted and discussed only when it bears directly upon the understanding of ecclesiastical penance.

The evidence has been grouped and discussed chronologically rather than thematically. In order to use the Lives at all it was found necessary to arrange them first in the chronological order of their composition, and the obvious usefulness to historians of having such a list conspired with the more practical limitations of time and space to suggest its retention as the structural principle of this study.[66] The chronological ordering also permits a true appreciation of the cumulative weight of the evidence and of any development in the penitential institutions. Moreover, the fact that certain penitential themes are clustered together in the Vitae of a given period is itself an observation of some importance for the interpretation of the evidence as a whole. The sense of this clustering is quickly lost when the same evidence is distributed into separate chapters divided by theme.

The period covered by this study (330-983) has been subdivided into four main sections (Chapters Two to Five) corresponding to recognizable

periods within Byzantine ecclesiastical history: the period from the dedication of Constantinople to the Council of Chalcedon (330-451); the turbulent period after Chalcedon down to the normalization of ecclesiastical discipline at the Trullan Council of 691/692; the age of Iconoclasm (692-843); the triumph of Orthodoxy and of monastic influence in the Byzantine church (843-983). The curiously exact terminus ad quem for this study (983) perhaps calls for some explanation. Some date towards the latter part of the tenth century had to be chosen to mark both the end of the pre-Metaphrastic age of hagiography and also the beginning of the literary activity of Symeon the New Theologian. The death of Patriarch Antonius III Studites in 983 meets these needs, and the fact that he too was the author of a De confessione makes the choice even more fitting.[67]

These four subdivisions are not unrelated to what can already be known of the history of ecclesiastical penance in Byzantium, but they have also been chosen with a practical view to breaking up a very lengthy list of sources and evidence into four roughly equal sections. This practical purpose is still more true of the further chronological subdivisions which are even more arbitrary and should not be taken to imply that the smaller periods so defined are in themselves of great significance for the history of penance, or even sometimes for the history of the Byzantine church. It is hoped, however, that they will prove helpful in finding a way through such a large number of documents.[68]

The Lives have also been distributed geographically in such a way as to distinguish the hagiography of Constantinople and its surrounding region from that of the other areas of the Greek-speaking Christian world. This distinction may also have the practical value of making the evidence easier to present and assimilate, but it is introduced primarily as a means of determining whether any distinction in penitential practice between the capital and the rest of the Byzantine empire can be identified.[69]

Constantinople may legitimately be regarded as a special case in this context, because, unlike the other important ecclesiastical urban centres

such as Alexandria and Antioch, the City was a new beginning ecclesiastically as well as politically.[70] The sudden, almost overnight, change from small provincial town to world capital represents a situation unparalleled in the history of the Church, and in all likelihood also in the history of ecclesiastical discipline and pastoral care.[71] Moreover, when the troubled religious history of the City down to the time of the Council of Chalcedon and especially during the first fifty years of its existence is recalled, there is every reason to seek to determine, if possible, what form the religious practice of ordinary lay people took at Constantinople, and in what way the institutions of ecclesiastical penance and discipline responded to the unique circumstances of life in the capital.

The documents cited in this study number more than 900.[72] The list of these Vitae is meant to be considered complete for the period from 330 to 983, but inevitably, there are some omissions. In the first place, a few unpublished Lives have remained inaccessible to the end, but as far as can be known none of these is of any substantial size or may be suspected to be important to the history of penance.[73] Secondly, many of the innumerable Passiones of the pre-Constantinian martyrs have been omitted, but that genre is a highly formulaic one and does not usually have place for the kind of anecdotal and circumstantial narrative in which the evidence for ecclesiastical penance is most often found.[74] Thirdly, among the homilies included by Halkin in the BHG, all those dealing with Christ, Mary, the apostles and other New Testament figures, and with the Christian feasts have normally been excluded. In many other cases, however, it has not been possible to distinguish usefully between the work of the hagiographer and that of the homilist.[75] Finally, not all of the many verba seniorum and narrationes animae utiles have been included. Collections of these which show a strong biographical interest or which can be dated with some certainty have been reviewed, but no attempt was made to include the whole mass of such materials catalogued by Halkin.[76] This decision was taken in part because of the difficulties attached to the

dating of individual sayings and stories, and in part because the biographical-hagiographical element in many of the apophthegmata is slight.[77]

This study has also been restricted to Lives written in Greek. Exceptions are rare and evidence from non-Greek texts has not been accorded the same value as evidence from the Greek Vitae. Where such Lives are translations from the Greek or are known to depend upon a Greek original, account has been taken of the general direction of the narrative, but individual details and expressions have not been used as a basis for any conclusions.[78] This restriction is important inasmuch as the influence that the reading of the Lives of the saints and the Passions of the martyrs exercised on pious Byzantines in every generation is itself a topos of Byzantine hagiography.[79] However idealized this picture may be, it does suggest that the cumulative exemplum of hagiography is itself part of the history of penance, and this can only have been true of the Lives accessible to the ordinary people in Greek. Cross references from the hagiographical evidence to other sources for the history of penance have been made where relevant and possible, but in cases where the dating of other relevant documents is itself a matter of doubt or dispute (as, especially, in the case of the canons), such references cannot claim to do more than suggest avenues for further exploration. Here too, limitations of space have been important in limiting the number of such references.

Finally, it has been a consistent principle of this study that in the absence of corroborating evidence from a different historical source, the evidence in a Life can be used to illustrate only the period of its composition, not the period in which the saint himself flourished. Thus a sixth-century Vita of a fourth-century saint will always be presumed to reflect the circumstances and theological understanding of the sixth-century author rather than those of his fourth-century subject.[80] Moreover, in order to eliminate so far as possible the risk of introducing anachronisms into the history of Byzantine penance, the principles of true Bollandist caution in dating the Lives have been honoured throughout.[81]

# CHAPTER TWO: FROM CONSTANTINE TO CHALCEDON (330-451)

# I QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE PENANCE (330-451)

It will be useful at the beginning of each of the four principal chapters to recall briefly the problems, issues and themes which are of particular significance in the history of Byzantine penance during the period to be surveyed. This will encourage a more sensitive appraisal of the contribution of the hagiographical evidence as it is passed in review. Indeed, even to know that certain of these matters are not reflected at all in the Lives is an observation of some interest and importance.

1. The fundamental problem for the history of penance before Chalcedon is the true meaning of the "Nectarius incident" recorded by Socrates and Sozomen.[1] Many have accepted that the suppression of the priest-penitentiary at Constantinople meant the effective end to all ecclesiastical penance not only there, but subsequently in the other Greek-speaking churches as well.[2] Others have rejected this view as exaggerated, but the actual consequences of the Nectarius incident in the history of ecclesiastical penance down to the time of Chalcedon remain unclear.[3]

2. The nature of the penitential ministry of John Chrysostom, the successor to Nectarius as archbishop of Constantinople, is another matter at issue in this period.[4] Did Chrysostom inherit any penitential system from his predecessor, or did he transplant Antiochene customs, or did he innovate in new circumstances?[5] For example, does the charge that John forgave sinners as often as they came to him imply that the modern pattern of repeated confession and absolution can be traced back at least to the turn of the fourth century?[6]

3. A further problem related to the previous questions is the actual geographical extent of the system of penitential stages mentioned in the canons of Nicaea and in those of other fourth-century councils.[7]

If this system was not a universal Christian institution, it becomes important to determine both where it was found and where it was not found.[8]

4. Closely bound up with the problem of the Bussstufen is the difficulty of knowing the extent to which local fourth- and fifth-century disciplinary canons had any influence outside the geographical region of their origin.[9] Moreover, how far can the canons be trusted to reflect actual practice, or were they already at that time prescriptive ideals tempered in practice by the weight of local custom and the use of οἰκονομία?[10] A final important dimension of the canonical background to penance which needs more attention is the way in which the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions actually functioned in relation to one another in certain cases, such as murder, adultery or magic, which came under both the moral and the criminal law.[11]

5. The period from 330 to 451 was an age marked by schism and heresy on a large scale. Great numbers of ordinary people, especially at Constantinople, must have found themselves at various times technically excommunicated, or at least out of communion with the Catholic church.[12] The same period also furnishes the earliest evidence for a rite of ecclesiastical reconciliation for heretics and schismatics.[13] One of the thorniest problems for the historian of ecclesiastical penance, therefore, is to know whether the ordinary people in these circumstances were subject to, and consequently gained some personal experience of, a formal rite or process of ecclesiastical reconciliation.[14] In this regard it is also important to know, but hard to discover, what proportion of an ordinary Christian congregation in the fourth and fifth centuries had actually been baptized, and what proportion remained more or less permanently as catechumens and hence not strictly subject to ecclesiastical penance.[15] The continued existence of a strong Novatianist group in the East down to the time of Chalcedon

is a factor relevant to both these problems.[16]

6. The years 330-451 embrace the period from the first great expansion of early monasticism in the figures of Antony, Pachomius and Hilarion to the canonical regulation of the monastic movement at the Council of Chalcedon.[17] The importance of monasticism to the church life of the time is universally recognized, but the real influence of monastic penitential practice on the ordinary patterns of piety and religious observance among Christians who remained in the world has not been finally determined.[18]

## II THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

### A. Before the Dedication of the City in 330

Although the present study has been restricted chronologically to the period from 330 to 983, at least some brief preliminary consideration must be given to the literary background from which the later Lives emerged.[19] The Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca lists many documents from the period before 330: primitive Acta of the martyrs, letters containing biographical information, edifying tales, and the whole range of literary genres from parainesis to romance that characterizes the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.[20] It will be the interest of this study to determine whether or to what extent the theme of ecclesiastical penance already had a place in this early narrative literature of the first Christian centuries, and hence what literary and theological influence it may have exercised on the presentation of ecclesiastical penance in the post-Constantinian Vitae.

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae - Pre-Constantinian Byzantium is without any contemporary hagiographical evidence. The Lives of saints who lived in Byzantium or had some relationship to the City before the time

of Constantine are all later documents.[21] These Vitae, many of which are in large measure fabulous, will be considered below in their proper chronological sequence, but it may perhaps be noted here that while they contain no privileged or reliable information about the early days of the City, neither do they show any tendency to "read back" the ecclesiastical customs and institutions of their own time into an earlier period.[22]

2. Other Vitae - [Acta Martyrum] Barnes has reviewed the claims of the earliest Acta to authenticity and concluded that six documents at least (the Acts of Polycarp [BHG 1556-1560], Ptolemaeus/Lucius, Justin Martyr [BHG 972z], Perpetua and Felicity [BHG 1482], the martyrs of Lyons [BHG 1573] and the Scillitan martyrs [BHG 1645] may be accepted in their earliest known versions as Decian or pre-Decian documents contemporary with the events they recount.[23]

Of these Acta four were certainly composed in Greek (Polycarp, Ptolemaeus/Lucius, Justin Martyr and the martyrs of Lyons) but of these only the last touches in any way upon the theme of ecclesiastical penance. Mention is made of the lapsa Biblis whose later courage in confessing the faith overcomes the effects of her earlier fall.[24] The author of the Acta is at some pains to contrast the merciful attitude of the martyrs towards the lapsi with the rigorist treatment accorded them afterwards by others.[25] None of these early Acta, however, suggests that resort to any institution of ecclesiastical penance had become a normal part of Christian life, even at the moment of death.[26]

The Acts of the Scillitan martyrs and of Perpetua and Felicity were written in Latin, but the Greek translations seem very probably to have been in circulation before 330.[27] The first makes no reference of any kind to ecclesiastical penance; the second shows some awareness that the occasion of the martyr's death is a privileged moment for

reconciliation within the Christian community, but in the Acta Perpetuae et Felicitatis this reconciliation is personal and does not seem to bear directly on the ecclesiastical forgiveness of sins.[28]

Of the remaining extant Acta composed before 330 the majority are associated with the name of Eusebius of Caesarea. In his account of the martyrs of Palestine under Diocletian, and in the Historia Ecclesiastica, excerpts of earlier Acta are found side by side with materials of his own composition.[29] None of these texts mentions ecclesiastical penance in any form, even in the context of a deliberate preparation for death.[30]

Among the few non-Eusebian documents from this same period only the Acta Pionii et sociorum (BHG 1546) are relevant here.[31] These, like the Acts of the martyrs of Lyons, touch upon the problem of the lapsi but contrast their sin which was unintentional and coerced with the deliberate sins committed by the Jews of Moses' day and by Judaizing Christians of the author's own time.[32] Pionius urges even the Judaizers - whose sin he has earlier likened to the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit - not to despair but to return to Christ who receives the μετάνοια of his children.[33] While these Acta provide no description of ecclesiastical penance or of any of its institutions, the early appearance of an important hagiographical topos should be observed, namely, that it is despair rather than any particular sin, however great, that is the true enemy of the Christian.[34]

[Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha] The many apocryphal Acts of the Apostles which began to be composed in the late second century, and continued to be produced as late as, and even beyond, the sixth century, have a direct relationship to the later developed hagiographical tradition.[35] The popular audience for such writings was certainly the same as for the Lives of the saints, and it is therefore of interest to this study to determine not only whether these works contain information

about ecclesiastical penance projected backwards into the apostolic age, but also whether they have contributed in any way to the formation of the penitential topoi of the later Vitae.

The Acta Petri, Acta Pauli and Acta Andreae are all dated to the last two decades of the second century and the few allusions in these texts to repentance and forgiveness of sin occur only in the context of baptism. They do not refer to the post-baptismal sins of Christians.[36] The Acta Petri, however, present at least one clear instance of the forgiveness of sins after baptism. Marcellus, a Christian and a Roman senator, perceives that he has been deluded by Simon Magus and prostrates himself before Peter, confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness.[37] This forgiveness is sought, significantly, through the intercession of Peter's prayers and through the faith of the sinner himself in God's own mercy. Appeal is also made to the precedent of the forgiveness which was granted to Peter by Christ after the apostle's own fall.[38] The restoration of the senator to his former place in the community is apparently immediate, because, at Peter's express direction, the now-reconciled Marcellus proceeds to work a miracle, and the miraculous restoration of the broken statue becomes the sign of Marcellus' own return to grace.[39]

Earlier, the apostle Paul refuses Eucharistic communion to the adulteress Rufina, although at the same time he holds out to her the possibility of forgiveness if she is truly repentant.[40] The punishment inflicted in the case of Rufina causes other Christians to doubt whether their own sins have been forgiven, but Paul assures all, on the basis of his own experience, that they have indeed found forgiveness from God.[41]

The same theme of unworthy communion appears in the third century Acta Thomae (BHG 1800-1829). Here the Eucharist itself "convicts" a Christian who is guilty of murder but has nonetheless approached the sacrament.[42] Thomas asks the man to confess his sin without shame;

the man is then immediately cured of his withered hands as he washes them in water upon which the apostle has invoked the Holy Spirit.[43] All other references in the Acta Thomae to forgiveness of sin have to do with baptism rather than with post-baptismal sin.[44]

The late third century Acta Ioannis (BHG 900-913) also contain at least one reference to the situation of Christians who sin after baptism. In his last address to the community at Ephesus John warns baptized Christians who fall back into sins that they can expect neither forgiveness nor mercy from God.[45] The sternness of this position may find illustration earlier in the Acta Ioannis in the elaborate "excommunication" of the steward Fortunatus for his complicity in an attempted act of necrophilia by Callimachus.[46] To be set against this rigorist spirit, however, is the extreme mercy shown by the same John to the parricide in an episode which teaches that no sin is so grievous as to exclude God's mercy.[47] It is true that the parricide of the Acta Ioannis is not a Christian, but the story recalls strongly that other πρᾶξις of John the apostle recorded by Clement of Alexandria in which another young man - this time a Christian - is first retrieved by the apostle after falling into the sins of robbery and murder, and then formally reconciled to the Church.[48] It should be observed that both stories are important precisely because they are presented as limiting cases of the forgiveness of sin, and in both instances the danger of despair is identified as the real enemy against which every possible weapon must be used.[49]

3. Conclusions - Evidence from the hagiographical or pre-hagiographical documents of this early period is clearly too sparse to allow for the drawing of firm conclusions about the shape of ecclesiastical penance either at Byzantium or elsewhere in the Greek speaking Christian world, but the following observations may be made.

(a) Ecclesiastical penance cannot be said to be a theme of great importance or interest in these early forms of Christian narrative. Where the forgiveness of sin _is_ a subject of interest, the context almost always concerns the immediate approach to baptism and does not deal with post-baptismal sin. In particular it may be noted that the genre of the martyr's _Passio_ shows no interest in the topic of ecclesiastical penance, whereas the more leisurely pace and episodic style of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles can afford it a place.

(b) If the theme of ecclesiastical penance occurs sporadically in these texts, no specific details about the shape of penitential institutions or ritual can be gleaned from them. There is nothing, for example, that might confirm or deny the existence of the various systems of ecclesiastical penance predicated of this period by the historians of penance. Indeed, of the important themes that mark the history of penance as it is reconstructed from more directly theological and historical sources, such as rigorism, repeated penance or the _Bussstufen_, none appears unambiguously in these early narrative texts.

(c) The available evidence provides no basis as yet for comparing or contrasting the local conditions of pre-Constantinian Byzantium with those of other centres of the Greek-speaking Christian world in the matter of ecclesiastical penance.

## B. The Arian Years: 330-381

1. _Constantinopolitan Vitae_ - The hagiographical testimony from the first half-century of the history of Constantinople is most incomplete and unsatisfactory. Where Lives of the figures of the period exist at all, they regularly date from a later age.[50] In fact only four hagiographical documents are contemporary with their subjects in this period, and all four were originally composed as sermons: encomia of Athanasius (_BHG_ 186), and Cyprian (_BHG_ 457), the oration _De se ipso_

given at the Council of 381 by Gregory Nazianzen (BHG 730b) and the eulogy for Meletius of Antioch (BHG 1243) pronounced at the same synod by Gregory of Nyssa. The last three do not treat directly of ecclesiastical penance.[51]

[Vita Athanasii] The Life of Athanasius, really a panegyric delivered at Constantinople by Gregory Nazianzen in the year 379, contains the first clear hagiographical evidence that ecclesiastical penance was an object of reflection at Constantinople.[52] The Laudatio concentrates on Athanasius' struggle against the Arians and on the character of his episcopate which is praised for the golden mean that Athanasius maintained in matters of church discipline.[53] Gregory clearly presents the bishop as the officer and source of discipline within the local church whose responsibility it is to avoid the two extremes of laxity and rigorism, for the former only encourages the spread of evil while the latter discourages those who have sinned.[54] Excommunication (τομή ) is only to be a last resort and the surgical character of the term implies that the bishop's role in maintaining discipline within the community is likened to that of the physician.[55] It must be noted, however, that the immediate context for all these reflections is the reconciliation of heretics, not the moral lapses of ordinary members of the church. Nor should it be forgotten that among sins heresy was a special case, for reconciliation was to be more lenient for the followers of a heretical movement than for its leaders.[56] Lastly, the Laudatio reveals through the incident of the deathbed repentance of the Emperor Constantius that Gregory was concerned more about the nature than about the mere declaration of a change of heart since he asserts that Constantius' regrets were ἀνόνητα.[57]

2. Other Vitae - [Vita Constantini] Despite the fact that the foundation of Constantinople was an initiative of the first Christian

emperor, the encomium of Constantine by Eusebius of Caesarea cannot properly be included among the Constantinopolitan Vitae.[58] In any case, while it provides an excellent example of a pre-baptismal confession, and shows that the term μετάνοια was applied to the reconciliation of heretics, the Vita Constantini (BHG 361x) contains no description or direct discussion of any of the institutions of ecclesiastical penance properly so called.[59] Of the other contemporary or near-contemporary documents treating of Constantine, neither the De laudibus Constantini (BHG 361z) nor the disputed Oratio ad sanctorum coetum (BHG 361y) contains any evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[60]

[Vita Antonii] The Life of Antony which enjoyed such a wide and immediate impact among Christians in the fourth century also provides the first historical testimony to the important and particular place given to penance in the monastic milieu.[61] Though not ordained to office as bishop or priest, Antony acted nonetheless as father not only to the monks gathered around him but also to the world outside which was fascinated by him.[62] This spiritual fatherhood involved the exercise of the traditionally episcopal responsibility of νουθεσία and of a kind of spiritual direction based on the revelation of the disciple's λογισμοί or "spiritual state" to the director.[63] Antony's advice to his monks to keep a written daily account of their sins should not be interpreted, however, as evidence for the practice of "written confessions". It was put forward rather as an effective form of a personal examination of conscience and as a practical means of putting a stop to sin.[64] There is perhaps another recollection of the episcopal role as medicus/ἰατρός when Athanasius uses medicinal language in close connexion with exorcism and with the disclosure of λογισμοί.[65] Thus, although the Vita Antonii cannot be said to contain references to institutions of ecclesiastical penance, it remains an important witness to a new problem: how were the institutions and leadership of the

monastic ecclesiola to be related to those of the wider ecclesia?[66] And how were ordinary Christians to understand their own relationship to these two distinct milieux? Such problems were to acquire a special complexity in the domain of ecclesiastical penance and the forgiveness of sins.

[Vitae Cypriani] A curious deformation of the historical memory of Cyprian of Carthage lies behind three hagiographical documents which must antedate 379: the Conversion of Cyprian (BHG 452), the Confession of Cyprian (BHG 453) and the Martyrdom of Cyprian (BHG 455).[67] The texts portray Cyprian as a notorious magician converted to Christianity when his diabolical powers are thwarted by the prayers of the virgin Justina, a conversion consciously modelled after that of the magicians of Ephesus in Acts 19:18-20.[68] The importance of these texts, especially the Confession, is that they deliberately make of Cyprian a "limiting case", a sinner whose enormities pass all belief but whose repentance, because sincere, is nevertheless not rejected.[69] It is true that the context of the conversion is once again pre-baptismal, but the author shows a remarkable appreciation of the psychological value inherent in the very act of confessing one's sins, and he also emphasizes that it is precisely the role of the bishop to be the "teacher of penance" within the community.[70]

[Gregorius Nazianzenus] From the period before 381 ten of Gregory's works find a place in the BHG.[71] Of these five have no bearing of any kind on ecclesiastical penance and another two contain only the most vague references to ecclesiastical discipline.[72] The others - Oratio 2: De fuga sua, Oratio 18: In patrem suam and Oratio 43: In laudem Basilii Magni - are so bound up with the peculiar circumstances of the fourth-century struggle against heresy that it is extremely difficult to try to separate out Gregory's approach to the treatment of moral lapses among the faithful from what he says in these places about

the treatment of heretics. He clearly teaches that episcopal authority is to be used with mildness and moderation, and he draws an extended comparison between bodily and spiritual healing which makes it plain that he also interprets the penitential aspect of the bishop's ministry as medicinal.[73] Nevertheless, these few references are scarcely sufficient in themselves to establish any firm account of the shape of ecclesiastical penance as it may have been practised by Gregory before his arrival at Constantinople.

[Basilius Magnus] Four homilies of Basil are hagiographical in character: the economia for Gordius, Iulitta, Mamas, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.[74] Of these only the Homilia in martyrem Iulittam is relevant here. In one place Basil urges his hearers to weep together with a brother who is doing penance, a passage which confirms that penitents at Caesarea were a visible and identifiable group within the community.[75]

[Gregorius Nyssenus] A certain number of Gregory's hagiographical writings fall in the period before the Council of Constantinople and the accession of Nectarius. They include homilies on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, the Lives of Macrina his sister, Basil his brother and of Gregory Thaumaturgus, and a panegyric preached in honour of the martyr Theodore.[76] None of these texts refers to ecclesiastical penance, although the important theme of the value of the saints' intercession in securing the forgiveness of others' sins is developed at several places, and some hints are also given about the bishop's role in maintaining community discipline.[77]

[Homiliae Clementinae] Despite the difficulties which attach to the extant text, the Clementine Homilies may be taken in their present form as a work in circulation before the Council of 381.[78] The Homilies contain a number of interesting reflections on the nature of sin and penance and on the bishop's office as the one who binds and looses

within the community.[79] There are, however, only a few references to what may properly be called ecclesiastical penance.

In the Letter of Clement to James deacons are urged to act as the "eyes of the bishop" in maintaining discipline so that sin can be nipped in the bud by the episcopal νουθεσία.[80] The eighteenth Homily contains an episode in which the reconciliation of heretics is described.[81] Former adherents of Simon Magus prostrate themselves before the apostle Peter and ask for forgiveness; the apostle is shown receiving them (ἀποδεχθῆναι), laying hands upon them, praying over them and healing any who are sick, and finally, dismissing them until the following day.[82] There is no evidence in the Homilies, however, for the way in which cases of grave moral disorder such as murder or adultery were dealt with in the church - either in the church of the author's own experience or in an imagined apostolic past.[83]

3. Conclusions - (a) The main conclusion to be drawn from the documents surveyed in this section is that by the year 381 ecclesiastical penance still does not form a significant theme for the authors of the developing corpus of hagiographical literature. The plain fact is that the great majority of these texts contains no mention of ecclesiastical penance at all.

(b) Amid this general silence of the sources it may be noticed in particular that none of the hagiographical documents from the period 330 to 381 alludes, directly or indirectly, to those discrete "stages" of ecclesiastical penance (Bussstufen) mentioned in some fourth-century canons and often described as characteristic of all ecclesiastical penance during this period.[84]

(c) Where references to ecclesiastical discipline are found they are couched in the language of medicine not that of the law courts or of penal correction and punishment. The clear intent of all penitential

discipline is to heal the wounds of sin as these touch both the individual Christian and the whole community. This medicinal understanding of penance certainly dates from the earliest Christian ages, but a further reason for its prominence in the hagiographical texts surveyed may be the homiletic and exhortatory nature of so many of these works.

(d) By the year 381 it is also possible to observe the existence of two distinct "models" of penitential language and perhaps also of penitential institutions, one episcopal and the other monastic. The Vita Athanasii, the Confessio Cypriani and the Homiliae Clementinae illustrate the episcopal model in which it is the bishop himself who functions as the linchpin of all community discipline, directly involved in and responsible for maintaining the health of the flock which is considered as a living community, not just as a collection of isolated pastoral cases. Because of the circumstances of fourth century church life, the episcopal model of ecclesiastical discipline is more concerned with the reconciliation of heretics than with individual moral lapses among the faithful, whereas the monastic model (as illustrated in the Vita Antonii) is centred on the moral growth and spiritual perfection of the monk within the monastic ecclesiola. It would be mistaken, however, to speak at such an early stage of any opposition between these two models either in theory or in fact.

(e) Lastly, the weight of available evidence still remains too slight to justify any comparisons between the state of ecclesiastical penance at Constantinople and that which may have obtained elsewhere. It can be said, however, that whereas outside Constantinople evidence for both the episcopal and monastic models of penance exists, there is no sign as yet in the Vitae of any significant monastic influence inside the City by the year 381.

C. From Nectarius to the Council of Chalcedon: 381-451

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae - [Gregorius Nazianzenus] Three of the later works of Gregory have a bearing on ecclesiastical life and institutions at Constantinople: the Testamentum Gregorii (BHG 730), the oration De se ipso et sede Constantinopolitana (BHG 730x) and Carmen 11 De vita sua (BHG 730a). The first contains nothing relevant to this study, the second only a passing mention of the excommunication of heretics as something to be carried out for the benefit of the whole church and in a spirit of mercy rather than of retribution, and the third a brief and poetic description of the forgiveness granted by Gregory to a young man hired by Arian enemies as his assasin.[85] It may be that this act of forgiveness reflects the prevailing practice of ecclesiastical reconciliation or absolution, but the circumstances make it impossible to distinguish Gregory's personal pardon of the man from any wider ecclesial significance inherent in the act.[86]

[Gregorius Nyssenus] Two orations delivered by Gregory at the court of Theodosius in August and September of 385 on the occasions of the deaths of Pulcheria and Flacilla make no allusion to ecclesiastical penance.[87]

[Ioannes Chrysostomus] The bulk of Chrysostom's hagiographical homilies will be discussed below as belonging to his Antiochene ministry, but at least five such homilies can be placed in his Constantinopolitan period (398-404): In martyres omnes (BHG 1191p, 1191q), In principium Actorum, 2 (BHG 1617y), In martyres Aegyptos (BHG 1192) and De sancto hieromartyre Phoca (BHG 1573).[88] The first three contain no reference to ecclesiastical penance and the fourth only a brief mention of the effective power that the martyrs have to secure forgiveness of men's sins from God by their intercession.[89] The homily on Phocas, however, contains a quite definite expression of the way in which Chrysostom as bishop understood ecclesiastical penance as a medicinal rather than a

judicial process.[90] Moreover, in the matter of reconciling heretics Chrysostom likens the church to a mother who is always ready to receive back her children and never turns them away.[91]

[Vitae Ioannis Chrysostomi] Palladius wrote his Dialogus (BHG 870) in 408/412; it is at once a history of the trials of Chrysostom at the hands of his ecclesiastical enemies and an important document for the study of ecclesiastical life and customs in the East and at Constantinople itself in the early fifth century.[92]

The Dialogus provides specific historical instances of ecclesiastical penance resulting in excommunication for the sins of sodomy (at Alexandria) and of adultery and murder (at Constantinople).[93] The illustrative value of these cases is seriously reduced, however, by the fact that in all three incidents the persons excommunicated were clerics and it is known that the disciplinary treatment of clerics differed from that of the laity in important ways.[94] It is not possible, therefore, to draw general conclusions about the scope or the procedure of ecclesiastical penance at Constantinople on the basis of such references. Allusions in the Dialogus to the ἐπιτίμιον imposed on transgressors by church law, to the power of the keys (bound up with the notion of admitting sinners to penance), and to the importance of ἔλεγχος in the episcopal ministry all imply, however, that some form of ecclesiastical penance was still known in Constantinople ten to twenty years after Nectarius is thought to have abolished it.[95] Unfortunately, the available hagiographical evidence does not permit any further determination of the precise shape of that penance, apart from the probable fact that it included excommunication, nor the extent of its use in the life of the community.

The Dialogus contains another important clue to the future development of ecclesiastical penance at Constantinople. In chapter twenty, Palladius describes at some length both the demon's techniques for

ensnaring souls and also the divine remedies which oppose them.[96] The devil has a sieve with seven openings that correspond roughly to the λογισμοί of Evagrian tradition, and, according to Palladius, it is from these passions that all the sins and vices grow and it is through one of these various openings in the sieve that souls fall down to hell.[97] The passage is a strong pointer to the direction in which ecclesiastical penance was to continue its development, namely, the merging of the institutions of the episcopal sphere with the moral-spiritual analysis of sin taken from the monastic sphere.[98] To the traditional medicinal understanding of the treatment of sin the Evagrian analysis of the πάθη was a natural addition and refinement.[99] It is from this period onwards, therefore, that the impact of the monastic approach to sin and penance may reasonably be looked for within a City where orthodox monasticism took root at a relatively late date.[100]

With the Dialogus may also be associated the Laudatio of John Chrysostom (BHG 871) attributed to Martyrius of Antioch and probably written during the reign of Atticus of Constantinople (406-425). The extant text says nothing of ecclesiastical penance, but it is now known to be incomplete and the promised complete edition may well add significantly to the evidence from the period under review.[101]

[Vitae miscellaneae] An encomium on the martyrs by Severianus of Gabala (BHG 1189), another by Proclus of Constantinople (BHG 1617d), and a third found among the spuria of Chrysostom (BHG 820) may be included here along with the Carmen in sanctum Cyprianum (BHG 458, 459) of Eudocia, empress of Theodosius II.[102] This last text adds nothing to the study of ecclesiastical penance that is not already familiar from the Confession of Cyprian (BHG 453) examined above, although it does show that the earlier text continued to find readers down to the time of Chalcedon.[103] Of the other texts, the encomium by Severianus suggests that in cases of heresy ecclesiastical reconciliation was demanded,

at least from those responsible for teaching false doctrine.[104]

[Vita Hypatii] The Life of Hypatius (BHG 760), composed by the monk Callinicus very probably within a few years of the saint's death in 446, is the first major work of monastic hagiography produced within the Constantinopolitan church.[105] It presents a remarkable portrait of the interaction of the lay and monastic worlds at Constantinople. The prologue to the Vita speaks of a thirst for spiritual direction in the City even among lay people, and the body of the Life shows Hypatius as dispenser of νουθεσία even to the royal family.[106] Moreover, as hegumen of the monastery at Rufinianae he provides monastic clergy to staff some of the new martyria of Constantinople.[107] Throughout the Life a stream of lay people makes its way to Hypatius seeking bodily healing and receiving spiritual healing as well.[108]

The contradiction between sinfulness and reception of the Eucharist is drawn more clearly in this Vita than in the documents already seen, and it will be remembered that this was a theme upon which Chrysostom himself preached.[109] One particular instance of a sacrilegious communion by a layman is of great importance. A man guilty of adultery had committed a double sacrilege by denying his first sin under an oath taken on the scriptures, and then by receiving communion the following morning while these sins were still on his conscience.[110] During a subsequent illness the man, an official of the imperial post, is brought to Hypatius to be cured, but when the malady persists, Hypatius asks the man to confess whatever hidden sin is obstructing his cure. The man still acknowledges nothing and it is only afterwards in a dream that the saint perceives the man's true spiritual state.[111] Hypatius then confronts the man with the truth and assures him that had he repented and confessed his sin at first, he would have been forgiven and healed. For not having done so he will die in three days. On hearing this, the man despairs and dies in his sin.[112] The story is another example

of a limiting case meant to illustrate the point that forgiveness is possible for any sin or combination of sins - however enormous - if only there is repentance. The willingness to confess one's sins is a sign of that repentance, and intercession by the servant of God will bring forgiveness and consequent healing. But despair, by its very nature, excludes true repentance and so brings death. The historian of ecclesiastical penance will note here that in a case concerned with sins that belonged traditionally to the sphere of official penance, that is, to the sphere of episcopal discipline, the hagiographer presumes that Hypatius was able to deal with them by his own intercession and ministry. The Life makes no reference to the need to bring the matter before the bishop and alludes to no system of public penance.[113]

A second long story recounted in the Vita Hypatii concerns a monk who was deceived by the devil and who, having rejected the νουθεσία of Hypatius and spurned the brotherhood, went on to take communion without securing the blessing of the hegumen and without reconciling himself beforehand with his spiritual father and with the others in the monastery.[114] Later the monk repents, but he cannot be reconciled with his spiritual father Hypatius because the latter has died in the interval.[115] The monk himself then dies and receives burial in the monastery because allowance is made for his spiritual inexperience. His salvation is hoped for through the prayers of Hypatius and all the saints.[116] The incident provides another example of the way disciplinary cases could be resolved within the walls of a monastery without any recourse to the episcopal sphere, and it is also an early illustration of the canonical principle that a sinner can only be reconciled by the one who has separated him from communion.[117]

2. Other Vitae - [Gregorius Nazianzenus] Oration 44 In novam

dominicam (BHG 1021) is dated to 383 and touches on the life of Saint Mamas, but apart from one brief reference to the fact that the sins of Christians can be cured by ἐπιστροφή , it contains nothing to interest this study.[118]

[Gregorius Nyssenus] Two homilies delivered in 383 in praise of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (BHG 1206, 1207) likewise contribute nothing to a discussion of ecclesiastical penance.[119]

[Ioannes Chrysostomus] Twenty-four hagiographical texts may be ascribed with confidence to the period of Chrysostom's ministry as priest at Antioch (382-397), but only twelve of these refer to ecclesiastical penances and the references are scattered and of varied worth.[120] Although many of the penitential reflections in these hagiographical homilies are in no way connected with the genre of the Laudatio itself, others grow more naturally out of the subject of the encomium and these will be considered first.

The two homilies on Babylas and Meletius (BHG 208, 1244) confirm that at Antioch in the late fourth century ecclesiastical penance was understood as an activity medicinal by nature and under the bishop's own direction. It is in the light of this conception that punishment is consciously opposed to the true end of penance (διόρθωσις), and that excommunication (τομή ) is also interpreted within the context of healing: it is to be used only in the last resort, and either to bring a sinner to his senses or to protect the larger ecclesial body from the spread of contagion.[121] The Life of Babylas also contains the very important assertion that the sinner who undertakes sincere μετάνοια is restored to the same level of holiness as those not guilty of sin.[122]

A second theme from Chrysostom's hagiographical homilies that is directly linked to the genre is the important role the martyrs play through their shrines and relics in securing forgiveness for the sins of Christians. Chrysostom plainly affirms that recourse to the relics

of the martyrs in faith will relieve the conscience of Christians and that the fruits of the martyrs' intercession is the forgiveness of sins and indeed even the sensible assurance (ἀϊστησις, πληροφορία) that God has truly forgiven the repentant sinner.[123] It is not clear from these texts whether such forgiveness was related in any way to other institutions of ecclesiastical penance. In one place, for example, (Vita Iuliani 4) it seems possible to make a connexion between the forgiveness secured at the martyrs' shrines and a confession of sin made to an attending priest or bishop.[124] Elsewhere, however, the description of a similar kind of confession, understood according to the medical model of revealing one's wounds to the doctor, can certainly be thought of as a purely interior act or as a disclosure made directly to the martyrs themselves.[125]

The hagiographical homilies of Chrysostom also contain themes related to ecclesiastical penance but connected only arbitrarily to the subject matter of the laudatio. In two places, for example, Chrysostom appeals to his listeners to practise the correptio fraterna sketched in Matt 18:15-17, even if this means delating recalcitrant offenders to priest or bishop.[126] It may be doubted, however, whether these homiletic appeals reflect the actual workings of discipline in the community; it is perhaps more likely that they represent a vivid way in which the preacher tries to get his hearers to understand the seriousness of sin.[127]

Another topic of some importance is the relation of penance for sin to the worthy reception of the Eucharist, a problem Chrysostom handles expressly in his panegyric for Philogonius (BHG 1532). Faced with the apparently widely held notion that the reception of Eucharistic communion forgives sins eo ipso, Chrysostom is at pains to point out that this is not true. Indeed, automatic and unreflective reception of the Eucharist will only add further burdens to conscience, inasmuch

as true repentance (μετάνοια) is required before communion if Christians are to be reconciled to their King.[128] Such repentance demands first of all that the Christian cease from all sin, promise to amend his life and be reconciled with others. What it does not necessarily require, however, is a protracted period of time, for in fact Chrysostom affirms that the four days between the feast of the blessed Philogonius and the celebration of Christmas is time enough to prepare for a worthy communion.[129] It will be observed that even in a context which deals specifically with the penance of the laity, recourse to the officials of the church is nowhere explicitly mentioned, let alone required, as part of the penitential preparation for Eucharistic communion.

[Asterius Amasenus] Of the three hagiographical homilies of Asterius listed in the BHG (Euphemia [BHG 623], Phocas [BHG 1538-1540] and the Martyrs [BHG 1190]), none deals in any way with ecclesiastical penance.[130]

[Vita Abercii] The interest of this late fourth century Life lies in the description it gives of episcopal responsibilities in the second century as these were conceived two centuries later.[131] Abercius is represented as taking an active part by means of νουθεσία and διδασκαλία in the struggle against the Marcionite heresy and especially in the reconciling of local Syrian communities, but the few references in the Vita to μετάνοια and ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν allude only to baptism not to post-baptismal sin or to ecclesiastical penance properly so called.[132]

[Pachomius Tabennensis] The group of hagiographical documents attached to the life and teaching of Pachomius and Theodore of Tabennisi (Vita Pachomii prima [BHG 1396], Epistula Ammonis [BHG 1397], Epistula Theophili ad Ammonem [BHG 1398] and Paralipomena [BHG 1399]) reflect and illustrate the developing monastic milieu more directly and intimately than any of the writings hitherto examined.[133] The problem of the

relationship between the monastic world and the wider church glimpsed already in the Vita Antonii is revealed more fully in the Pachomian texts. Here, for example, the monk is also referred to as "watchman" (σκοπός), a term and an image normally applied before this time to bishops.[134] Indeed, in one remarkable instance in the Vita prima the bishop himself sends a sinful monk to be judged by the unordained Pachomius, a reflection of the fact that church discipline was coming to operate in two spheres: that of the ordinary church under the bishop and that of the monastic community under its own leaders.[135]

Within the monastic sphere the Vita Pachomii provides examples of both public and private confession of sins.[136] There is some evidence, however, that such public "confession" normally consisted of a general acknowledgement of guilt or sinfulness rather than a detailed confession of particular sins. This latter kind of revelation was known to have a disturbing effect on many.[137] Conversely, the disclosure of one's inner thoughts (λογισμοί) to a spiritual guide or director within the monastery is presented as an established practice, and the description of Theodore as spiritual director is an early example of the topos of the spiritual father who makes himself responsible for the salvation not only of himself but also of his children.[138] Prayer, συνείδησις and ἔλεγχος are the modes by which this responsibility is primarily exercised.[139] In the monastic sphere as in the episcopal sphere the sometimes harsh realities of discipline are normally couched in the medicinal language connatural to a milieu which did not always distinguish sharply between sins and the πάθη.[140] Even those formal rebukes and punishments (ἐπιτιμίαι) consequent upon sin and transgression are administered with a therapeutic intent.[141]

If the practice of monastic penance can be described from the Vitae, its theoretical foundations are less clear. The very fact that the monks dealt with sinners inside the boundaries of the monastery, particularly

in cases which the canonical tradition of the wider church considered to be very serious such as that of the monk guilty of sacrificing to idols, shows that they presumed the authority to act in such matters.[142] Moreover, in the case of the monk who was sent by a bishop to be judged by Pachomius, the authority of the monastery to act in matters of church discipline may be said to have received some kind of tacit recognition.[143] Nevertheless, the origin of this authority is nowhere consciously examined in the Vitae. A divine vision, for example, assures Pachomius that he is to serve as an instrument by which sinners will be brought to repentance, and Theodore receives and proclaims a similar revelation (afterwards confirmed by a letter from Antony) that God has forgiven all those monks who have repented truly for the sins they had committed after baptism.[144] Neither incident, however, is used in the context to justify any real opposition between the monastic sphere and the episcopal sphere nor presumes any clash between two competing authorities or jurisdictions. Indeed, according to the evidence of the documents taken as a whole, Pachomius and his monks always treated the episcopal office with the greatest deference both in theory and in fact, and received in turn exaggerated marks of respect even from Athanasius himself.[145] Nevertheless, it is possible to see in the Vita Pachomii signs that one period of the church's history, a period in which the burden of judgement in matters of discipline was normally if not exclusively an episcopal responsibility, was coming to an end, and that a new period was beginning when the complex relationship between monastic and episcopal authority was also becoming part of the history of ecclesiastical penance.

[Historia Monachorum in Aegypto] This account of a journey to the monastic centres of Egypt in the last decade of the fourth century is another valuable source for monastic customs and institutions of the time.[146] There is much in the Historia Monachorum about the

forgiveness of sins but it is a vexed question how far this material from the monastic milieu concerns ecclesiastical penance properly so called. On the one hand, some of the anecdotes, for example those of the young man guilty of many grave sins including fornication or the story of the proud monk, suggest that serious sins of the kind subject elsewhere to canonical sanctions could be forgiven within the monastic context without any reference to higher church authorities.[147] On the other hand, the Historia also tells the story of the priest Abba Eulogius whose public ἔλεγχος of communicants was so severe that he denied communion to those guilty of certain sins of thought until they repented, a public discipline certainly more rigorous than any that prevailed in the non-monastic churches.[148]

The relationship between sin and the Eucharist is another important theme of the Historia Monachorum and is raised in the work at four different places. The Abba Apollo teaches that worthy communion effects the remission of sins (ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν ) while the Abba Eulogius, as has been seen already, urges those conscious even of unworthy thoughts to withdraw from communion.[149] Abstention from communion after the experience of nocturnal emission is also recommended, but any kind of prolonged absence from the Eucharist is warned against as leading to spiritual death.[150] Underlying all these texts is the dilemma that while the interior dispositions of the communicant can be known (normally) only to himself, in spiritual matters a man is not the best judge of his own case. The conflicting dimensions of this problem were not finally resolved until much later when the conviction prevailed that confession should always precede communion.

The Historia Monachorum also places a strong emphasis on that power or right of intercession for sinners which the Egyptian monks received as a result of their ascetic labours.[151] This intercession could secure the forgiveness of even such a serious sin as murder, or the granting of

a καιρὸς τῆς μετανοίας for a monk at the point of death.[152] Personal holiness was also one of the foundations of the practice of spiritual direction and of the authority it enjoyed among the monks. Exaggerated claims for such authority must be resisted, however, for at least one reference in the Historia shows that while the spiritual director or "father" had become an accepted coenobitic institution, it was not unknown for such men to be remiss in their duties.[153]

A last important observation is that by the end of the fourth century the hagiographical sources already present monastic forgiveness in a ritualized form. The main elements of the ritual include prostration (often accompanied by tears) before the hegumen or holy man, an appeal for forgiveness ("συγχώρησον, πάτερ"), and, often, a particular statement of the sin or offence for which forgiveness is asked ("ὅτι ..."). [154] That this pattern was already familiar in monastic life is confirmed by the parody of the ritual which the demons employ when they attack the humility of John of Lycopolis.[155]

[Historia Lausiaca] Another account of Egyptian monasticism was composed by Palladius and sent to Lausus the chamberlain of Theodosius II.[156] Like the Historia Monachorum, the Lausiac History contains a number of isolated anecdotes that touch upon sin and penance, but they remain anecdotes only. The work attempts no systematic exposition, whether descriptive or analytical, of penance in either its ecclesiastical or monastic forms.

The anecdotal nature of the evidence in the Lausiac History is well illustrated by the six instances of "confession" recounted in it. The circumstances of the various incidents are so diverse that no general pattern of practice can be abstracted from them.[157] In fact among all these confessions only that of the lector accused of fornication may be put forward with any confidence as a reflection of contemporary institutions of ecclesiastical penance.[158] In this case the

bishop receives the complaint, summons his clergy in council, confronts the accused with the charge, secures a "confession" (really the acknowledgement of a deed already notorious, not the voluntary revelation of an unknown sin), and finally pronounces judgement in the form of deposition.[159] The judicial character of such a process is clear but, inasmuch as the case concerns a cleric, it would probably be mistaken to use these very specific details to suggest, even by analogy, the working system of ecclesiastical penance as it may have touched the lives of the laity.[160]

Specific information about "penances" assigned or undertaken for various kinds of sins is also to be found in the Historia Lausiaca, but once again the texts cannot be taken as reflections of an established system of ecclesiastical discipline even within the restricted context of the monastic world.[161] Deposition of a cleric for (alleged) fornication has been noted already.[162] In another case a period of seven years excommunication is imposed on a group of nuns for their responsibility in the suicide of a sister nun.[163] Other references suggest that at least some of the Egyptian monasteries regularly used forms of corporal punishment and periods of incarceration when dealing with sins and other infractions of monastic discipline.[164] These kinds of penances were clearly inflicted on transgressors by the monastic authorities (the "fathers")but in other cases penances were voluntarily undertaken, as in the story of the nun guilty of fornication who voluntarily embraced a penance for her sin by assuming the care of the sick and the lame, a penance which in the event lasted for thirty years.[165]

The Historia Lausiaca gives further evidence of the monastic world at grips with a problem crucial to the later development of penance in the Byzantine church, namely, how to relate the internal world of conscience and individual self-judgement to the external institutions of public discipline now that a more subtle and profound analysis of sin

had made the earlier norms of judgement (public notoriety, triad of grave sins) seem primitive and inadequate. Access to Eucharistic communion is the nub of this problem. On the one hand unworthy communion is rejected, but on the other hand the dangers of prolonged abstention from communion are also made very clear.[166] What assurance (πληροφορία, παρρησία) can a man have that his communion is worthy? In such a dilemma personal scrupulosity can be paralysing, and the case of Moses the Robber illustrates the necessity (and the value) of an external authority or judge in order to remove the paralysis.[167] Plagued by dreams and temptations of lust Moses stays away from communion and is only brought to return when Isidore, the priest of Scete, proclaims to him with authority: "Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πέπαυταί σου τὰ ἐνύπνια· κοινώνησον οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας."[168] The expansion of this role of priest/director in relation to the reception of communion is one of the foundations of the developed Byzantine penitential system.[169]

[Hieronymus] Greek translations of some of Jerome's Lives were already known in the first half of the fifth century (Gregory Nazianzen [BHG 730i], Hilarion [BHG 751z] and Paul of Thebes [BHG 1466]) but none contains any evidence for the practice of ecclesiastical penance.[170]

[Historia Religiosa] Theodoret's picture gallery of Syrian monasticism in the first half of the fifth century contributes further detail to the outline of penitential practice already drawn, but like the Historia Monachorum and the Historia Lausiaca it does not deliberately treat ecclesiastical penance as a matter of interest in itself.[171]

Six examples of the confession of sin occur in the Historia Religiosa, one made to a bishop, one to a priest and four to monks.[172] The value of these cases for determining patterns of ecclesiastical penance is seriously diminished, however, by the fact that each confession either occurs in the context of a miracle and is thus by

definition extraordinary, or is made directly to the one injured by the confessed offence, a circumstance which renders it almost impossible to distinguish between personal pardon and ecclesiastical forgiveness or absolution.[173] The same difficulties of context also plague the interpretation of the language of binding and loosing which occurs frequently in the Historia, and which could normally be taken as referring to the theory and/or practice of ecclesiastical penance.[174]

A few existing clues do seem to point, however, to some reality very like ecclesiastical penance. In Historia Religiosa 13, for example, a bishop who wants to lure a monk from his retreat in order to ordain him is represented as summoning the monk to face written charges which have apparently been laid against him.[175] The incident recalls the disciplinary court faced by the lector in the Historia Lausiaca and presumes both the continued existence of such tribunals and the active exercise of episcopal authority in matters of discipline, even over monks.[176] Such an active ἔλεγχος by the bishop also appears as a presumed part of the episcopal task in Historia Religiosa 1, although here the context is more that of a civil dispute. More importantly, it is explicitly shown by another text (Historia Religiosa 13) that the intention of the bishop's ἔλεγχος is not judicial or vindictive by nature, but medicinal, and leads to μετάνοια.[177]

The other major theme of the Historia relevant to this study is that of the intercession of the holy man. The ascetic life brings about, indeed almost guarantees, the effective intercession of men with God on behalf of their fellow men.[178] Ordinary sinful men are therefore eager to win for themselves the intercession of holy men in order to have their sins forgiven and to secure a προστάτης to act on their behalf in their future relations with God.[179] Emphasis on this kind of intercession is stronger in the Historia Religiosa than in either the Historia Monachorum or the Historia Lausiaca. Among the

reasons for this change may have been a growing understanding and experience of forgiveness of sins among the people as a direct divine act rather than as an act mediated by ecclesiastical authority. Assurance that God had acted directly and effectively in an individual case may have been looked for in the first place from those whose lives in so many other respects gave evidence of a direct, personal and privileged grasp of the divine will.[180]

[Vitae miscellaneae] Neither Theodoret's Laudationes of John Chrysostom ([BHG 878t-878x] reported and excerpted in Photius' Bibliotheca 273) nor the contemporary oratiunculae on Cyrus and John by Cyril of Alexandria ([BHG 472-474] pronounced on the occasion of the translation of the relics) nor the encomia of Antony (BHG 141f) and Procopius (BHG 1584) by Hesychius of Jerusalem make any real contribution to this study.[181] More disappointing is the silence of the Vita Melaniae (BHG 1241), another mid-fifth-century text and a more likely source to illuminate the relations which pious Christians might have been expected to have with the institutions of ecclesiastical penance.[182]

[Vita Syncleticae] The Life of Syncletica (BHG 1694) is another text which may be ascribed to the middle of the fifth century.[183] It is a fertile source of monastic reflection on sin and forgiveness, but it contains relatively few allusions to any form of penance which may properly be called ecclesiastical, even within the restricted monastic ecclesiola. There is no mention, for example, of clergy in connexion with the forgiveness of sin, and the only reference to confession is too vague to be of any use in the reconstruction of monastic penitential institutions.[184] This lack of interest in the externals of penance is most easily explained by the fact that the real concern of the Vita Syncleticae lies in the analysis of the interior struggle against sin.[185] Hence the inner attitudes and true spiritual condition of the sinner receive the greatest attention, and within this perspective penance is

most effective when undertaken voluntarily and in private, for it is not the sin considered in itself which is of primary importance, but the state of the sinner and his or her response to the evil one.[186] Here Vita Syncleticae 52 is the central text, and also shows how what may seem to be contradictory teachings about sin can be maintained simultaneously by the same author.

Inasmuch as the real context for sin and penance is the psychological and spiritual battle waged against the demons, the πάθη and, especially, against discouragement and despair, there can be no single and "objectively" correct response or remedy to the brute external fact of sin, no "penance" to be imposed according to the nature of the sin but without regard to the nature of the sinner. In the perspective of the Vita Syncleticae, therefore, a serious sin in one tempted to discouragement may, and at times must, be made light of. Conversely, a petty fault in one tempted to pride or in those already far advanced in virtue must be treated as a heinous offence.[187] Unreasonable rigour can thus alternate with what appears to be an astonishing laxity as the most appropriate way to prevent despair, cure the wounds of sin and keep the monk or nun advancing on the path of perfection. This flexible and interior approach to the imposition of penances and to judgement concerning the gravity of sin - a policy so much easier to uphold within the closed world of the convent than in the more litigious atmosphere of the urban churches - is fully represented for the first time in the hagiographic sources by the Life of Syncletica.[188]

[Acta Philippi] Of the later apocryphal Acts probably only the Acta Philippi fall within the period ending with the Council of Chalcedon.[189] There is no direct evidence in these Acts for ecclesiastical penance, but several themes should be noticed nevertheless. A concern for church order characteristic of the fifth century is evident when

the apostle is represented as providing κανόνες and τύποι for the Christian community of Nicatera he has founded in Greece, and it is probable that these terms conjured up disciplinary as well as liturgical and theological regulations in the minds of a fifth-century audience.[190] Later in the Acta on the occasion of the ordination of Hireus as bishop of Nicatera, Philip urges the people to open their λογισμοί to their bishop as children to a father. This text may imply, although it does not demand, that the ministry of the confessor was part of any ideal portrait of episcopal activity.[191]

One significant element of Christian penitential understanding that is reflected in the Acta Philippi and has not yet been encountered elsewhere in the hagiographical sources, is the important idea of the connexion between sin and some kind of discipline post mortem. This discipline is perhaps reflected in a reference to the δεσμωτήρια τῆς κρίσεως in which a young man is imprisoned before Philip's intervention raises him from the dead.[192] A more direct assertion of a penance that is post mortem but ante resurrectionem occurs in the Martyrium Philippi when Christ himself descends to "loose" those "bound" under the earth by the ill-judged curse of the irascible apostle and to sentence Philip himself to forty days' exclusion from Paradise after his death for having returned evil for evil.[193] The text goes on to show that in such a case the prayers and intercession of the faithful on earth are directly efficacious in relieving the plight of the dead, a useful reminder that the visible institutions of ecclesiastical penance which are the focus of this study made up only part of the total context within which sin and μετάνοια were considered and dealt with in these early Christian centuries.[194]

3. Conclusions - (a) Despite the great increase in the number of hagiographical documents during the seventy-year period between the

Councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon, it remains true that hagiographers show no particular interest in ecclesiastical penance as a distinct historical or theological theme. Scattered references to the institutions of ecclesiastical penance do exist in the Vitae (ecclesiastical courts and excommunication under episcopal authority are attested, for example, both for Constantinople and elsewhere in the East), but to many historians who have interpreted the "Nectarius incident" of 391/392 as a profound change in the patterns of penance and indeed of church life at this time, it must be said that neither the incident itself nor any of its supposed consequences finds any echo in the hagiography of the time. Nor are the Bussstufen anywhere mentioned or reflected in the details of the Lives, and nothing in the Vitae suggests that any radical change occurred at this period in the actual operation of ecclesiastical penance in the churches.

(b) If ecclesiastical penance as such hardly appears in these Vitae, penance understood as μετάνοια, conversion from sin, increasingly preoccupies the sources, especially those of monastic provenance. Here the primary concern is with the fact of inner conversion (διάθεσις) and not with the consequences and modes of conversion such as absolutions, penances, continuing pastoral care, or what might happen in the case of subsequent relapse into sin. In these anecdotes conversion stands on its own outside the continuing progression of ordinary time in a kind of dramatic isolation. More will be said about the implications of this observation in the General Conclusions to this chapter.

(c) The evidence from these Lives for the practice of confession, especially among the laity, is ambiguous. That individual instances of confession and absolution may have occurred in a manner very similar even to the modern Greek rite is by no means ruled out by the sources examined in this chapter, but there is no suggestion anywhere that the laity

were obliged to confess their sins even for serious moral lapses, or that confession was a repeated and so to say normal aspect of the religious practice of ordinary lay Christians.

(d) The monastic sources of this period (Pachomiana, Historia Monachorum, Historia Lausiaca, Historia Religiosa) show that by the time of the Council of Chalcedon the monastic penitential institutions of confession of λογισμοί, spiritual direction, and the correction of sinners within the sphere of the monastic ecclesiola have become normative. The texts also reflect the first contacts between these monastic patterns and the sphere of episcopal control over church discipline, but it is important to note that the hagiography before Chalcedon reflects no inherent friction or opposition between the two modes of penance.

(e) Prior to 381 the two major differences between the situation at Constantinople and in the rest of the Greek world were the apparent absence of monastic influence from the capital and the relative poverty of the local Constantinopolitan hagiography. By the time of the Council of Chalcedon and with the appearance of the Vita Hypatii these differences have largely disappeared or begun to disappear, although it is only much later that hagiographical evidence from the City becomes as abundant as that from elsewhere in the Byzantine world.

## III GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS (330-451)

It would be tedious simply to repeat here the conclusions already appended to the individual sections above. The analysis will therefore concentrate instead on the ways in which the literary form of the hagiographical sources affects the worth of their evidence for ecclesiastical penance.

1. Taken as a whole the hagiographical corpus down to the time

of Chalcedon presents ecclesiastical penance as a process by nature medicinal and therapeutic. Scattered reminders of a judicial dimension to penance can indeed be found in these texts, but the overwhelming weight of the evidence suggests that it was the world of medicine not the court of law that provided the fundamental analogy which informed the experience of penance in the Byzantine church. Such a medicinal understanding of penance reflects both the monastic provenance of the bulk of the texts and also that deliberate intention to edify which belongs to the genre. It is an understanding of penance which is not merely reflected in the Vitae, but also continuously reinforced by their teaching.

2. Taken together, the hagiographical sources also put forward an image of ecclesiastical penance that is encouraging and even appealing. In the Vitae God always receives back the truly repentant, and all sins no matter how grievous, can be forgiven. Only those die in their sins who cannot bring themselves to repent or who, like Judas, despair of God's mercy. As a genre hagiography displays no rigorist tendency, no suggestion that some sins are inherently unforgivable or that some sinners must necessarily be rejected by ecclesiastical authority.

3. These general observations about penance in the Lives should not, however, obscure the more important fact that hagiography remains a very incomplete and particular kind of source for the history of penance. Important dimensions of that history, for example, the Bussstufen, are totally absent from the Vitae even though they are attested elsewhere in contemporary canons and episcopal correspondence.[195] This silence is a useful counterweight to impressions gleaned solely from these latter sources, but it can easily be misinterpreted itself if the limitations of hagiography as a genre are overlooked.

4. The most important of these limitations lies simply in the anecdotal character of so much of the evidence for penance in the Vitae. The success of the anecdote as a narrative form depends on severe restrictions of time, place and character and on a sharply focussed didactic intent and narrative point of view. In the case of penitential anecdotes, all this inevitably means that many facets of a very complex historical reality have to be sacrificed to requirements of literary form.

In fact most penitential anecdotes can be grouped into two main classes, the one finding its dramatic centre in the conversion (διόρθωσις) of the sinner, and the other in the forgiveness (ἄφεσις) of a particular sin. In anecdotes of the first kind the diagnosis of the sinner's true spiritual condition (often involving the διόρασις of the saint) and the subsequent pastoral treatment required to convert the sinner receive great emphasis. In anecdotes of the second kind the stress falls rather on the power of the saint to intercede for sin and to provide the sinner with direct assurance (πληροφορία) that God has granted him forgiveness. Neither emphasis by itself provides a complete image of the process of ecclesiastical penance and, more importantly, neither class of anecdote extends its narrative interest beyond its own natural dramatic climax (διόρθωσις / ἄφεσις). The result is that certain problems of real importance for the history of penance, as, for example, whether and from what date ecclesiastical forgiveness was granted repeatedly to the same sinner, fall right outside the purview of these narrative forms and so also of the historian's grasp.

5. A second limitation affecting the nature of hagiographical evidence for ecclesiastical penance is the fact that in the main the Lives were written by monks, and that consequently they serve as vehicles for the monastic analysis of sin and its remedies. This analysis,

as noted above in the discussion of the Vita Syncleticae, can often seem self-contradictory because it grew from the observation of actual problems and cases, not from a prefabricated and logically devised penitential "system". The narrative expression of this more pragmatic approach is the διήγησις ψυχωφελής, an expanded form of the "word" (λόγος) given to monks seeking answers to a wide variety of conflicting spiritual ἀπορίαι.[196] Διηγήσεις can therefore be found to illustrate and advocate remedies and positions quite opposed to one another, and the historian anxious to use such sources must, like the monks themselves, know how to harmonize the inconsistencies and contradictions.

6. A final and familiar limitation of the Vitae is the ubiquity of the topoi, those commonplaces of theme, situation and treatment which characterize almost all hagiographical writing. The obvious element of sheer literary routine inherent in the topoi warns the historian against using them naïvely as evidence for the circumstances of any specific time or place, but the kinds of topoi which grow up around a given theme and the changes and developments which such clusters of topoi may undergo in the passage of time are matters of greater nuance. Careful observation here may provide data of real historical value.

It is perhaps premature to look for such "developments" in penitential commonplaces before the time of Chalcedon, but it is right to take note at least of the emergence of a cluster of penitential topoi which by 451 includes the following themes: despair (or the temptation to despair) of salvation or forgiveness because the sinner is convinced that his sin is unique or too heinous to be forgiven; Eucharistic communion as a moment of crisis that lays bare the sin/sinner and provokes his cure or, if he will not repent, his condemnation; confession of sin as a spiritual necessity for the sinner even when his sin may already be known, whether through public notoriety or the διόρθωσις of a

saint; assurance (πληροφορία) given by or through a saint that God has forgiven the sinner his sin. Subsequent chapters of this study will attend to any changes or developments in the constitutive elements of these topoi and will note new topoi as they emerge.

7. In sum therefore the hagiographical evidence for ecclesiastical penance during the period 330-451 may be said to indicate a situation of greater fluidity and indetermination than that which prevailed either during the early Christian centuries or in the later mediaeval period. The disciplinary and pentitential forms and institutions of the pre-Constantinian church (νουθεσία, ἔλεγχος, excommunication and reconciliation under direct episcopal control) certainly continued in existence down to the time of Chalcedon; of that there can be little doubt. At the same time the development of newer institutions under monastic control (disclosure of λογισμοί, confession of sins, the entrusting of one's salvation to a spiritual guide) is also well attested. What the evidence lacks, however, is any indication that an accepted rite or routine for securing forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with the Eucharistic community after serious moral lapses was universally known and practised during this period - let alone required - either at Constantinople or in the rest of the Greek-speaking Christian East. There is certainly no indication in the Vitae that ordinary lay Christians in the normal course of their lives would have come into contact with the institutions of ecclesiastical penance, whether of the older episcopal or of the newer monastic kind.

Such a conclusion should not be unexpected, however, if the historical circumstances of church life at the time are recalled. The rapid increase in the number of Christians during the troubled fourth and fifth centuries, together with the consequent involvement of Christian bishops in important civic and political functions and the

inevitable decline of corporate moral and spiritual standards that this implied, must have made the pre-Constantinian structures of ecclesiastical penance almost wholly irrelevant to the new situation of the church, especially in large cities like Constantinople.[197] The theory underlying the older structures was enshrined in the church canons and so may have continued to be honoured, but the practice must have been very different.[198] Indeed, the history of ecclesiastical penance in the Byzantine church from the fourth century onwards will largely be an account of how the theory and practice of penance came slowly and by stages back together again. By 451 the hagiographical sources reveal the problem clearly but not as yet the solution.

# CHAPTER THREE: FROM CHALCEDON TO THE TRULLAN CANONS (451-692)

# I QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE PENANCE (451-692)

1. The fundamental problem for the historian of Byzantine penance during the period 451-692 is the difficulty of determining with any precision how the work of codifying the canons was related to the practical administrations of penance among ordinary Christians.[1] Canon 2 of the Trullan Council demonstrates that by the end of the seventh century a normative body of canons had been established and was held in great honour, but it is less clear whether this honour should be taken to mean that the specific provisions of the canons, especially in penitential matters, were actually observed as written.[2] In other words, did the labours of the sixth-century canonists in fact provide working manuals for the administration of ecclesiastical penance by bishops and other confessors, or was the whole process of codification at least as much a scholarly as a practical pursuit? The answer to this question will have to take into account the accumulating canonical experience and precedents of the episcopal chanceries (as documented at Constantinople, for example, by Grumel[3]), and examine the curious relationship between the administration of civil and ecclesiastical laws within a single Christian empire, particularly in a period when the two were drawing more closely together as is seen in the emergence of the hybrid legal form of the nomocanon and in certain aspects of the legislation of Justinian.[4]

2. Also of great importance for the history of ecclesiastical penance during the period under review is the development of monastic penitential theory and practice that finds illustration in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, Barsanuphius and John, and the Sinaite school (John Climacus and the various Anastasian writings).[5] In different ways all of these works bear witness to the central part played by the monastic τάγμα in giving shape and theological meaning to the Byzantine experience of penance.[6] Moreover, the value of the distinction between the monastic and episcopal spheres of penance grew

less important during the centuries after Chalcedon as bishops came to be chosen more and more exclusively from among the ranks of the monks.[7]

3. A third element in the background to ecclesiastical penance during the period from 451 to 692, and one which is too easily overlooked, is the influence of the liturgical environment that was being created by the growth of hymnody and of new forms of liturgical expression within the Byzantine church.[8] The construction of Hagia Sophia made Constantinople a liturgical as well as a political capital of the empire, but the significance of this influence within the history of Byzantine penance remains largely unexplored.[9]

4. Penance did not remain wholly outside the public interests of the Byzantine world in these centuries. Ecclesiastical reconciliation continued to be a significant matter at the heart of both church life and imperial politics because of the many breaches of communion and dislocations of allegiance that marked the course of the Monophysite and Monothelite controversies.[10] It will be of interest to this study to see the extent to which such questions are reflected in the hagiographical evidence. Moreover, the reverses suffered by the Eastern empire at the hands of the Persians and the Arabs created a changed climate of pessimism and self-judgement. Byzantine Christians began to interpret their own history on the pattern of the experience of Israel in the Old Testament, and to see in their historical misfortunes and defeats the punishment of God for their sins.[11] The place of ecclesiastical penance within this new climate merits investigation.

5. Finally, the period from Chalcedon to the Trullan Council provides many valuable materials for comparing the penitential practices and institutions of the Greek church with those of other Christian churches both in the East (Syria, Armenia) and in the West where the appearance of the first <u>libri poenitentiales</u> in the sixth century marks the beginnings of the modern penitential discipline of the Latin church.[12]

# II THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

## A. The Rise of Constantinople 451-527

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vita Marciani et Martyrii] The account of the martyrdom of the Holy Notaries Marcianus and Martyrius, clerics of the church of Constantinople in the fourth century (BHG 1028y, 1028z), exists in two recensions from the latter half of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth.[13] The texts contain no clear reference to ecclesiastical penance.[14]

[Vita Alexandri Acoemetae] The Life of Alexander (BHG 47) is one of the first hagiographical witnesses to strained relationships between monks and the secular clergy; it may be dated to the early sixth century.[15] In one place in the Life a cleric laments that he has been deprived of his living and of his good name by the reputation for holiness that the monks enjoy among the laity.[16] This popular reputation is further illustrated by the story of the curse of three years' drought laid by Alexander upon a town. The townspeople only secure the lifting of the curse by having their own bishops go to intercede with Alexander, a sign that the saint is thought to move in a sphere quite different from that in which the authority of the bishops holds sway.[17]

Although the Vita Alexandri contains no direct testimony to ecclesiastical penance, it shows that monastic penitential discipline, which included excommunication, confession and penances, dealt unhesitatingly with cases - such as the misappropriation of church goods - that might fall elsewhere under the episcopal discipline.[18] In the Life of Alexander, however, no reference is made to such episcopal authority; all is resolved within the precincts of the monastery by the hegumen himself.[19]

[Vita Danielis Stylitae] The Life of Daniel the Stylite (BHG 489) is an excellent source of evidence for the life of the City in the late fifth or early sixth centuries, but it proves a disappointment to the

student of ecclesiastical penance.[20] There is only one rather oblique reference to the deposition of some clerics by Gennadius of Constantinople,[21] and perhaps two allusions to reconciliation of heretics, one to the case of a private citizen and the other to that of the Emperor Basiliscus, although the circumstances in both instances make it difficult to be sure that full ecclesiastical reconciliation is being described.[22] In the case of the private individual, a heretic who had slandered Daniel and was then possessed by a demon as punishment, the final cure of the man is effected within three days of his penitent return to the saint, and may be presumed to imply reconciliation and forgiveness as well, although these are nowhere expressly mentioned.[23] The same two cases also provide the Life's only examples of confession, and in each instance the confession has to be extracted from the sinner by God's punitive action, whether begun or only threatened. It is not the voluntary choice of the sinner himself. And while the Life insists on the number of people, nobles included, who frequented Daniel to secure his blessing and spiritual guidance, it does not mention the confession and forgiveness of sins directly.[24]

The Vita Danielis provides further evidence for the difficult matter of the relationship between the pastoral ministry which monks exercised among the ordinary people and the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical hierarchs. Friction existed between Daniel the popular ascetic and some of the clergy who felt that he threatened their livelihood, but the archbishop is represented as supporting Daniel against his accusers and indeed subsequently ordains him as a priest.[25] This co-opting of the holy man by the bishop together with certain other references in the Life (for example, to the archimandrites in the archbishop's entourage and to Daniel's own explicit recommendations to his monks that they must respect the shepherds responsible for the flock), suggest that it would be wrong to interpret the undeniable popularity of the monks as a declared challenge to the authority of the ordained clergy or as the reflection of a radical opposition between Charisma

and Amt.[26] Thus when the Life uses "charismatic" language to describe the intercession of the holy man (as in the cases of the heretic and the emperor) it must be remembered that the holy man (Daniel) is also a priest, and that the nature of his intercession thereby differs substantially from that of the ordinary monk.[27]

[Vita Symeonis Stylitae] The wildly various nature of the textual tradition of the Life of Symeon Stylites by Antonius (BHG 1682-1683) makes the document difficult to date, but if Peeters is correct in believing that Antonius wrote the Life in Constantinople, perhaps within the provincia of the monastery of Daniel at Anaplus, then it may not be amiss to consider the evidence of the Life in loose connexion at least with that of the Vita Danielis.[28]

In fact the Life of Symeon contains very little about the forgiveness of sin. The only example of a confession is a purely commonplace acknowledgement of injustice done to the saint by his hegumen and fellow monks, a confession provoked by divine warning in a dream.[29] More important are two incidents in which lay people are portrayed as doing penance and finding forgiveness for their sins in the monastery that grew up around Symeon.[30] At first sight these cases recall the conversi of the Western church, that is, laymen who fulfilled the term of their ecclesiastical penances within a monastery although without becoming monks, but closer analysis makes the comparison seem less likely.[31] In the case of the deer slayers many details of the story, especially the nature of their sin, are unclear, and their penitential stay in the monastery coincides with the healing of the dumbness with which they were afflicted by Symeon.[32] In the other incident, an ἀρχιλῃστής comes to Symeon to obtain asylum from his pursuers, and although guilty of very serious sins, the brigand is clearly counted among the just after only two hours of weeping at the column of the saint.[33] This is an evident topos: sincere conversion is always acceptable

to God and can be measured only by the depth of contrition not by the time spent in doing penance.[34] It is a support to this teaching that Symeon remains a rather remote figure throughout the anecdote.

The Vita does contain numerous illustrations of a theme of real importance for the question of the forgiveness of sins, namely, the meaning of the saint's intercession. Symeon is able to provide sinners with the assurance (πληροφορία) that their repentance has been accepted by God and that their sins are forgiven.[35] Moreover, his death is interpreted by the people as the removal of a barrier which has been protecting them from the effects of their sins, for they attribute directly to Symeon's prayers the power to avert God's just sentence against them.[36] This last passage also shows that a general sinfulness was presumed to characterize the lives of ordinary Christians, a judgement of some relevance to the history of ecclesiastical penance.[37] The intercessory power enjoyed by Symeon attaches also to his relics as the story of the necrophiliac in Vita 31 testifies. Here too the curing of a pathological condition (dumbness) is taken as a sign that freedom from sin has been granted through the saint's intercession.[38] Evidence from elsewhere in the Life that the saint in glory can "overrule" a bishop's decision is no proof, however, for the exaltation of monastic power over episcopal jurisdiction, although it is true that the Greek Life quietly presumes that the ideal of Christian holiness is really only possible within the monastic πολιτεία.[39]

[Vita Auxentii] For the historian of penance at Constantinople the Life of Auxentius (BHG 199) is an especially valuable source to illustrate the spread of monastic influence among the laity of the City and of its Asiatic environs.[40] The Life, however, touches directly upon the institutions of ecclesiastical penance only once in reference to a certain Marcianus, a former Novatianist layman reconciled with the Catholic church who afterwards becomes the οἰκονόμος of Hagia Sophia.[41] The story demonstrates

that the mere fact of having undergone ecclesiastical reconciliation (at least in cases of schism) was not considered an automatic impediment to subsequent ordination and high ecclesiastical office, a significant difference from the disciplinary practice of the Western church.[42]

Allusions to the ἔλεγχος of sin and to confession occur in the Vita Auxentii, but only as subordinate elements in anecdotes that recount the healing of the sick or the confounding of those sceptical of the saint's powers.[43] The Life nowhere states that people resorted to Auxentius, an ordained priest, for the express purpose of obtaining the forgiveness of their sins.[44]

Nevertheless, the Life does show in some detail the kind of relationship that was growing up between monks and the laity. Both nobles and ordinary lay people make frequent visits to Auxentius not only to be healed but also to benefit from his teaching.[45] Visitors from Constantinople are especially numerous. Auxentius receives them warmly and has them share his monastic regimen of prayer and reading for a few hours before he sends them on their way home.[46] The Vita also makes much of Auxentius' liturgical activity as a writer of troparia and of other hymns which he teaches to his lay visitors.[47] At this first stage of the great flowering of Byzantine liturgical poetry into that religious environment which moulded the piety of the Greek Christian world, it is significant that the penitential vision of monasticism should be so central: Ἐν ψυχῇ τεθλιμμένῃ προσπίπτομέν σοι, καὶ δεόμεθά σου, Σῶτερ τοῦ κόσμου· σὺ γὰρ εἶ Θεὸς τῶν μετανοούντων.[48]

[Vita Euphemiae] Nothing in the "epic Passion" of the Chalcedonian martyr Euphemia (BHG 619d) is of direct interest to this study.[49]

2. Other Vitae [Vita et Miracula Theclae] The Life and Miracles of Thecla (BHG 1717, 1718, 1718m, 1720) portray sin and ecclesiastical discipline within the very limited but important context of a pilgrim

shrine, in this case that of St. Thecla near Seleucia in Isauria.[50] Here sins are primarily offences committed against the saint herself. To misbehave at the shrine is to doubt and mock the power of Thecla and to incur her punishment.[51] When once a πτῶσις has been committed, for example, theft, the most pressing concern of the sinner is to recover the εὔνοια of the saint by amending his life; a prolonged penance does not seem to be envisaged in this context.[52]

One of the sections of the Miracula Theclae in which the anonymous hagiographer provides a great deal of detail about his own life demonstrates that a system of ecclesiastical penance was in full working order in Seleucia in the third quarter of the fifth century, at least for clerics. The author, a priest/διδάσκαλος of the shrine, reveals that he himself had been excommunicated by the bishop, Basil of Seleucia, as a result of denunciations made by a certain Eubulus.[53] The excommunication was withdrawn after three days, but was apparently re-imposed by Basil's successor Porphyrius, although the circumstances of this latter excommunication are not wholly clear.[54] The situation of the author may be taken as proof, however, that excommunication (ἀκοινωνησία) continued in use as a means of ecclesiastical discipline.[55]

[Vitae martyrum] The "Passio Asiatica" of Cosmas and Damian (BHG 372), the Passion of the martyr Nicetas the Goth (BHG 1339) and the encomium of Theodore by Chrysippus of Jerusalem (BHG 1765c) may be taken together as belonging to this period; none deals specifically with ecclesiastical penance although the encomium of Theodore illustrates the importance attached to the intercession of the saints in bringing sinners to repentance.[56]

[Varia monstica] The text of the Visio of Diadochus of Photike (BHG 2470) and of the Greek translation of Jerome's Vita Hilarionis (BHG 753) were certainly in circulation before the end of the fifth century; one example of excommunication within a monastery is described in the

Life of Hilarion, but there is no other trace of ecclesiastical penance in either document.[57]

[Vita Theognii] This Life, a panegyric delivered in 526 at the monastery of Theodosius by Paulus Helladicus (BHG 1786) contains no direct allusion to ecclesiastical penance, but it does touch upon some important kindred themes.[58] Foremost among these is the spread of monastic influence among lay people, especially in the area of spiritual direction. Lay people are portrayed in the Vita as frequent visitors to the monastery of Theognius, as recipients from him of spiritual direction and healing, and also as hosts in their own homes to monastic travellers.[59] The breadth of contact attested here points to precisely the kind of milieu in which the laity may have begun to become familiar with and even to assimilate various monastic customs - including those of the confession of sins and of λογισμοί - into their own lives of piety.[60]

Two further penitential themes are present in the Life of Theognius. The first, an important topos in all later hagiography, is the assertion that God punishes the sins of Christians directly, using for this purpose the reverses and catastrophes of history and nature.[61] The second, also a topos, is the conviction that the moment of death represents the closing of the door of God's mercy on sin. Even though forgiveness is always available μέχρι θανάτου to all who wish to repent, after death there can be no possibility for repentance.[62]

[Vita Cyrici et Iulittae] The Passion of the martyrs Cyricus and Julitta (BHG 314) is preserved from the reign of Justinus but contributes nothing to the subject of this study.[63]

[Vita Isaiae] A brief hagiographical text from the writings of John Rufus (+ c. 520), this "Life" (BHG 2207) extols the importance of revealing one's conscience to "experienced and spiritual elders" ( γέρουσιν ἐμπείροις καὶ πνευματικοῖς ) but contains no direct evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[64]

3. Conclusions (a) Direct testimony to ecclesiastical penance in the Vitae of the period after Chalcedon down to the beginning of the reign of Justinian remains very sparse both at Constantinople and in the rest of the Greek speaking world. In particular, very little evidence exists to cast light on the nature of the contact that ordinary laymen may have had with the institutions of ecclesiastical penance. The extant allusions and anecdotes deal almost exclusively with clerics and the discipline proper to them. Nothing in the hagiography suggests, however, that the practice of ecclesiastical penance during this period - whatever it may or may not have been - differed from that of the previous period in any significant way.

(b) The hagiographical sources do furnish evidence of an increasing penetration of monastic influence into the lives of lay people, and this influence must be deemed to have provided the foundation which enabled the monastic customs of confession and spiritual direction to spread among ordinary Christians.

It is important at this stage, however, neither to exaggerate the monastic influence in itself nor to overlook certain factors that limited its impact. The Vitae do not present the growth of such influence in startling and dramatic terms, but portray it simply as an element of Christian life more and more to be taken for granted. The Lives also supply indications, however, that this influence was not universally accepted. An undeniable pessimism about the quality of contemporary monasticism is betrayed by these texts, and this diffidence, taken together with instances of direct lay opposition to the monks, must temper any account of the rise of monastic power and influence.[65] Another factor which may be thought to have limited the impact of monastic spiritual culture among the laity is the existence of a division attested in the Vitae between lay Christians who were actively interested in religious matters and those who were not.[66] There is scant reason to believe that the former group included the majority of ordinary

Christians, and this consideration must also be allowed its proper weight in measuring the progress of monastic customs and practices among the mass of ordinary believers.

(c) The hagiographical evidence at this period also presents a new dimension that merits notice here. It is plain that the many Lives written during the period before Chalcedon continued to be read and to influence later generations of Christians, something evident not only in the prominence of the topos as a constituent element of hagiographical style but also in the self-conscious use that is made of hagiographical exempla by the subjects of the Lives themselves.[67] It must be presumed therefore that the portrait of ecclesiastical penance as it was contained in the hagiographical corpus also enjoyed the same kind of accumulating and increasingly normative authority that was beginning to be attached to the hagiographical tradition as a whole.[68]

This same process of literary accumulation also contributed to a problem already noted, namely, the presence of apparently contradictory themes within the same Lives.[69] For example, to the well-attested hagiographical emphasis on divine mercy and φιλανθρωπία Lives from the Period 451-527 add a new emphasis (based upon new historical circumstances and experiences) on the just anger of God towards sin and also, at least collectively, towards sinners.[70] The appearance of the new theme will not necessarily mean, however, the disappearance of the old. The writers themselves find ways to harmonize opposing tendencies and parts of the tradition, and this subjective need to harmonize must be given as important a place in any account of Byzantine piety as the new emphases that mark particular periods.

(d) The Lives witness to no significant distinctions between penitential language, institutions and practice at Constantinople and those which obtained elsewhere in the Greek east.

## B. The Reign of Justinian 527-565

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vita Marcelli Acoemetae] The Life of

Marcellus (BHG 1027z) is the only major Constantinopolitan Vita which can be ascribed to the reign of Justinian.[71] It does not refer to ecclesiastical penance but it provides another example of the pastoral ministry of monks in the City. A cleric on his deathbed sends to Marcellus at the monastery of the Acoemetae to come and say the prayers for the dying over him. This pastoral involvement of monks in the lives of the laity, especially at such crucial moments as death, deserves notice although the text itself does not prove that the deathbed ritual included either confession of sin or any kind of ecclesiastical absolution or reconciliation.[72]

In fact the Life contains only one instance of a confession of sin and it is significant that this confession is not volunteered by the sinner himself but is provoked by the διορατικὸν χάρισμα of Marcellus.[73] Confession of λογισμοί, however, is portrayed as an established and expected part of the monastic routine.[74] A more telling indication of the state of penitential practice among the monks at Constantinople is revealed by the attitude Marcellus adopted towards monks who left the monastery but who later repented and wished to return. According to the testimony of his successor Thalassius, Marcellus would receive such men back not just once, twice or even three times, but as often as they repented, and this in spite of the traditional view that a man's abandonment of his monastery for the world was a seriously sinful act.[75] It is plain from the text, however, that Marcellus' example is deemed exceptional and that such repeated reconciliation was still not the common practice.[76]

[Vita Olympiadis] The Life of Olympias (BHG 1375), deaconess of the church of Constantinople and friend of John Chrysostom, has a probable terminus ad quem of 532.[77] It provides no direct evidence for ecclesiastical penance and only a vague and possible hint that deaconesses may have played some role in preparing sinners for reconciliation.[78]

2. Other Vitae [Vita Cyrici et Iulittae] Another account of the passion of these martyrs by Theodore of Iconium (BHG 315) can be dated to c. 530 but does not refer to ecclesiastical penance.[79]

[Vita Nicolai] The Praxis de stratelatis (BHG 1349z) probably composed shortly after 550 illustrates the working of ecclesiastical penance as Nicholas, bishop of Myra, upbraids a local magistrate for the injustice of condemning innocent people to death.[80] The man appears to repent but Nicholas then goes on to reveal his unconfessed crime of taking bribes. He forgives the man only at the insistent intercession of those who had been falsely condemned.[81] The story is frankly legendary and the details not to be pressed, but at least two principles emerge from the account. The first is that the ἔλεγχος of sin and injustice within the community was still considered an episcopal responsibility in the mid-sixth century, and the second is that when such ἔλεγχος succeeded in putting an end to sin (and to its consequences: ἐκκυρώσας τὰ ἀδίκως παρ' αὐτοῦ πραχθέντα ), forgiveness could then be granted immediately without imposing the penalties apparently required by the canons.[82]

[Vita Theodosii] The Life of Theodosius of Jerusalem (BHG 1776) is the first of a group of mid-sixth-century Vitae devoted to the memory of the great figures of Palestinian monasticism.[83] As might be expected, it has little to say of ecclesiastical penance in the episcopal sphere, nor is it much concerned with the life of the laity. However, as hegumen of his monastery and archimandrite for the cœnobitic monks in the region of Jerusalem, Theodosius is portrayed as the undisputed spiritual father (πατὴρ πνευματικός ) of those who come to him.[84] This position implies that he is not only responsible for the spiritual direction of his flock, but also that he is the centre of discipline and penance.[85] Thus Theodosius announces to the patriarch, in a letter from himself and Sabas, that they will accept reconciliation with Monophysites only after the due canonical procedures.[86] For monastic sinners Theodosius arranged a "monastery within a monastery"

apart from the general life of the κοινόβιον and under his personal care.[87] That this care was personal is reflected in the report that having excommunicated a brother (within the monastery), he himself also abstained from communion until the penalty on the brother was lifted.[88]

This personal involvement in and responsibility for the salvation of his spiritual children finds it highest expression in Vita 60 when Theodosius, at the point of death, promises his monks that if they persevere in obedience to the hegumens who will come after him, he will make himself responsible for their souls on the day of judgement, a promise to be confirmed by a divine sign, namely, the continued growth of the Theodosian community.[89]

[Cyrillus Scythopolitanus] The corpus of monastic Lives written by Cyril of Scythopolis during the years after the middle of the sixth century is a rich storehouse of knowledge for the study of penance both ecclesiastical and monastic.[90]

In the realm of ecclesiastical penance the Lives demonstrate that excommunication, the formal reconciliation of heretics and the confession and forgiveness of serious sin all continued in existence during the sixth century. In the Vita Abraamii Bishop Plato of Krateia invokes the ecclesiastical canons in order to make Abraamius, a priest, return to Krateia. When Abraamius still does not return, the bishop finally sends him notice that he has been excommunicated. Attempts to have the excommunication lifted (λῦσαι τὸν ἀφορισμόν) by Elias the archbishop of Jerusalem fail when Elias declares it uncanonical for one bishop to loose the excommunication imposed by another, especially when the excommunicating bishop is still alive and not present himself.[91] In the Life of Sabas, Cyril reports similar scruples held by Sabas and his monks and observes with disapproval the action of Peter the Fuller who returned to his see before the ἀναθέματα against him had been formally loosed.[92] The same Life also recounts that the priest Dometianus died an excommunicate (ἀκοινώνητος) at Constantinople.[93]

The practice of monastic excommunication is also attested. In one case

when a monk castrates himself in order to escape πορνεία , Sabas expells him from the monastery, reckoning the crime as the equivalent of suicide.[94] Theodosius then intercedes with Sabas on the monk's behalf and sees that he is taken back as a penitent. Ultimately he is reconciled by Sabas.[95] Voluntary withdrawal from communion is urged by Euthymius for those overcome by any of the λογισμοί and until such time as they have cleansed themselves by the appropriate penance.[96] There are, however, in these texts no examples of excommunication of the laity.

Another aspect of ecclesiastical penance is the reconciliation of heretics and the Cyrillan Lives provide a number of illustrations of this practice. Two kinds of reconciliation can be distinguished, the first dealing with groups of heretics, such as Nonnus and his party in the Vita Sabae, and the second with individuals, such as the nephew of the Constantinopolitan deaconess Basilina.[97] Both types are instructive. The reconciliation of Nonnus involves a certain amount of negotiation with the archbishop of Jerusalem over the conditions of return, and the reconciliation itself, conceived as a "loosing of ἀναθέματα," is finally performed in private (κατ' ἰδίαν) in order to avoid the possibility of disorder.[98] The reconciliation of the nephew of Basilina is an even more private affair. Bishop John, having originally refused even to bless the young man as being a Monophysite, then confounds him by the exercise of his διορατικὸν χάρισμα. Ultimately, however, a firm promise of amendment (that is, to join in communion with the Catholic Church) is all that is required of him, and the bishop receives the youth immediately to communion.[99] Elsewhere, reconciliation/communion is normally preceded by an anathema which the heretic pronounces against his former beliefs.[100] Evidence that in the time of Justinian bishops could invoke real sanctions when there was need is provided by the passage in the Vita Sabae where Patriarch Eustochius of Jerusalem calls in the forces of the Duke Anastasius in order to expel recalcitrant monks from the New Lavra.[101]

A further area of ecclesiastical penance attested in these Lives is

the confession of serious sin. Twelve examples of confession are recounted by Cyril but only two of these concern laymen. In one case, two brigands (λῃσταί) are saved from a lion by the invocation of Sabas' name; they return to him afterwards, prostrate themselves before him and promise never again to do injustice to others.[102] In a second and similar anecdote certain shepherds who have been miraculously punished for mistreating anchorites come to Sabas, prostrate themselves before him and give promise of amendment. Sabas accepts the promises, prays over them, blesses them and lets them go.[103] In both instances the confession is clearly an exceptional event provoked by miracle, not a part of any normal pattern of lay piety. The assured conversion of the sinner is also the only important circumstance of the confessions, there is no reference to any kind of ἐπιτίμιον to follow Sabas' dismissal of the men.[104]

The other examples of the confession of sin all take place within a monastic context and even here the majority of these are also provoked by some miraculous intervention of the saint. Voluntary confessions normally concern the disclosure of λογισμοί rather than of actual sins.[105] An interesting example of a confession occurs in the Life of John the Hesychast. John, a bishop living incognito in the monastery of Sabas, finds that Sabas wishes to have him ordained as priest in Jerusalem. He is only able to maintain the secret of his identity by feigning to confess some impediment to his ordination privately to the bishop beforehand.[106] This use of confession as a ploy to avoid discovery suggests that the institution itself was a familiar one and that a certain secrecy surrounded it.[107]

The forgiveness that followed upon the confession of serious sin (or its discovery) is not dwelt upon in the Lives, although three instances in the Life of Sabas indicate how such forgiveness was understood. The monk James who castrated himself, the muleteer Aphrodisius who killed his mule, and the monk Flavius who fell into fornication, all finally achieve divine forgiveness.[108] In the first two cases the fact of this forgiveness is made

known by a special revelation from God and is sealed by the return of the brother to the community, a return which is marked particularly by the kiss of peace. In the last case the process seems to be the same but the language is less specific.[109] There is thus nothing automatic or routine about the securing of forgiveness, but it is fittingly celebrated by a rite of reconciliation.

The Cyrillan Lives are also the first hagiographical documents in which some kind of deathbed penance (or perhaps, repentance) has any prominent place. No mention is made of penance at the deaths of the subjects of the Lives, but in other cases the matter is decidedly different. A layman guilty of perjury is miraculously beaten by Euthymius in a dream and warned that his soul will be demanded of him that very night.[110] He asks to be taken to the monastery of Euthymius and confesses that he has sinned against the saint, but the story also seems to imply that this late conversion was not successful.[111] Another deathbed confession, this one by the monk James, is more successful. James manages to bring himself, literally with his last breath, to ask forgiveness for his sins of lying and disobedience to Sabas. When Sabas forgives him and raises him up to receive the Eucharist, James is immediately restored to full health.[112] The miraculous healing is in fact the point of the whole anecdote, but the insistent desire of the sinner to be forgiven before he dies remains nevertheless a significant detail, though a curiously isolated one among all the Lives so far examined.

In addition to the evidence directly concerned with ecclesiastical penance the Cyrillan corpus also contains other relevant materials. There are texts, for example, that point to the growth of the custom of lay people receiving spiritual direction from monks.[113] Another text suggests that the subjective standard for the worthy reception of the Eucharist was becoming more exacting as the full Evagrian doctrine of the λογισμοί was explicitly applied to the self-judgement required from all before communion.[114] It is not difficult to see that such a doctrine must have influenced many to abstain

from communion for longer and longer periods or to have sought some external πληροφορία that they were indeed approaching communion with the proper dispositions.

A final theme relevant to ecclesiastical penance in the Lives composed by Cyril of Scythopolis is the relationship which obtained between the world of the monasteries and the wider world of episcopal authority. Charismatic language is certainly to be found in the Vitae, but it is balanced by a very large body of evidence which shows that monasteries lived quite consciously within the sphere of episcopal jurisdiction, and that whatever their de facto independence in daily matters they did not consider their own sphere to be above that of the bishops.[115] An instructive example of the harmony achieved between the two spheres is provided by the account of the priestly ordination of Sabas by the archbishop Sallustius. The bishop himself proclaims that the choice of Sabas comes from God not from himself and that he, the bishop, has been merely the instrument of God's will: "ἰδοὺ ἔχετε τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ τῆς κατ' ὑμᾶς λαύρας ἡγούμενον, ὅνπερ ὁ θεὸς ἄνωθεν ἐμηφίσατο καὶ οὐκ ἄνθρωπος. ἐγὼ γὰρ μόνον χειροτετήκας τὴν θείαν ἐκύρωσα χῆφον."[116] Here the holy man is co-opted by the episcopal authority, and it is from the mouth of the hierarch that the language of "enthusiasm" comes forth.

[Vita Nicolai] The earliest complete Life of Nicolas is not that of the bishop of Myra, but the Vita of an archimandrite of the monastery of Sion near Myra composed at the end of the reign of Justinian.[117] Despite its very real interest to church historians the Life contains no evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[118]

[Vita Arethae] The Life of the martyr Arethas (BHG 166) comes from the end of Justinian's reign or from the period just after it.[119] It contributes nothing to the study of ecclesiastical penance but it does provide the first example in Christian literature of a monarch who leaves his throne to become a monk. Even if the story is imaginative and legendary, it surely reflects the attraction that the monastery already exercised on all levels of Greek

lay life and would exercise increasingly strongly in the future.[120]

3. Conclusions (a) The hagiography from the reign of Justinian proves to be a disappointingly meagre field for the historian of ecclesiastical penance. Evidence is scant and repetitive. This may be a sign that the institutions of ecclesiastical penance continued to function more or less in the same pattern that characterized the years from 451 to 527, or it may simply reflect the fact that the reign of Justinian constitutes a rather artificial "period" for the study of ecclesiastical institutions. Nevertheless, if any of the many silences in the evidence from this age may be taken as significant, it must be that which surrounds the laity. The hagiography of the age of Justinian provides no examples of the excommunication of laymen or of the application of ecclesiastical penalties against them.

(b) Of the positive evidence for ecclesiastical penance in the period from 527 to 565 only the reconciliation of heretics stands out as a theme of particular importance to the age. Significantly this reconciliation is understood as the loosing of a bond.

(c) The hagiographical sources of the period are almost totally monastic in origin both at Constantinople and elsewhere. The literary milieu peculiar to monasticism is well illustrated by Cyril of Scythopolis who frequently portrays his monastic heroes as raconteurs trading their favourite διηγήματα to recall the past and to give point to their moral and spiritual teachings.[121]

(d) Among topoi the commonplace that God punishes the sins of Christians in nature and history strikes ever deeper roots among the Vitae of the period - in spite of the relative successes of Justinian's imperial adventures - and is established as characteristic of the Byzantine understanding of history.[122] The same Vitae also display certain signs that the deathbed is beginning to be the focus of increased penitential anxieties and perhaps also of new penitential practices.

(e) The poverty of hagiographical materials coming directly from a Con-

stantinopolitan milieu during the years 527 to 565 makes impossible any valid comparison between the practice of ecclesiastical penance in the City and that in the provinces.

C. After Justinian to Heraclius 565-610

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vita Menae] The short Life of the Patriarch Menas (BHG 1272) who opposed Pope Vigilius at Constantinople is remarkable only for the incident in which Vigilius imposes an ἐπιτίμιον on Menas.[123] The term itself is an important one in the history of penance but the context of high church politics in this case is far removed from the ordinary workings of ecclesiastical discipline.

[Vita Eutychii] The Life of another Patriarch of Constantinople, Eutychius (BHG 657), was written very soon after his death by a disciple named Eustratius and contains much important evidence for the practice of ecclesiastical penance in the City during the late sixth century.[124]

The Life shows, for example, that canonical ἐπιτίμια were invoked by bishops against other bishops and that church life was greatly complicated for the ordinary faithful by the frequent ruptures of communion between hierarchs.[125] More important than these matters of imperial and hierarchical policy, however, is the witness of the Vita Eutychii that it was the bishop himself who remained at the centre of ecclesiastical discipline. This is expressed in summary fashion by the author when he alludes explicitly to the episcopal ideal of moderation in discipline described by Nazianzen in the Laudatio Basilii, namely, that ἐπιτίμησις remains part of the task of the bishop but it must be exercised in a fatherly spirit.[126] A more specific and telling example of episcopal discipline is found in the story of the perjurer who has been struck blind by God.[127] The man comes to Eutychius making a forthright confession of his sin and proclaiming his faith in the scriptural assurance that God had given the power of binding and loosing to his priests (that is, bishops) through the holy apostles.[128] Eutychius, who has

been given the power of healing as well as that of "loosing", first forgives the man's sin and then cures his blindness.[129] This explicit acknowledgement of the power of the bishop to forgive sins (on the basis of Mt 18:18) is a central element in the anecdote even though the confession itself, as provoked by miracle, cannot be considered as a normal penitential practice.

A similar instance of confession (though complicated here by the possibility that the penitent is also a demoniac) witnesses to the authority that bishops exercised in the monastic sphere as well. Eutychius hears the confession of a monk and without consulting the hegumen sends the monk back to his monastery and to the habit he had abandoned.[130] The incident recalls the fact that Eutychius himself had previously held the position of catholicos/archimandrite over all the monks in the metropolia of Amasea.[131]

Several anecdotes in the Life reveal a connexion between the forgiveness of sins and the use of holy oil (τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαιον). This is illustrated in the case of the blind perjurer mentioned above whose cure is effected by an anointing with holy oil over a period of three days, and the connexion is even more evident in Vita 45 where this anointing is described as customary with Eutychius and is identified directly with the anointing referred to in Jas 5:14.[132]

The Life of Eutychius also betrays some of the practical limitations which must be kept in mind when discussing the workings of ecclesiastical penance. The modern discipline of requiring confession before communion is sometimes assumed to have been in force at this time by present-day historians of the period.[133] But the Vita says nothing of this, and in its account of the return of Eutychius to the City in 577 it relates that he was kept for six hours in Hagia Sophia distributing communion to those who wanted to receive the mysteries directly from his own hands.[134] In the absence of any positive evidence of the fact, it would be mistaken to presume that these enormous numbers of people must also have made, or been expected to make, confession of their sins before receiving communion, and this more especially as Eutychius himself had not been present beforehand to hear the confessions or to delegate others to hear them.[135] The

hagiographical sources continue to present confession, therefore, as an exceptional not a normal event in a Christian's life, and as something almost invariably bound up with some extraordinary act of bodily healing, exorcism or divine παιδεία.

[Vita Elizabeth/Vita Matronae] These two late sixth-century Lives of Constantinopolitan abbesses (BHG 2121/BHG 1221) demonstrate once again that the leading monastic figures of the City exercised a notable pastoral and spiritual ministry among the laity and among the nobles in particular, but they provide no evidence relevant to the history of ecclesiastical penance.[136]

[Miracula Cosmae et Damiani] The first two collections of miracles attached to the shrine of Cosmas and Damian at Constantinople (BHG 385-386, 387) are dated to the end of the sixth and to the beginning of the seventh century.[137] They include only one anecdote that has any bearing at all on the theme of ecclesiastical penance, the story of a certain Martha who had been much given to unchastity in her earlier life. It need only be remarked that the account of her conversion and of her subsequent attempt to lead a virtuous life makes no reference to any recourse to ecclesiastical penance or indeed to the need for any such recourse.[138] For the rest, penitential themes in the Miracula are few and unimportant.

[Vita Ioannis Ieiunatoris] The fragmentary condition of the Life of John the Faster (BHG 893), Patriarch of Constantinople from 582 to 595, is a great disappointment to the historian of ecclesiastical penance.[139] To John the Faster are traditionally ascribed the earliest Libri poenitentiales of the Greek church, and even if this ascription is unlikely, there is reason to believe that John himself may have played a part in the canonical labours associated with the name of John Scholasticus, labours which raise the vital question whether or to what extent the detailed prescriptions of the earlier penitential canons influenced the actual practice of ecclesiastical penance in the late sixth century.[140] It is a matter of regret, then, that the fragments of the Life preserved from the Acta of the seventh ecumenical council reflect only the parti-

cular concerns of the later struggle against iconoclasm and contain nothing that deals with ecclesiastical penance or allows the historian to gauge the extent of the patriarch's own activity in the area of ecclesiastical discipline.

[Vitae Golinduch] The various documents that describe the Life and Passion of the Persian martyr Golinduch (BHG 700, 701, 702b), and which seem to have been collected at Constantinople in connexion with her cult, provide no direct evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[141]

2. Other Vitae. Sixth Century Lives: [Vitae Martyrum] Seven Lives of martyrs can be assigned with some confidence to the second half of the sixth century: the Passions of Albianus (BHG 2020), Barlaam (BHG 221), Cleonicus Eutropius and Basiliscus (BHG 656), Dometius (BHG 560), Hermylus and Stratonicus (BHG 744z), Mercurius (BHG 1274) and Thallelaeus (BHG 1707).[142] Of these only the Vita Dometii contains anything relevant to penance. In one incident in the Life a sick man approaches Dometius (an ordained priest) at the shrine of Cosmas and Damian and asks for his intercession to be cured. Dometius reveals that the obstacle preventing the man's cure is his sin against the martyrs; he then tells the man to receive communion in order to be cured, and both cure and forgiveness are immediate.[143] The moral is pointedly drawn: πολλὰ δύνανται κατορθοῦν ἡ μετάνοια.[144]

Episcopal Lives [Vita Parthenii] The Life of Parthenius of Lampsacus has a terminus ad quem in the sixth century but may be a century earlier.[145] One anecdote in the Vita describes the νουθεσία administered by Parthenius to the grasping archbishop of Heraclea on his deathbed. Confronted with his crime of stealing from the poor, the archbishop confesses his sin (Ἐπ' ἀληθείας, Πάτερ, ἥμαρτηκα τῷ Κυρίῳ·), gives back the money publicly and is both cured and forgiven by God.[146] The story is a further example of the close connexion between spiritual and bodily health and of the theme of the deathbed as a place of κρίσις.[147]

[Vita Petri Alexandrini] The Life of Peter of Alexandria (BHG 1502), 1502a), at least in its longer recension, may be dated to the sixth century.[148] In connexion with the history of Arius it includes some important details about excommunication and/or the suspension (χωρισμός) of a cleric. The bishop clearly has sole responsibility over the χωρισμός which is understood not only as a "binding" that must be "loosed" but also as a curse (ἀνάθεμα).[149] The Vita makes it very plain that the effects of this χωρισμός - ἀνάθεμα operate both in this life and in the life to come; χωρισμός is not, therefore, merely a matter of discipline in an "external forum."[150] It is also true, however, that the case of Arius is an extraordinary one, for a special divine πληροφορία is given by Christ to Peter, and the reaction of the others in the Life implies that such an ἀνάθεμα without hope of revocation is most unusual.[151] A theme already encountered in the Vita Abraamii (BHG 12) should also be noticed here: a man must be loosed by the same bishop who bound him originally. It is for this reason that Arius is portrayed as keen to have the χωρισμός lifted before Peter is martyred, and that Peter himself impresses upon his two designated successors that they must not receive Arius back to communion.[152]

[Vita Porphyrii Gazensis] The exact date of the Life of Porphyry by Mark the Deacon (BHG 1570) is still disputed but a late sixth-century terminus ad quem makes allowance for most of the possible problems.[153]

The Life presents an excellent description of the formal reconciliation of a heretic (in this case an ordinary Arian layman) by a group of travelling orthodox bishops.[154] The heretic admits his error, confesses the orthodox faith and repudiates both the teaching and the person of Arius. He is then "sealed" a second time by the bishops who pray over him and then give him the Eucharist.[155]

Another relevant incident in the Vita Porphyrii occurs during the description of the struggle against paganism at Gaza. Porphyry threatens the Christians with excommunication should they loot anything from the pagan

temples that are to be destroyed.[156] The threat is given no particular emphasis in the context of the account and this in itself is a valuable indication that excommunication, or the threat of it, was not unknown as a preventive weapon of episcopal discipline, and that the bishop himself was still regarded as the primary agent of local ecclesiastical discipline.[157]

[Acta Silvestri] The Greek translations of the Latin Acts of Pope Silvester (BHG 1628, 1629, 1629b, 1632e) were made in the sixth century and seem to have been known to Malalas and Zacharias of Mitylene.[158] The documents brought before Greek eyes the Roman custom of reconciling penitents on Maundy Thursday and a description of the public confession of the Empress Helena after she had been deceived by the Jews.[159] Such reference to a distinct class of penitents (οἱ ἐν μετανοίᾳ τυγχάνοντες) contrasts sharply with the absence of such allusions in purely Greek lives.[160]

[Vita Basilii Magni] The last of this group of sixth-century episcopal Lives, and much the most important, is the Vita Basilii attributed to Amphilochius of Iconium (BHG 247-259).[161] One reason for the importance of this Life is that it represents a significant example of the literary mingling of the episcopal and monastic patterns of penance. Thus while it is true that throughout the Vita Basil remains the great bishop who oversees community discipline, the perspective from which the author views his activity is much changed when compared, for example, with that adopted by Gregory Nazianzen in the Laudatio Basilii (BHG 245). Whereas in the Laudatio all references to Basil's disciplinary action are of the most general kind and are often expressed in vague metaphor, in the Vita individual cases of penance have become a centre of interest in themselves and the subjective dispositions of the sinners are much more to the fore.[162] Moreover, a subtle shift has taken place in the very portrayal of the person of the bishop himself, for even when he acts as bishop, Basil appears more in the character of a "holy man". He has become the ideal monastic saint and in the penitential contexts of the Life his most characteristic activity is not so much the authoritative

shepherding of the flock as his direct and powerful intercession with God on behalf of men.[163]

The Vita Basilii supplies quite precise and even vivid details of the workings of ecclesiastical penance and it is plain that penance itself has become a direct focus of the author's attention. Nevertheless, the closest scrutiny is still required in order to determine whether these details are accurate reflections of the real penitential practice of a local community, at Caesarea or elsewhere, or whether their main function is to serve as a kind of literary vehicle for the author's moral. Three examples from the Vita illustrate this point.

In Vita 5 Basil observes a deacon making signs to a woman in the church during the liturgy, an offence apparently serious enough to inhibit the customary visible manifestation of the Spirit's descent upon the Eucharistic gifts.[164] For this offence Basil suspends the deacon from his functions (καὶ μετεστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ βήματος ), and subjects him to a course of penitential fasting, watching and almsgiving for seven days. During this time he is supported by the prayers of the whole people assembled on Basil's orders in the church, and after the week is over he is allowed to resume his ministry.[165] In Vita 7 a young man who has sold his soul to the devil in order to win his beloved undergoes a penance of forty days after his condition has been made known to the bishop, three days in a kind of strict quarantine with a specific and rigorous penitential regime supported by the intercession of Basil's prayers and ascesis, and the rest of the forty days in a slightly less rigorous penance but also supported by the bishop's prayers.[166] After these forty days of penance the young man is received back to communion with great solemnity in the midst of the whole community whose own fervent and corporate intercession helps to overcome the last resistance of the devil. Having received the young man to communion Basil gives him further instructions and assigns him a suitable κανών for an indeterminate future period.[167] The last example (Vita 12) describes the case of a wealthy woman who, after a

life devoted to pleasure and sin and completely devoid of any thought of God, is finally brought to repent directly by God's grace.[168] She writes out a confession of all the sins she has committed since her youth and gives the paper, sealed, to Basil, asking him to intercede with God to obtain the forgiveness of her sins. Basil takes the sealed confession into the church, places it near the altar and prays for the woman during the παννυχίς. He then summons the woman and gives her the paper from which all the sins have been removed miraculously, except for the last, a great sin.[169] In the end this last sin too is removed when the woman casts the paper on the bier of Basil, who has died in the meantime, complaining that he has left her behind on earth without having secured the forgiveness of her sin by his intercession. But when the paper is examined, it is found to be completely blank.[170]

What is to be made of these vivid and quite precise details? Can they be accepted as accurate and perhaps unconscious reflections of local penitential practice? In Vita 12 a lifetime of serious sin is removed by the intercession of the bishop/saint during a single all-night vigil, and even the one sin which remains - the "great" sin - is removed in its turn after the woman has briefly demonstrated her faith and perseverance. There is no mention, however, of any of the institutions of ecclesiastical penance as such. Yet in the instance of another "great" sin in Vita 7 (selling one's soul to the devil) the sinner is required to perform forty days of penance in prayer and fasting before he can be reconciled. Moreover, in the case of the distracted deacon in Vita 5, an apparently minor fault brings the whole community to a standstill for seven days of intense prayer and penance by sinner and congregation alike until expiation is made, a much greater penance than was required from the sinful woman of Vita 12.

There is no coherence here in the treatment accorded to the different sinners, even when allowance is made for episcopal discretion. These cases cannot reflect a "system" of ecclesiastical penance, much less the actual practice of a local church, but they do advance the various didactic purposes

of the author, inasmuch as each set of details furnishes its own penitential lesson directed to a particular audience. Thus the evident severity of the treatment meted out to the deacon may well have been aimed at a certain indiscipline in liturgical attendance among both clergy and laity. It makes the point most vividly that misconduct among Christians at the liturgy cannot be shrugged off as a matter of little importance; every moment and every gesture is of great value.[171] Conversely, the Faust-like story of the young man illustrates the topos that no sin is too big to be forgiven where there is true repentance, even for as little as forty days.[172] The last story of the sinful woman emphasizes another topos, namely, that it is never too late to repent, and that God always provides what help is needed, whether this is to bring about true repentance, to help a sinner recall all his sins, or to effect the forgiveness of each and every sin through the intercession of his saints.[173]

These different penitential lessons can be integrated into a coherent theory of repentance for sin and of the availability of salvation to all, but there is no reason to believe that the details from such lessons actually reflect the operations of a real penitential system. Instead they betray a literary conflation of the episcopal and monastic models of penance, with the choice of particular details governed by the needs of the hagiographer.[174] The episcopal model is reflected in Vita 5 and 7 which portray the bishop as the linchpin of ecclesiastical discipline and make the reception of the Eucharist the goal of penance. The monastic model is reflected in Vita 12 where the sense of hierarchical order is remote. It is as saint rather than as bishop that Basil intercedes with God, and the aim of the whole process is assurance of the forgiveness/expiation of individual sins.[175] The Vita Basilii demonstrates, therefore, that by the end of the sixth century the hagiographical sources can already present a stylized account of ecclesiastical penance in which even narrative details concerning the administration of penance have

become part of the hagiographer's spiritual message.

Monastic Lives [Vita Abraamii et Mariae] The Life of Abraham and Mary (BHG 6, 7) is best taken as an extended narratio animae utilis, and a sixth-century date is likely.[176] The conversion of the lapsed nun is obviously a moral tale and it would be mistaken to interpret the details as elements in an historical description of ecclesiastical penance, even within a strictly monastic context. Nevertheless, the burden of the story is of interest.

On the one hand, the Vita teaches that no sin, however heinous, is beyond forgiveness, and that it is despair rather than the simple fact of having sinned that constitutes the real danger to salvation.[177] On the other hand, the whole story implies that a strong interior temptation to despair was not uncommon among Christian sinners, and also that such sinners did not routinely seek out any kind of "automatic" forgiveness, either through a rite of ecclesiastical penance (absolution) or by having recourse to the authoritative intercession of a holy man.[178]

[Vita Mariae Antiochenae] The Life of Mary of Antioch is another sixth-century narratio animae utilis; it too is built around the Faust theme, and like the tale of Cyprian of Carthage it presents a limiting case of human sinfulness.[179] Of great interest is the manner in which the Life describes the forgiveness of Anthemius for an offence as grave as making a pact with the devil. Ashamed to make his sin known locally, Anthemius has recourse to a bishop in a near-by town who has a reputation for holiness. He shaves his head, puts on sackcloth, prostrates himself before the bishop, asks to be baptized a second time and finally reveals to the bishop the details of his crime.[180] The bishop then shows his solidarity with the repentant Anthemius by prostrating himself beside the man and weeping. Next he raises Anthemius to his feet and encourages him to do penance, for the baptism of tears in lifelong penance is, he says, the

only way to secure forgiveness for his apostasy, and he assures the sinner that God accepts such a penance. Finally the bishop prays over the sinner, who then leaves and begins to live out his conversion.[181] The account implies strongly that by God's mercy Anthemius did achieve forgiveness in the end.[182]

Two elements of this story may be pointed up for their significance to the history of ecclesiastical penance. The first is that in the sixth century a grievous sinner can still be portrayed as resorting to a bishop rather than to a monk for spiritual direction and penance.[183] The second element, already noticed in connexion with the Vita Abraamii et Mariae, is that in situations of serious sinfulness no routine or "automatic" forgiveness seems to have been available which would have relieved the anxiety of the sinner or made the assurances of another - such as those of the bishop to Anthemius - unnecessary.[184]

[Vita Theodorae] The Life of the Egyptian nun Theodora (BHG 1727-1729) is another extended narratio centred on the practice of doing life-long penance for sin. It is unlikely to be later than the sixth century.[185] Theodora, who is guilty of adultery, first confesses her sinfulness to the abbess of a local convent and then goes off to a monastery of men in order to expiate her sin by means of a life of penitence.[186] The Vita contains two examples of confession: the first is the voluntary one made by Theodora to the abbess, and the second is a confession extracted from Theodora at the monastery by the archimandrite who interviews the new arrival and asks a number of searching questions.[187] Neither confession is followed by any kind of explicit absolution.

Theodora has assumed the disguise of a man, but soon finds herself accused of having fathered a child in a local scandal.[188] The imputed sin of fornication is punished by exclusion from the monastery, and although forgiveness is finally secured after seven years of sincere repentance, Theodora can only return to the monastery because others provide

the πληροφορία of her conversion (an angel in one recension of the Life, Theodora's fellow monks in another). Moreover, certain disabilities continue to be attached to the sinner even after reception back into the monastery.[189] The Vita Theodorae is, therefore, another witness to a world that used no routine ritual of ecclesiastical penance to secure forgiveness of serious sin and to effect immediate reconciliation with the community.

Repentance for serious sin was not something quickly passed over; it remained a continuous dimension of the sinner's life.[190]

[Vitae miscellaneae] Another four monastic Lives may also be assigned dates sometime in the sixth century, those of Theophanes and Pansemne (BHG 2447), Conon (BHG 2077), Gerasimus (BHG 693) and Zosimus (BHG 1889). Despite the inherent interest of some of these texts for Church historians, especially the Lives of Conon and Zosimus, they have no importance for the history of penance.[191]

Seventh Century Lives: Episcopal Lives [Vita Gregorii Armeni] The Life of Gregory the Illuminator, apostle of Armenia (BHG 712), seems to come from a milieu where the experience of forgiveness was still connected directly with baptism and not with ecclesiastical penance.[192] More than many other Lives, however, the Vita Gregorii exalts the office of bishop and stresses his roles as mediator and holder of the power to bind and loose in heaven as well as on earth.[193] While it records no particular instance of ecclesiastical penance, the Life of Gregory the Illuminator certainly reflects a milieu which accepted without question episcopal control over community discipline.[194]

[Vita Leonis Magni] This Greek Life of Pope Leo (BHG 982) alludes only once, and that briefly, to a papal excommunication of Eutyches and Dioscorus as leaders (ἀρχηγοί) of heresy.[195] Otherwise it does not touch on penance.

[Vita Gregorii Nazianzeni] This rather late first Life of Gregory

Nazianzen (BHG 723) comes from Cappadocia and contains a number of passages that touch directly upon ecclesiastical penance.[196] For example, Gregory is portrayed as bringing his own father, who was himself a bishop, to confess that he had been deceived by Arian trickery and to ask openly for pardon before the church.[197] The Life also provides a detailed and valuable description of Gregory's own pastoral activity at Constantinople emphasizing the discretion a bishop must exercise when dealing with different types of sinners, especially heretics, and the active role he must play in "convicting" sin wherever it is found.[198]

Finally, there is the dramatic scene in which a young man hired by the Arians to assassinate Gregory confesses instead to his intended victim and is pardoned.[199] This incident is of great importance because it is also related in Gregory's own words in his Carmina, and this rare circumstance allows a comparison of the two versions.[200] In the Carmen Gregory seems to treat the matter more as a personal affair, and his forgiveness of the young man is a kindness from the injured party to one who has repented, but the author of the Vita describes the episode much more in the language of ecclesiastical reconciliation. The young man lies prostrate at the feet of Gregory, weeping and asking pardon for his sin; the bishop, in fatherly fashion, assures him of the forgiveness of Christ and requires from him in order to make up for his sin (εἰς ἀπολογίαν τῆς τόλμης) only that he repudiate his heresy and rejoin the Catholic Church.[201] These changes in detail and tone suggest strongly that the hagiographer modelled his account on a familiar paradigm of repentance and forgiveness.

[Vita Eusebii Alexandrini] The sermons and biographical narratives which make up the pseudonymous corpus attributed to Eusebius of Alexandria (BHG 635, 635a-z) may be given a conservative terminus ad quem in the late sixth or early seventh centuries, although the difficulties attaching to these texts have by no means all been resolved.[202]

This rather disparate corpus characteristically accords a central

place to penance in the preaching and living of the Christian life. The centrality of penance follows naturally from the way sin is understood in these documents and is reflected especially in the insistence upon penance as necessary to every Christian life.[203] New to hagiography, however, is the concern about weighing the relative gravity of different types of sin.[204]

With respect to ecclesiastical penance two important pieces of evidence are found in the Eusebian writings. The first attests the practice of reconciling a sinner on his deathbed. The author thinks it ideal that a man should fall ill just long enough before his death to allow him the opportunity (and the motivation) to repent of his sins, give alms to the church and the poor, confess his sins to the priest, be granted communion and reconciliation, and die a just man.[205] This is the first time in the sources thus far examined that unambiguous reference has been made to the practice of deathbed reconciliation for ordinary Christians. Moreover, the practice is presented as a great grace, and as something that can be accomplished in as little as one day if repentance is sincere.[206]

The other significant piece of evidence occurs in a kind of speculum pastoris in which the author advises the pastor (ποιμήν) about the proper way of exercising penitential discipline.[207] The passage presumes an active ἔλεγχος of sin by the clergy in the form of repeated warnings (νουθεσίαι) to the sinner. Excommunication is to be resorted to only when these warnings and a further public ἔλεγχος have been stubbornly resisted. Even when excommunication is finally imposed, it must be lifted as soon as its purpose, the διόρθωσις of the sinner, is achieved.[208] It should also be noticed here that the priest is expressly urged to forgive those sins which occasioned the original νουθεσία. In the context this means that the priest may let the sinner off with no canonical penalties where there is evidence of διόρθωσις.[209] This entire passage suggests a conception (and practice?) of ecclesiastical penance which places the focus of pastoral

attention not upon the actual forgiveness of sins but upon the provocation of repentance/διόρθωσις. Excommunication appears as the only active disciplinary sanction, and absolution therefore consists of the loosing of the excommunication. Where no excommuncation has been imposed, a συγχώρησις is accorded to the sinner. This is not a formal act of forgiveness, but a kind of indulgence granted to the sinner which takes the form of a decision not to proceed in his case towards excommunication or any of the other canonical sanctions theoretically still in force. Whether such indulgence was repeated for recidivists is a question unanswered in the texts. They presume, however, that apart from the deathbed, voluntary confession of sin is not common, and that sins and wrongdoing will have to be ferreted out by the priest himself.[210]

Monastic Lives [Vita Symeonis Stylitae Iunioris] The Life of the younger Symeon Stylites (BHG 1689) is dated to the end of the sixth century or to the very beginning of the seventh and was written near Antioch; it is a document of the first importance for the history of ecclesiastical penance although, as Delehaye has warned, it must be used with care.[211]

With respect to ecclesiastical penance the Vita Symeonis contains three examples of excommunication, one in which a priest is excommunicated (more properly, suspended) by his bishop and deprived of all sources of revenue, and two instances in which local priests excommunicate/anathematize Symeon himself for his alleged magical practices.[212] These incidents demonstrate that excommunication could be imposed by priests as well as by bishops and that it was understood as a "binding" that could only be loosed by competent authority.[213] It should be noted too that there are no examples of this sort of excommunication affecting laymen; only clerics are involved.

Another pattern of penance that may be related to ecclesiastical penance is illustrated by stories in which Symeon receives the μετάνοιαι of pilgrims who come to him to be cured and who then stay on to serve in

the monastery which grew up literally around his pillar. Also relevant here is a further reference to certain (heretical?) clerics sent to monasteries by public tribunals for their "instruction".[214] The evidence is perhaps too meagre to be conclusive, but there are striking parallels to the phenomenon of the penitential conversi known in the Western church. The intervention of the civil authority and its use of monasteries as centres of detention and rehabilitation is also reminiscent of Western practice.[215]

The great contribution of the Vita Symeonis to the history of penance lies, however, in the evidence it provides for the practice of confession. The Life contains seventeen clear examples of the confession of sin, far more than any document yet examined.[216] Some analysis of these cases is required.

In the first place it can be observed that all of these confessions are provoked by an external circumstance, usually of supernatural origin: a sudden sickness, possession by demons, the ἔλεγχος of the sinner by Symeon (itself an effect of his διορατικὸν χάρισμα ).[217] It is significant that none of these cases portrays the voluntary confession of a sinner whose sin is not already known to others and whose everyday life is not being directly threatened by the consequences of his sin. Confession of sins is always extracted from without.

It may also be observed that these confessions usually involve one sin only, either a hidden crime that must be revealed or some offence committed directly against the saint or against the Spirit dwelling within him.[218] Moreover, none of these confessions is presented as an habitual act, that is, as one instance of a regular practice of confession, and few of the anecdotes imply that the actual confession itself disclosed anything more than the one sin about which the story turns. Such confessions are literally moments out of time, images of conversion that take little account of the ordinary context of living the Christian life day

after day.

Three cases exist, however, of what might be called a more general confession in which not just some single great sin, but the whole range of a man's earlier sinful conduct is revealed.[219] The anecdotes containing these confessions clearly form a group apart within the Vita, and though the description of a general confession is an important and new element in the hagiographical evidence for the history of ecclesiastical penance, the significance of these three examples for determining ordinary lay penitential practice should not be exaggerated.[220] These three general confessions are, for example, the only cases in the Life of a confession of sin which is followed by the imposition of an ἐπιτίμιον or "penance" to be completed by the sinner after his confession. Indeed the Vita Symeonis is the first Life in which the ἐπιτίμιον occurs, at least in some cases, as a constituent element of penance in a quite modern sense.[221]

Further observations about confession as presented in the Life of Symeon must include the fact that the author shows little concern for any distinction between public and private confession. The details of his narrative reveal that most of the confessions he records were made more or less openly in the presence of witnesses. "Public" confession of this kind should not be identified, however, with the voluntary revelation of secret sins before the whole church, for here the sins to be confessed were either known beforehand - at least by Symeon - or had already been denounced in public by the saint's ἔλεγχος.[222] Another striking leit-motif of these stories is the fear that inhibits Christians from revealing their sins, a mixture of shame and hesitation that monks share with lay people.[223] Symeon is adamant, however, that the very act of confession is a subjective necessity for the sinner, because the refusal to admit to one's sin is equivalent to the hardness of heart that excludes divine healing and forgiveness.[224] Finally it may be remarked that the Life does not distinguish the clergy from the laity with respect to the mode or to the necessity of

confessing sins. This assimilation of clergy and laity is surprising, given the theoretical indications of the canons.[225]

Having considered the confession of sins in the Vita Symeonis, specific evidence for the forgiveness of sins remains to be examined. Many but not all, of the confession stories leave a general impression that the sinner was forgiven immediately after his confession.[226] Nevertheless, unambiguous assertions of the forgiveness of sin are rare in the Life, limited perhaps to the case of Evagrius Scholasticus whose forgiveness follows upon a prayer of Symeon that God will grant him pardon.[227] Only in Vita 239 is there what may be called an authoritative declaration of absolution: "Ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ λέλυται ὁ δεσμός σου".[228] But even here, although sin is certainly involved in the case, the bond that Symeon looses is the ecclesiastical bond of excommunication/anathema (complicated by demonic possession) which fell upon a priest who had unjustly excommunicated Symeon. The absolution is from the bond whereas for the sin itself Symeon offers a prayer of intercession that God will grant forgiveness.[229]

It may be asked in this context whether the Vita Symeonis provides any illustration of that opposition of Amt and Geist which Karl Holl and others have asserted as such a central element in the development of penance in the Greek church.[230] There is indeed evidence in the Life for friction between monks and clergy and also for friction between ordinary monks and the saint. There are also abundant allusions to the exceptional and charismatic nature of Symeon's holiness.[231] Absent, however, is any suggestion that these attitudes amount to a conscious, coherent policy which opposed Amt to Geist in the historical circumstances of Symeon's own life or in the theological Tendenz of the author of the Vita. It should not be forgotten that Symeon himself was ordained both deacon and priest, and although he received a divine πληροφορία to overcome his scruples about becoming a priest, the Life is explicit that Symeon was

destined to mediate between God and man through the grace of priesthood (ἱερωσύνη).[232]

[Vita Marthae] The Life of the mother of Symeon Stylites the Younger (BHG 1174) was composed soon after the Vita Symeonis and is clearly dependent on the earlier Life.[233] Here, as in the Life of Symeon, the confession of sin is always involuntary, provoked from outside and often by extraordinary circumstances.[234] The Life makes no mention of any of the other forms of ecclesiastical penance found in the Vita Symeonis.

One noteworthy theme in the Life of Martha not much encountered in the Vitae thus far examined is the close connexion between forgiveness of sins and the relics of the saints. Contact with the tomb of Martha brings instant healing of the physical effects of sin, drives out demons and provides general spiritual and bodily healing. Moreover, through the gateway of Martha's intercession with her son, her tomb also becomes a source of forgiveness for sins.[235]

[Vita et Narrationes Danielis] A collection of thirteen narrationes preserved under the name of Daniel of Scete may also be ascribed to the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries.[236]

The narrationes illustrate a variety of penitential themes. Although none deals with excommunication, at least three of the stories refer to the confession of sins. One of these treats the case of Daniel himself who, having killed one of his barbarian captors in order to escape, goes in repentance to the archbishop in Alexandria to confess his deed: a relatively rare example of an unprovoked confession, although less unexpected in Daniel's case since he is a monk.[237] The story is of particular interest, however, because Daniel does not meet the rigorous response he has expected. The archbishop of Alexandria does not treat the killing of a barbarian as murder, nor do the patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Ephesus, Jerusalem, and Antioch whom Daniel visits in turn seeking to satisfy his conscience.[238] This pilgrimage of conscience is not unexampled in the literature of the

narrationes animae utiles but it points up a situation not yet encountered in the Lives, that of the voluntary penitent whose scruples cannot be quieted even by the highest authorities.[239] Of the other two instances of confession in the corpus of Daniel of Scete one is merely the repetition of a story found in the Historia Lausiaca which has been discussed above, and the other an example of the confession of λογισμοί to a monastic elder.[240]

A second theme of some importance in the corpus is that of penances voluntarily undertaken to satisfy conscience and to atone for sin. The case of Daniel discussed above ends only when Daniel decides on his own to repay life for life by assuming complete and lifelong responsibility for the care of a helpless cripple.[241] The Life of Mark the Fool contains a similar theme, for Mark, having submitted to the demon of πορνεία for fifteen years, voluntarily expiates his sin first by doing penance and then by living as a σαλός in Alexandria for the same length of time.[242] Concern that the penance be equivalent to the sin has not yet been encountered in the hagiographical sources, but against it may be set the story of the conversion of Daniel's sister, a prostitute in the city. The episode is a topos illustrating the traditional teaching that the briefest of sincere penances, even the very act of conversion itself (διόρθωσις), is sufficient to save a soul lost in sin.[243] The corpus also contains a reference implying that corporal punishment continued to be used among monks as a form of penance for sin.[244]

It should be observed too that forgiveness in the narrationes of Daniel is not presented as something which follows the confession of a sin, or even the performance of a penance, as a matter of course. Daniel's pilgrimage of conscience is an excellent illustration of this point, and so are those places in the stories where assurance that a penance has been "accepted" by God comes only through an extraordinary sign.[245] Mention should also be made of the theme of the "répondant du péché" discussed

above in connexion with the Vita Theodosii and central to the plot of the story of Eulogius the stonecutter. Significantly, the practice is condemned here as presumptuous and foolish.[246] Also of interest to the history of penance is the view implied by the Narratio de moniali in balneis, that sinners should not resort (or be taken) to another χέρων in order to be cured when they have been disciplined by their own.[247]

[Vita Alexii] The earliest form of the legend of the "man of God" Alexius (BHG 56c) perhaps also dates from the late sixth or early seventh century and with the Life of Mark the Fool forms part of the background to the Byzantine phenomenon of the "fool for the sake of Christ".[248] The Life, however, contains nothing relevant to a discussion of ecclesiastical penance.

Other Lives [Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha] Apocryphal Acts continued to be written well after the second and third centuries and many can be ascribed to the late sixth and early seventh centuries, at least as a terminus ad quem.[249] The narrative setting of the Acta almost necessarily excludes the portrayal of anything but pre-baptismal penance, and the anonymous authors of these Acts do not project back into the apostolic age, consciously or unconsciously, problems associated with post-baptismal sin and its remedies. Ecclesiastical penance properly so called finds no reflection in these texts.

One characteristic feature of the Acta, however, which does bring certain relevant aspects of penance to light is the surprising attribution of weaknesses and sin to the apostles themselves, the champions of the church's golden age.[250] Andrew, for example, is upbraided by Christ for giving way to anger; John suffers a forty days' "penance" in a shipwreck for not having joyfully accepted God's will; Paul refuses to be reconciled with John Mark and Barnabas, and Heracleides yields to anger in cursing certain pagans.[251] In this last case the sin of anger weighs heavily upon Heracleides, and the intercession of his clergy and faithful in

securing his forgiveness is emphasized.[252]

At least once the Acta touch upon another theme already encountered, namely, the concern to determine which is the most serious of sins.[253] The appearance of this question indicates that neither the theoretical analysis of the nature of sin nor the practical treatment of it through penance had yet become fixed in static categories or routine practices.

3. Conclusions (a) The most important development in ecclesiastical penance attested by the hagiographical evidence from the period 565 to 610 is the emergence in lay experience of two elements which are still part of the penitential practice of the Greek church: the provision of ἐπιτίμια of limited duration for certain kinds of sin or sinners, and the confession of sins on the deathbed as an immediate preparation for divine judgement.[254] The existence of both of these practices is clearly attested by the beginning of the seventh century, but it must be stressed that the hagiographical texts nowhere give the impression that either had yet become a matter of universal custom.

(b) The Vitae of this period also show that excommunication continued to be an instrument of church discipline and was interpreted in the sense of the binding and loosing of Mt 18:18 and Jn 20:23. The hagiographical evidence as a whole suggests, however, that excommunication was used almost exclusively against the clergy, not against the laity. The evidence also implies that for cases of serious sin where excommunication was not imposed, and this must have been the vast majority of such cases, lesser means of discipline simply were not at hand to be invoked. For example, the Pseudo-Eusebian texts imply that where the sinner has shown repentance (διόρθωσις), the bishop need impose no further canonical penalties for the sins actually committed. The νουθεσία and ἔλεγχος referred to as part of this pastoral approach require that some knowledge of the sin should have come to the attention of the officials of the church, but the laity's

aversion to confession so evident in the Vitae suggests that the voluntary disclosure of sin must have remained exceptional during this period, and it may be doubted whether the active ἔλεγχος of the bishop could ever have uncovered more than a fraction of those sins and offences for which the canons provided penalties. As a consequence, ecclesiastical penance must have been absent, de facto if not de iure, from the lives of most ordinary Christians. It is certainly true that the hagiography of the period never refers to any recognizable classes of penitents, apart from the monastic τάγμα as a whole, within the churches of the Greek-speaking world.

(c) The Lives of the period also indicate that in the area of penance the pastoral ministry of ordinary priests and monks was assuming much greater importance, in part because of the practical ineffectiveness of the episcopal system of ecclesiastical penance, and in part because of the well-attested subjective need many people felt for the assurance (πληροφορία) that their sins had indeed been forgiven. The increased activity of monks and priests in this area need not be taken, however, as an attack on the episcopal control over ecclesiastical penance. There is no evidence for such an attack, and in any case, the main elements of this new penitential activity, especially confession and spiritual direction, had their natural culmination in the prayer of intercession, not in an absolution which consciously challenged the acknowledged episcopal power over binding and loosing.[255]

(d) During the period from 565 to 610, the only difference between the hagiographical evidence for ecclesiastical penance at Constantinople and that for the provinces is, as for the immediately preceding period, the larger number and superior worth of the hagiographical sources produced outside the City.

## D. Heraclius to the Trullan Canons 610-692

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Translatio Olympiadis] This appendix

to the Life of Olympias (BHG 1376) can be dated to the early years of the patriarchate of Sergius (610-638); it contains no information about ecclesiastical penance.[256]

[Vita et Acta Maximi Confessoris] The documents that recount the fortunes of Maximus the Confessor also provide a good deal of information about the many mutual anathemas that marked the Monothelite controversy. They contain no evidence, however, for the existence or practice of ecclesiastical penance as it may have affected the mass of ordinary Christians not directly involved in imperial politics.[257]

As a corpus, the Acta Maximi make it plain that an ἀνάθεμα was understood to be a fearful curse and not merely a measure of external discipline, but it is not clear from these documents whether a synodal ἀνάθεμα had any practical effects in the lives of ordinary Christians who found themsevles under obedience to an anathematized bishop.[258]

[Miracula Artemii] The collection of miracles gathered at the shrine of Artemius in Constantinople (BHG 173) is of very great interest to students of social history but proves a disappointment to the historian of ecclesiastical penance.[259] The Miracula do refer to the accepted belief that supernatural healing is inhibited by the sins of the one who is ill, but whereas in the Vita Hypatii and elsewhere this inhibition provoked the confession of sin, no such practice is attested here.[260] Worthy of note, however, is the power of healing both spiritual and physical ailments attributed to the relics of the saint: διώκει φθόνον, φυγαδεύει ἄλογον μῖσος, ζωοποιεῖ τοὺς ἐπιθυμητίως ἔχοντας, ἀνιστᾷ πεπτωκότας .[261] That relics were considered sources of spiritual healing is also illustrated by the only example of a confession in the Miracula, that of the doubting syncellus Peter who prostrates himself before the tomb of Artemius and confesses his sin directly to the saint.[262]

[Vitae Ioannis Chrysostomi] Two Lives of Chrysostom, by Theodore of Trimithus (BHG 872, 872b, 872d) and George of Alexandria (BHG 873, 873bd)

may be assigned to the period before the Trullan council.[263]

The former Life contains a number of extraordinary details concerning an excommunication imposed by Pope Innocent I on the rulers Honorius, Arcadius and Eudoxia at the beginning of the fifth century, but their interpretation is plagued with problems. The papal letters of excommunication which mention them may safely be classified as spurious. It is more difficult, however, to determine whether or to what extent the details themselves reflect the actual understanding and practice of penance of some later age, either that of the composition of the Life or of the fabrication of the letters, if these are earlier than the Vita itself.[264] In the absence of an answer to this question it may at least be allowed that the image of penance in the Life would have had its own effect upon a seventh-century audience.

Excommunication is portrayed as a temporary measure and the duration of the excommunications assigned varies in length according to the degree of guilt ascribed to the different individuals.[265] The aim of the measure, however, is to induce repentance, and once this has been achieved the excommunication itself is immediately lifted and the sinner restored forthwith to communion.[266] The excommunications are delivered formally in writing and are explicitly understood as a bond imposed by the bishop which is then "loosed" immediately he is satisfied there has been a true change of conduct.[267] These principles are clearly implied in the Vita and correspond fully to the ideals of ecclesiastical penance contained in Canon 102 of the Trullan council of 691/692.[268] The imperial status of those involved in the excommunications makes it unlikely, however, that their cases were typical of the ordinary administration of church discipline.

The Life of Chrysostom ascribed to George of Alexandria may be considered with the Life by Theodore of Trimithus despite uncertainty about the precise relationship between them.[269] Much of the evidence for ecclesiastical penance found in the Life by Theodore also exists in the Life by George

especially in the section dealing with the imperial excommunications, but the latter contains additional information of its own.[270]

The formal reconciliation of sinners is illustrated by two incidents, one involving a blasphemer, the other a heretical couple.[271] In both cases reconciliation is the task of the bishop although it is the "saint", not the bishop, who first brings the sinners to repentance. In the first case episcopal reconciliation is stressed as the norm; in the second case the reconciliation of the heretics includes a confession of orthodox faith, the anathematizing of Marcion, his writings and his followers, separation from Marcionite communion and a direct request for the intercession of the bishop (and also of John) in securing from God forgiveness of sins.[272] Excommunication from the Eucharist is also attested in the Vita. In one place excommunication is invoked as a means to persuade certain monks to obey orders from the bishop; in another it leads to the dramatic closing of the doors of the church in the face of the Empress Eudoxia.[273]

That the bishop himself was the focus and primary agent of ecclesiastical discipline is an important teaching of the Life. In his first public address as bishop of Constantinople, a kind of policy speech to the court, Chrysostom makes clear his conviction that it falls upon the bishop to confront sinners and rebuke them in order to provoke their repentance and secure the forgiveness of their sins.[274] The Life also strongly implies that forgiveness follows conversion (διόρθωσις) immediately, and is not dependent upon the completion of an extended course of penitential exercises.[275] Thus Euclia and her husband are forgiven their previous sins (injustice and avarice) and their child is cured as soon as they have promised to John that they will amend their lives.[276] Immediate forgiveness for all who repent is also more or less promised by Chrysostom in his inaugural address as bishop of the city.[277]

The spiritual direction of the laity is a final theme of the Life that is relevant here. As a simple monk, John provides νουθεσία for laymen, in-

cluding the nobility. This νουθεσία is a kind of spiritual direction of which the confession of λογισμοί is part.[278] It is significant that John's gifts for spiritual direction lead to such a deluge of clients that he is tempted to run away.[279]

[Vita Dalmati] The Life of Dalmatus (BHG 482), a pioneer of Constantinopolitan monasticism, is one of a number of later documents probably composed to fill the lacunae of monastic history in the City, and perhaps also to provide a history worthier of its dignity.[280]

The Vita contains only a passing reference to ecclesiastical penance in the case of Nestorius who is expected to request forgiveness from a church council for his blasphemous heresy.[281] More significantly, it portrays a harmonious relationship between the hierarchy and the monastic τάγμα at Constantinople. The bishops of the City take an active and helpful interest in monastic affairs, showing due reverence for the "father" of the local monasteries, a quasi-hereditary position that had fallen to Dalmatus.[282] Even if it is an idealized picture of the past, this image of the friendly relationship between the monastic and episcopal spheres is typical in the hagiographical sources, a fact worth recalling when the spiritual history of Byzantium is too neatly divided between hostile worlds of Amt and Geist.

[Vitae miscellaneae] The Passio of Febronia (BHG 659), various encomia of the martyrs (BHG 1191, 1191e) and the Miracula of Therapon (BHG 1797) and of Cosmas and Damian (BHG 388) are all documents of seventh-century composition.[283] These texts, like the Miracula Artemii, have an undoubted value for social history but contain little that touches on ecclesiastical penance.[284]

To these may also be added a number of interesting apocalyptic texts which date from the seventh century or even earlier: the Pseudo-Methodian apocalypses in their earlier recensions (BHG 2036, 2036a); the Apocalypse of Paul (BHG 1460), of Peter (BHG 1487, 1487b) and of John (BHG 922, 922i); earlier visions of the priest Lucian (BHG 1648y) and of the oracle of Baalbek.[285] These texts do not deal directly with the history of eccle-

siastical penance, but they dwell on certain themes important to the understanding of that history: pessimism about the holiness of the Christian people and of the clergy in particular, anxiety about the divine judgement and the forms it takes in this world and the next, concern to obtain the intercession of the saints in order to secure the forgiveness of sins.[286]

2. Other Vitae [Pratum spirituale] The importance of the Spiritual Meadow of John Moschus (BHG 1440z-1442) to an appreciation of the nature of Byzantine piety has long been understood.[287] Although the monastic character of the work is obvious, it also contains a number of references to ecclesiastical penance in the episcopal sphere, including the deposition (καθαίρεσις) of a bishop, the use of imprisonment as a punishment for sinful clerics, and the invocation of canonical sanctions by bishops against refractory clerics.[288] A complimentary reference to Gregory of Theopolis confirms that bishops still dealt directly with sinners and were by no means wholly removed from the direct pastoral care of their people.[289] Reconciliation of heretics is another dimension of ecclesiastical penance described many times in the Pratum. Reconciliation is effected through the very act of receiving the Eucharist from an orthodox priest. This communion is usually accompanied by the pronunciation of anathemas against heresy, but there is no indication that further or continuing penances and penalties were imposed upon a returning heretic.[290]

In the sphere of monastic penance the Pratum provides a good deal of evidence for a variety of penitential practices and institutions. One of the most striking of these is the practice of entering a monastery for life in order to repent of a sinful past or of some oppressively sinful act.[291] The Pratum attests to the practice of confessing both λογισμοί and actual sins, and also shows that certain works of penance adapted to the situation of the sinner were imposed by the confessor.[292] Reference to an authoritative absolution pronounced by the confessor is absent from these stories, however,

and absolution continues to be portrayed as coming directly from God. Conversely, a miraculous sign will often occur to provide assurance (πληροφορία) in a given case that this divine forgiveness has actually been granted.[293]

The Pratum also furnishes much material illustrating the relationship between the episcopal and monastic spheres of life and discipline, but it offers little support for the view that the two worlds were opposed either as enemies or rivals. There are certainly signs of friction between monks and bishops in the Pratum, but nothing to suggest that in matters of penance, for example, the monks arrogated episcopal responsibilities and powers to themselves solely on the basis of their own spiritual authority.[294]

[Vita Tychonis] The Life of Tychon (BHG 1859) is ascribed in the tradition to John the Almsgiver.[295] Apart from some general allusions to Tychon's prayers of intercession for the cure of πάθη ψυχικά in his visitors, and to themes like despair and binding/loosing, the Life contains no evidence relevant to ecclesiastical penance.[296]

[Miracula et Vita Cyri et Ioannis] The encomium and collection of miracles of the saints Cyrus and John by Sophronius (BHG 475-479) are further examples of a kind of literature more valuable for l'histoire des moeurs than for the history of penance.[297] At least one incident in this long composition implies that the martyrs themselves forgave sins directly, but as this forgiveness is closely bound up with a miraculous healing and as the sin itself was one committed against the martyrs, the application of the principle to other kinds of sins is not justified.[298] Otherwise the only materials in the Miracula relevant to penance are the use of πνευματικὸς πατήρ as a technical term for a monk's spiritual mentor and an ambiguous allusion to the practice of heretics leaving church before the moment of the Great Entrance.[299]

[Miracula Demetrii] The first book of the Miracles of St. Demetrius (BHG 500-516) is attributed to John of Thessalonica during the decade from

610 to 620.[300] The work is an important witness to a pervasive sense of sin in Christian life, but it contains hardly any evidence for ecclesiastical penance.

The author is under no illusions about the holiness of the Christian people; their sins are so many that in the end even Demetrius no longer trusts that his own intercession with Christ can secure their forgiveness.[301] The Miracula Demetrii also contain a good deal more about punishment for sin than has been seen in the texts so far examined, although it must also be admitted that the language of punishment remains within the realm of the traditionally medicinal and therapeutic understanding of penance.[302] Punishment takes the form of a general chastisement threatening the whole city, but there are also references to the direct punishment of individuals who have offended the saint in some way.[303] Apart from these particular cases, however, nothing suggests that the shrine of St. Demetrius was a centre dispensing forgiveness of sins to pilgrims; the only example of a confession in the Miracula is that of an eparch who had "blasphemed" by doubting the power of the saint.[304]

The setting of the Miracula remains firmly within the precincts of the shrine of St. Demetrius and it is curious that when the narrative does stray for once outside those precincts, the author finds occasion to refer to continuing spiritual direction given to the eparch of the city by an anonymous monk.[305] This reminder of the inherent limitations of the hagiographer's narrative scope is salutary.

[Vitae Martyrum] Lives of the martyrs Anastasius (BHG 84, 86, 88), Sira (BHG 1637), George (BHG 684, 672), Procopius (BHG 1576) and Dasius (BHG 491) may be grouped conveniently here either because they are known to have been written in the period under review (Anastasius, George [BHG 684]), or because the Trullan synod may be taken at least as a terminus ad quem for their composition.[306]

These Lives continue the patterns noted already for the genre of the

Passio: there are few if any references to ecclesiastical penance in any of its forms, and with respect to the forgiveness of sins, the interest is centred firmly on the power of intercession inhering in the martyr's prayers especially at the moment of death.[307]

The Vita and Laudatio of the Persian martyr Anastasius, however, differ markedly from the normal pattern of the Passio. The content and setting are more explicitly monastic and the Life therefore includes details of monastic discipline not normally found in a Passio.[308] The most important of these details concerns the monastic practice of disclosing or confessing λογισμοί. Two instances are described, the first concerns a struggle against λογισμοὶ πονηροί and the second has to do with a dream intimating Anastasius' impending martyrdom.[309] In both cases confession is made to the hegumen of the monastery and is accompanied by prostration and tears. The second case also reveals that the confession took place during Matins in the διακονικόν of the monastic church, a custom attested here in the early seventh century and one which is known to have continued on in Studite use.[310] The practice demonstrates the importance of the office of hegumen as the focus of spiritual direction in the coenobitic monastery.[311] The original Acta Anastasii also contain a classic formulation of the theme already familiar from the Pratum spirituale that the present generation is more sinful than those of the past.[312]

[Vita Georgii Chozebitae] The Life of George of the monastery of Chozeba in Palestine (BHG 669) was probably composed between 625 and 630 and is an excellent example of a truly monastic Vita concerned almost exclusively with the affairs of the monastery and the spiritual life.[313] The Life contains nothing about episcopal discipline or about any of the particular institutions of external ecclesiastical penance, but it is a valuable source of information for monastic spiritual direction and confession and for that subjective understanding of sin which was the context within which spiritual direction grew up and flourished.[314]

There is only one case in the Life of a confession of sin properly speaking, but even here the offence is a kind of "literary" sin common in hagiography, namely, opposition to the saint.[315] The disclosure of λογισμοί is clearly presented, however, as an integral part of monastic custom. At Chozeba it took place on Sundays when the γέρων George returned to the monastery.[316] The Life also contains the spiritual testament of George made up of long reflections on the nature of sin, temptation and the πάθη.[317] It is remarkable how clearly George rejects the idea that those in the monastic τάγμα are already perfect: all are sinners and must repent; indeed the monastery itself is a place for sinners not for the just, a place of repentance and healing.[318]

[Vita Alypii] The mid-seventh-century Life of the stylite Alypius (BHG 65) contains no direct evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[319]

[Vita Theodori Syceotae] The Life of Theodore of Sykeon in Galatia (BHG 1748) is prized by many historians as one of the most valuable of all sources for the study of life in the seventh-century Byzantine empire.[320] Its significance for the study of ecclesiastical penance is also great, for it is the first Life to contain a résumé of the pastoral activity of a bishop that makes explicit mention of recognizably "modern" forms of penitential discipline.[321]

The disclosure both of λογισμοί and of hidden sins was part of this discipline and where such confession was not voluntary, the bishop acted on his own initiative to bring sinners to repentance.[322] Although the text gives the impression that this episcopal oversight embraced all Christians, there is nevertheless no suggestion that confession itself was in any way considered an obligation.[323] There is a clear statement, however, that Theodore prescribed specified periods of penance for different kinds of sinners and that these periods of time were to be spent in fasting, praying and almsgiving.[324] There is no separate allusion in the Vita Theodori to excommunication as a part of ecclesiastical penance.[325]

Seven instances of confession are described in the Life. They include the pre-baptismal confession of a magician, four confessions of offences committed against Theodore himself, one confession of λογισμοί by a stylite, and, lastly, a confession of ritual sin that has to be elicited by the active questioning of Theodore himself.[326] These confessions are a poor illustration of the kind of pastoral activity apparently described by the résumé in Vita 147, but they point up extremely well certain aspects of Theodore's own holiness, especially his charismatic gifts (τὸ διορατικόν and τὸ προορατικόν), and this is surely the perspective within which the historian must situate these pieces of evidence. In fact, the fullest description of confession in the Life occurs in the story of Mamas the silentiarius at Constantinople, an incident which is really a healing story not, properly speaking, a confession at all.[327] Mamas visits Theodore frequently but cannot bring himself to reveal to him his internal illness.[328] In language strikingly reminiscent of the confessor, Theodore takes the man aside and gently assures him that the man's condition is not unknown to him. At this Mamas prostrates himself weeping at Theodore's feet and asks for his intercession in removing the πάθος.[329] The mutual influence of the literary topoi of healing and forgiveness is plain in this case and recalls the overarching importance of the medical analogy in the Greek interpretation of penance.[330]

Forgiveness of sin as a separate "moment" of penance is not a prominent theme in the Life of Theodore and indeed no explicit instance of forgiveness or absolution occurs. More general allusions to the theme of forgiveness presume a model of penance in which pardon for sin is secured through intercession with God rather than through any act of direct forgiveness whether this is mediated by the bishop or by a holy man.[331] The Life also reflects the monastic conviction that the deathbed is not to be regarded as the proper place for confession and absolution, even when the time of death is known in advance or when viaticum is being given.[332]

The Vita Theodori gives further examples of lay recourse to monks as spiritual guides and directors and uses the term πατὴρ πνευματικός in the more technical sense of a director of souls.[333] The author of the Life, himself a disciple of Theodore, admonishes his readers always to obey and never to despise or to contradict their spiritual fathers: ἵνα μηδέποτε τοῖς πνευματικοῖς ἡμῶν πατράσιν ἀντιπίπτωμεν ἢ ἀντιλέγωμεν ἢ καταφρονῶμεν αὐτῶν.[334] That such disobedience brings retribution, even when the πατὴρ πνευματικός prays that retribution may not come, illustrates well the common belief that the relationship between a spiritual father and his children was a lasting one with mutual obligations and divine sanctions.[335]

Finally, the Vita Theodori shows few signs of any opposition between Amt and Charisma, whether theoretical or practical. Theodore himself was ordained at the uncanonical age of 18 in recognition of the charisms God had already given him, and his ordination is described as "coming from God." This further example of the "co-opting of the holy man" by the hierarchy only serves to underline the absence from the Life of any idea that such charisms were thought to operate in independence from or in opposition to the powers of the hierarchical church.[336] Moreover, even while it recounts the miraculous ministry of Theodore, the Life betrays some of the pessimism about the holiness of its own age that has already been remarked in connexion with the Pratum spirituale and the Life of George of Chozeba.[337]

[Vitae in Cypro conscriptae] A number of important Lives from the period before the Trullan council may conveniently be taken together as the work of a "school" of Cypriot hagiographers in touch with the major centres of church life at Alexandria and Constantinople and in Syria and Palestine.[338] These are the anonymous Lives of Epiphanius of Salamis (BHG 596-599) and Auxibius of Solia (BHG 204), the Life of Spyridon of Trimithus (BHG 1644) by Theodore of Paphos, and the Lives of John the Almsgiver (BHG 886), Symeon the Fool (BHG 1677) and Spyridon (BHG 1648a) by

Leontius of Neapolis.[339] Evidence for ecclesiastical penance, especially in the episcopal sphere, can be found throughout these Vitae, for in spite of an evident sympathy for the monastic life among the authors the narrative perspective is usually that of the episcopate.

Excommunication from the Eucharist is attested in the Life of John the Almsgiver, at least for clerics, as a measure intended only to provoke repentance in a sinner.[340] Thus while a specific period of time may be attached to the excommunication, there is no insistence and no intention that this time should be "served" completely.[341] The bishop takes an active role in rooting out sin within the community, employing his ἔλεγχος both in private and in public and at times even using instruments of coercion to prevent and correct scandalous public behaviour.[342] This group of Lives also contains several examples of confession to the bishop, although these confessions are typically provoked by the διορατικὸν χάρισμα of the saint, not offered spontaneously by the sinner.[343] Only the long anecdote of the sinful Rhodian woman in the Life of John the Alsgiver is an exception to this rule, but as the whole story is a topos also found in the Pseudo-Amphilochian Life of Basil the Great, it can hardly be used as historical evidence for normal penitential practice.[344] Shame at confession is, however, an element in many of these confession stories and is more prominent here than in the documents previously examined.[345]

The forgiveness of sin which follows upon confession is understood in these texts in a variety of ways. In some cases forgiveness is mediated by a direct and authoritative act of the bishop (absolution); in others it is procured from God as a favour through the intercession of the bishop, and in other cases still pardon comes as a direct consequence of the conversion and penance (διόρθωσις) of the sinner.[346] In this connexion the first example of a request for an ἐπιτίμιον from a lay person should be noted, a sign that by the middle of the seventh century the ἐπιτίμιον was a familiar part of ecclesiastical penance. Moreover,

because of its definite and tangible prescriptions in an area of life subject to much natural anxiety, the ἐπιτίμιον may also have been a welcome part of this penance.[347]

Evidence for monastic penance in this group of Lives is extremely sparse although it can be said that the authors are certainly familiar with the confession of λογισμοί and with the language of medicinal penance and of the πάθη.[348] It is more interesting, however, to observe that while these Vitae abundantly illustrate the fact that the activity of the saint or "holy man" often ran well outside the bounds of conventional pastoral practice, they give no reason to believe that the powers and activities of monks and bishops were thought of at the time as mutually hostile.[349] Indeed one of the most important things to be learned from these Lives is that the holiness and reputation of those outside the episcopal order was very frequently co-opted by means of ordination, and thus bishops themselves not infrequently became charismatic figures.[350]

[Miracula varia] Three documents or sets of documents composed before the end of the seventh century may be examined together here: the second book of the Miracles of St. Demetrius from Thessalonica (BHG 517-522), the Miracles of St. Menas of Egypt (BHG 1256-1269 with BHG 1254, 1254m) and the story of the miracle attributed to the archangel Michael at the shrine of Chonae (BHG 1282).[351]

As a group these texts provide very little direct evidence to illustrate the workings of ecclesiastical penance in either the episcopal or monastic spheres.[352] However, the Miracula Menae in particular indicate that many pilgrims to the shrine of the saint felt a strong subjective need to secure a definite absolution for their sins, a new theme in the Lives. The pilgrims visit the saint in order to bewail their sins and not a few of them stay on permanently, serving at the shrine as a kind of lifelong expiation.[353] In this pilgrimage context forgiveness of sin is understood as coming directly from the saint or through his necessary

intercession.[354] A new dimension of forgiveness evident in the Miracula is a frankly commercial element which can be discerned behind many of the anecdotes. Money secures forgiveness not only in the traditional form of almsgiving as a way of doing penance, but also in ways which suggest that the ἐπιτίμιον for certain sins could be commuted to or perhaps simply included the offering of sums of money to the shrine of the saint.[355] Guarantees of the forgiveness of sin are also characteristic of these shrine-centred texts.[356]

Miscellanea Monastica [1. Vitae] Three Lives of historical monastic figures may be grouped together as having been in circulation very probably before 692, though more precise dates cannot yet be determined: these are the Lives of Chariton (BHG 300z), Ephraem (BHG 583) and Dositheus (BHG 2117).[357] There is very little evidence for ecclesiastical penance among this group of Vitae, but one important passage in the Life of Ephraem speaks of the hermit teaching his lay visitors to confess their sins, a reflection perhaps of the practical way in which the monastic custom of confession first began to take hold among the laity.[358]

As might be expected from their provenance these Lives contain information about the various practices of monastic penance, and of these the most important is the explicit testimony of the Vita Dosithei that συγχώρησις was granted repeatedly for sins and faults committed within the monastery, and that each act of forgiveness had the subjective value of a "fresh start" for the sinner in his pursuit of Christian virtue.[359] In a similar vein the Life of Chariton teaches that penance (μετάνοια) restores the original beauty of the soul lost by sin.[360]

[2. Legenda] A further group of hagiographical texts from this or perhaps from an even earlier period share a strongly legendary character; the group includes the Lives of Apollinaria (BHG 148), Euphrosyna (BHG 625), Eupraxia (BHG 631), Maria/Marinus (BHG 1163, 615, 615a, 615b), Mark the Athenian (BHG 1039) and Onuphrius (BHG 1378).[361] Each of these

texts is more an extended narratio animae utilis than a true Vita, and here even more than in the Lives discussed immediately above, the monastic world constitutes a closed and self-sufficient environment in which the problems of sin and and forgiveness are worked out without any reference to the bishop or to penitential institutions of the episcopal sphere.[362] Thus excommunication and reconciliation of the excommunicated take place within a convent and are treated as matters of domestic discipline; there can even be a "public" confession inside the bounds of a closed community.[363] The monastic approach to deathbed penance differs considerably from the lay approach which was examined above in connexion with the Vita Eusebii Alexandrini.[364] Within the monastic perspective the deathbed is not the proper or even an adequate setting to do penance for sin, for example by a deathbed confession, but conversely the death of a holy man provides a treasured occasion for others to secure for themselves the guarantee of the saint's intercession for their sins - a theme already encountered above but expressed here with increased precision and a sharpened sense of calculation.[365]

[3. Paenitentes ] Another group of monastic διηγήματα may be identified as pre-Trullan texts; all revolve around a limiting case of sinfulness. The group includes the Lives of the sinful women Pelagia (BHG 1478), Taisia (BHG 1695-1697e) and Mary of Egypt (BHG 1042), the priest Theophilus who sold his soul to the devil (BHG 1322) and the fallen monk James (BHG 770).[366]

The express aim of these texts is to preach and to illustrate "from life" that repentance is always possible and that any sin or sins can be forgiven, no matter how grave. Given their aim, the stories contain disappointingly few details which may be thought to reflect the actual working of a system of ecclesiastical penance.[367] The narrative interest lies instead in the subjective state of the sinner and the inclination to despair typical of those guilty of serious sin. It is dangerous to argue from silence in this area but it is noteworthy that none of these texts

seems even to entertain the possibility that a person guilty of serious sin might simply have approached a bishop or priest (or a monk), confessed his sin, received a penance (ἐπιτίμιον) and been absolved (either immediately or after the completion of the ἐπιτίμιον). All seem to imply instead that forgiveness comes only through an extraordinary grace of God associated with some miraculous sign (πληροφορία).[368] However, the evidence examined in the course of the present and preceeding chapters has shown clearly that this kind of extraordinary πληροφορία was not the only means of pardon available to sinners. Silence surrounding the institutions of ecclesiastical penance in such stories can hardly mean, therefore, that the institutions themselves did not exist to be used. It may mean instead that a tendency to give way to despair was a stronger temptation for Byzantine Christians in cases of great sinfulness than any tendency towards the mechanical use or abuse of ecclesiastical penance.[369] Limiting cases of heroic penitents are thus a kind of specialized genre aimed at a particular spiritual condition, not a true reflection of the normal operation of penitential institutions.

[4. Narrationes] A small selection of the vast literature of the monastic διηγήματα will be considered here, in fact only a few texts which are thought almost certainly to have been in circulation before the end of the seventh century: the Narrationes of Ammonius (BHG 1300), Nilus (BHG 1301-1307), Anastasius (BHG 1318, 1318s, 1318t) and Zosimas (BHG 1448x) and the story of the compassionate sinner Philentolus (BHG 1322w).[370]

Ecclesiastical penance is not mentioned in these texts and in two cases of particularly grave sin (adultery and murder) forgiveness can be secured only by extraordinary means. The adulterous ταξεώτης is miraculously brought back to life in order to perform the forty days of sincere repentance that will send him back to God καθαρός.[371] The man who killed his own wife and children lest they fall into the hands of

barbarians (with the inevitable consequence of their forced apostasy) is ultimately granted foreknowledge of his own death by God so that he can receive communion before he dies.[372] Automatic recourse to ecclesiastical penance and absolution/reconciliation does not seem to enter into the narrative horizon of either of these tales.[373] It should also be noticed that in the first narratio the conviction is expressed that ἀναχώρησις from the world to a monastic way of life, even if not to a monastery proper, is sufficient by itself to cancel out all previous sins, at least those of the flesh. This conviction must be borne in mind when evidence for penance from the monastic sphere is to be interpreted; it is also highly relevant to the development of the customs surrounding deathbed repentance.[374]

A final element common to many of these anecdotes should also be observed, namely, a continuing concern with the history of the soul after death and with what might be called the "geography" of judgement in the beyond.[375] The story of Philentolus, for example, rebukes the revealing attitude that, for the average Christian, just to escape hell would be "good enough".[376] This element of calculation in Byzantine piety has been remarked upon above; it need only be added here that by the end of the seventh century the hagiographical sources do not suggest that such calculation had begun to affect the way in which the institutions of ecclesiastical penance were being used by the laity.

3. Conclusions (a) There is nothing in the hagiography of the seventh century which shows that the practice of excommunication was at all relevant to the situation of the laity. Reference to excommunication in the texts is rare and where it does exist it presents the measure as a kind of shock treatment used against recalcitrant clerics or occasionally against important public figures whose actions have wide influence on others. Excommunication is also used within monasteries as a measure

or sanction of domestic discipline. Corporal punishment and imprisonment are also attested as instruments of episcopal discipline, but only against clerics and monks.

(b) The seventh-century texts present a more substantial picture of the penitential ἐπιτίμια than has been seen hitherto. The content of the ἐπιτίμιον consists of penitential activities (fasting, prayer, almsgiving and μετάνοιαι) and the extent of the ἐπιτίμιον is limited to a "given" period of time. If these periods of time were beginning to form a system of their own, perhaps analogous to the different years of penance assigned to different sins in the older canons, hardly a trace of such a system can yet be seen in the Vitae. It is important to notice, however, that the regime of life envisaged by the prescriptions of an ἐπιτίμιον is de facto a kind of monastic life, and that entry into the monastic life was widely believed to have as a consequence the forgiveness of past sin.[377]

(c) The Lives of the period also show signs that the practice of spiritual direction was continuing to spread among the laity and that this practice was presumed to include the confession of sins and λογισμοί. There are still very few signs in the hagiography, however, that voluntary confession outside spiritual direction had as yet become common among lay Christians.

(d) The seventh century is also characterized in the hagiography by a certain anxiety about forgiveness which has not been so prominent in the sources before. The "guarantees" of forgiveness offered by certain shrines and by devotion to particular saints are one manifestation of this anxiety, as may also be the development of the more tangible ἐπιτίμιον for sins. Increased interest in the details of judgement after death and the desire to avoid the shame connected with sin on earth are further aspects of this same anxiety. It is probable also that the calamities of the later seventh century in the Byzantine world contributed to the conviction that that particular generation of Christians was an evil one

and was being punished by God for its sins, a conviction which in turn could only have added to the anxiousness of the age.

(e) Hagiographical materials continue to be more plentiful outside Constantinople than in the City itself, but the texts give no reason to believe that by the end of the seventh century there were any significant differences in penitential practice as between the capital and the provinces. In this connexion the Trullan canons represent a synthesis of past experience throughout the Empire and a foundation for future uniformity both in theory and practice.

## III GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS (451-692)

1. Much the most important observation to be made on the basis of the documents examined above is that by the end of the seventh century almost all the constitutive elements of the later mediaeval and modern Greek practice of ecclesiastical penance (confession, ἐπιτίμιον, absolution, deathbed reconciliation, the spiritual father) are attested individually in the hagiographical sources. Only the custom/obligation of confessing one's sins immediately before receiving Eucharistic communion is not found in the Vitae - at least as a lay practice - and one further important issue remains ambiguous, namely, to what extent ordinary lay Christians received pardon repeatedly for their sins by having recourse to some form of ecclesiastical penance. Clear evidence for this kind of repeated forgiveness (συγχώρησις) is not found in the Lives outside purely monastic contexts.

2. While the Vitae do contain all these individual elements of ecclesiastical penance, they do not yet reflect a single and coherent pattern of practice in which these elements were combined and which held sway in all parts of the Greek-speaking Christian world. In short, on the basis of the hagiographical evidence, no "routine" of ecclesiastical penance was current among the Christian laity, and certainly nothing in the Lives

suggests that the faithful were under any obligation to resort to penance in order to secure the forgiveness of their sins; and it is a fair reading of the evidence to say that even by the end of the seventh century the majority of the laity probably continued to have no contact with the official institutions of ecclesiastical penance throughout the whole of their Christian lives.

3. For those who did avail themselves of it, recourse to ecclesiastical penance was becoming more private in character. In earlier times the bishop's prosecution of individual sins was deemed to have a directly beneficial effect upon the health of the ecclesial body as a whole by purging it of dangerous foreign poisons. In an age less optimistic about the healthy spiritual condition of the Church in general, and perhaps more resigned to the fact of Christian sinfulness, the fate of individually diseased members lost much of its significance for the collectivity. God was punishing the whole body by earthquake and the sword; Christian guilt was therefore collective and the conversion and reconciliation of the individual for his own private sins and lapses became more and more his own affair and of less moment to the health and ultimate destiny of the larger body. For the latter, the public litanies and liturgies of the whole church were the proper instruments of intercession and propitiation. A disjunction of this kind between individual and collectivity must not be exaggerated, but it does find at least some reflection in the penitential anecdotes of the Vitae and also in the image of medicinal penance developed at length in Canon 102 of the Trullan council.[378]

4. The observations made at the end of the preceding chapter about literary limitations and particularities of the hagiographical evidence for penance may also be applied to the Vitae composed during the period 451-692.[379] The topoi discussed there continue to appear in the Lives of the sixth and seventh centuries, although relative to the number of documents involved the topos of Eucharistic communion as a moment provoking conversion and the confession of sin is less frequent in Lives written

after than before Chalcedon. More evidence is required, however, before such a change can be related securely to the frequency with which Byzantine Christians actually received the Eucharist during these ages.[380]

A topos of great importance after the time of Chalcedon is the belief that God uses the scourges of history and nature to punish the Christian people as a whole for their sins. It may also be observed that apart from the genre of the Passio a higher proportion of the Vitae written after Chalcedon contain some kind of reference to ecclesiastical penance than did the Lives from the first period of Christian hagiography.

5. In the debate about the relative significance of Charisma and Amt in the history of the Greek church appeal is made to the practice whereby the laity confessed their sins and secured pardon from unordained monks.[381] An examination of the hagiographical evidence to the time of the Trullan council will not sustain such an appeal. The examples of this practice adduced by Holl are not, as he claims, typical of many other such stories, and indeed upon closer examination none of the texts he cites as examples of this practice can be admitted at all.[382] Unordained monks certainly acted as spiritual guides and directors of conscience for the laity before 692, and heads of monasteries, whether ordained or unordained, certainly granted pardon for sins and offences committed within monastic brotherhoods, but the Vitae provide no examples of an unordained monk who hears the confession of sins from lay Christians and grants them forgiveness. Any further evidence touching upon such a practice will receive careful scrutiny in the next two chapters.

# CHAPTER FOUR: FROM THE TRULLAN CANONS TO THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY (692-843)

# I QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE PENANCE (692-843)

1. The Iconoclastic controversy was undoubtedly the dominant reality in Byzantine church life during this period.[1] Holl's account of the history of Byzantine penance points to the Iconoclastic age as the time when monks moved out of their monasteries and came into closer contact with lay life, thus disseminating their own penitential customs and piety among the ordinary faithful.[2] The present study has already presented enough proof of monastic involvement in Byzantine lay life before the eighth century to soften this image of a sudden and unprecedented irruption of monastic influence during the Iconoclast years, but it cannot be doubted that courageous advocacy of the images greatly strengthened the position of monks within the public and ecclesiastical life of Byzantium.[3] The precise implications of this enhanced monastic position in the area of the administration of ecclesiastical penance remain, however, unclear. It has been suggested, for example, that the emergence of a new group of _lapsi_ during the Iconoclast persecutions enabled monks to displace the compromised hierarchs and secular parish clergy as mediators of ecclesiastical reconciliation.[4] The hagiography of the Iconoclast period must certainly be studied with care to see what light it can cast upon these claims. Acknowledged monastic control over the historical sources of the period demands, however, that many of these claims be reconsidered, especially where both the secular clergy and the monks are presented as homogeneous groups and little attention is paid to the ambiguities of so much of the evidence.[5] The _Vitae_ themselves certainly share in these limitations and must be used judiciously for that reason.[6]

2. Herman has dated the appearance of the earliest Greek penitential (the _Kanonarion_ of John, monk and deacon) to the first half of the

ninth century, that is, to the end of the period under review.[7] Other documents were gradually appended to the Kanonarion, and the whole collection came to be ascribed to John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople.[8] The significance of this ascription and the exact provenance of all the texts have not yet been determined, but the very existence of a text such as the Kanonarion clearly implies that the practice of confession among lay people, (with ἐπιτίμια and absolution) long antedates the penitential itself.[9] This last consideration is also directly relevant to any judgement about the value of the hagiographical sources as unconscious witnesses to the religious practice of their age.

3. The Trullan Council provided a list of the canonical texts accepted and honoured by the Byzantine church, but it did not put an end to new canonical writing. As circumstances changed and new problems demanded resolution, the decisions of hierarchs and their responses to canonical difficulties continued to be collected and to inform legal practice in all areas of church life, including that of ecclesiastical penance.[10] Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the absence of critical texts is crippling, for it is known that later regulations and prescriptions have been interpolated into these collections in general and into their penitential provisions in particular.[11] Reflections of penance in the hagiographical sources may, however, provide a further element of control in the use of these canons and canonical responses.

4. The liturgical environment of penance also continued to grow during the age of Iconoclasm. The provision of a liturgical rite for confession inspired by the monastic offices of orthros and Compline is evident already in the Kanonarion of John.[12] Moreover, the appearance of the great penitential Canon of Andrew of Crete in the first part of the period under review recalls the intensely penitential nature of corporate Byzantine worship, a characteristic reinforced by the spread of the monastic κανών as a new liturgical genre during the eighth and

ninth centuries.[13]

5. Finally, much remains to be done by way of providing a systematic study of pentitential teaching and information about penance in the important theological writers of the period (John of Damascus, Theodore of Stoudion) and in the chronicles of Nicephorus and Theophanes.[14] The accurate interpretation of this evidence will benefit, however, from familiarity with the language and topoi of penance in the Vitae of the previous centuries.[15]

## II THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

### A. From the Trullan Canons to Nicaea II 692-787

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Miracula Anastasii] A collection of seventeen miracles added to the hagiographical dossier of the Persian martyr Anastasius (BHG 90) at Constantinople in the course of the eighth century provides no further historical evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[16]

[Vita Gregorii Nysseni] The published excerpts of an eighth-century Life of Gregory Nyssa (BHG 717) probably written in the circle of the Patriarch Germanus (715-730) also contribute nothing to this study.[17]

2. Other Vitae [Vitae miscellaneae] Four rather disparate hagiographical documents may be reckoned as compositions of the first half of the eighth century: another Passio of the martyr Anastasius (BHG 89) and the Lives of David of Thessalonica (BHG 493), Dorotheus of Gaza (BHG 2116z) and Pope Martin of Rome (BHG 2259).[18] Apart from a few perfunctory allusions to the anathemas of the Monothelite years these documents contain very little that is relevant to ecclesiastical penance.[19]

[Andreas Cretensis] Among the writings of Andrew of Crete at least eight are hagiographical encomia: Athanasius (BHG 186a), Basil (BHG 262),

Cosmas and Damian (BHG 384b), George (BHG 681, 682), the 10 Cretan Martyrs (BHG 1197d), Nicholas (BHG 1362), Patapius (BHG 1425-1428) and Therapon (BHG 1798).[20] The evidence touching on penance in these Lives is thin and of a kind already familiar from previous sources.[21] One relevant episode in the Life of Patapius, however, may be more closely linked to actual historical circumstances than the generality of historical anecdotes; it concerns a young woman who fell into sin soon after she had left the convent, although she had never formally taken the habit.[22] She is brought back to the church by certain friends, and the protopresbyter Dometius directs the course of her penance, an interesting indication that in the eighth century the secular clergy could be presented as taking a normal place in the administration of ecclesiastical penance.[23]

[Ioannes Damascenus] Three hagiographical works of John of Damascus may be considered here, encomia of the martyrs Anastasia (BHG 83b) and Barbara (BHG 217) and of John Chrysostom (BHG 879).[24] None of these however, provides any new evidence for this study.[25]

[Vitae in Italia conscriptae] Lives of Leo of Catania (BHG 981, 981b), Marcianus of Syracuse (BHG 1030) and Pancratius of Tauromenium (BHG 1410, 1410a) may all be taken as compositions from the period 692-787 although more precise dates are either impossible or not yet finally established.[26]

The Life of Leo of Catania portrays the bishop as much involved in the attempt to convert an apostate magician by means of repeated episcopal νουθεσία.[27] When this and all else fails it then becomes the bishop's simple duty to extirpate the evil from the midst of his community, a task Leo discharges motu proprio.[28]

The Life of Marcianus contains nothing relevant to the history of penance but the long and interesting Vita Pancratii teaches in at least

one place that it is the duty of a bishop to intercede directly with God on behalf of the sins of his people. This intercession is likened explicitly to that of Moses but it is nowhere connected in the Life to the power of the keys, despite the importance of the apostle Peter in the early parts of the Vita.[29] The hierarchical ordering of clergy and laity is stressed, however, and the author has Peter himself decree that charges laid against priests are not to be received.[30] No other references to the problems of penance for sin after baptism occur in the Life, although some technical terms of penitential usage (ἐπιτίμιον, ἐγγυητής) are used in other contexts.[31]

[Vitae miscellaneae] Five more documents can be assigned with some assurance to the period 692-787, at least as a terminus ad quem. These are: the Life of John Climacus by Daniel of Rhaithu (BHG 882, 882a, 882b), the Passions of the martyrs Pancratius of Rome (BHG 1408) and Procopius (BHG 1577) and an anonymous encomium of the 60 Martyrs of Jerusalem (BHG 1217).[32] None casts any light on the practice of ecclesiastical penance.[33]

3. Conclusions (a) The only valid and obvious conclusion to be drawn from the scant evidence available in the Lives for the period 692-787 is that on the whole the period was a "dark" age for Greek hagiography and that the historian of ecclesiastical penance suffers here from the decline of his source material as much as any other historian of the Byzantine world.

(b) If the evidence is too sparse to support comparisons and contrasts with other times and places it may at least be observed that the Council of Nicaea in 787 showed by its use of hagiographical witnesses that the Lives of the saints were not only a valued but indeed a revered source of the practice and the teaching of the church.[34] The image of

ecclesiastical penance presented by the Vitae so far examined may thus be presumed to have had its own influence in forming the patterns of Byzantine piety.

## B. From Nicaea II to the Death of Theodore of Stoudion 787-829

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vitae miscellaneae] The Passions of the local martyrs Lucillianus (BHG 998y) and Mocius/Theoctistus (BHG 1298, 1298b, 1298c, 2424) were in circulation before the ninth century but provide no evidence for the history of ecclesiastical penance.[35]

[Vita Isaacii] This life of the fourth-century monastic figure Isaacius of the monastery of Dalmatus (BHG 956) contains no direct evidence for ecclesiastical penance.[36] It does refer to Isaacius as the πατὴρ πνευματικός of certain noble laymen in the City, but the nature of this relationship is not further described and the technical term itself is more likely to stem from the milieu of the eighth-century author of the Life than that of his fourth-century subject.[37]

[Vita Stephani Iunioris] The Life of Stephen the Younger (BHG 1666) was written at Constantinople in 806, and although it forms a valuable historical source for the first iconoclast period it is regrettably less important for the history of penance.[38] The Vita Stephani also witnesses to the use of the term πνευματικὸς πατήρ - applied in this case to one who bestows the monastic σχῆμα on another - and it attests once again to the fact that in Byzantium the monastic life was understood as something penitential by its very nature. No mention is made in the Life, however, of the confession of sins or of any of the other institutions of ecclesiastical penance.[39] This silence is of particular interest in two places: in the first, the author describes visits made by the laity of Constantinople to see Stephen ὠφελείας χάριν; in the second, the new iconoclast patriarch of Constantinople

has all the people swear fearful oaths never to receive communion from nor even to greet a monk.[40] Elsewhere in the Life, however, the anti-monastic bias of the iconoclast bishops is answered in kind by the monastic author, yet the Vita nowhere suggests that monks were usurping sacerdotal powers or that by the end of the eighth century lay people were habitually resorting to unordained monastic confessors for confession and/or absolution of their sins.[41]

[Vita Philareti] This charming tale of the Job-like figure, Philaretus of Amnia (BHG 1511z), was composed in 822 by the grandson of the saint.[42] At the very end of the Life the author, Nicetas, describes the preparations for death made by the second and fourth sons of Philaretus to whom their father in the guise of a final blessing had predicted that they would die in their youth.[43] In both cases the young men distribute their goods to the poor, give their lands to the monastery of St. George τοῦ Πραιποσίτου in Constantinople, confess their sins to holy men in the same monastery and die soon afterwards in peace.[44] In all the hagiographical sources so far surveyed these are the first definitely historical examples of confession and absolution among the laity as part of a more or less direct preparation for death.[45] The testimony is all the more valuable because it is related as an aside, added on by the author apparently for the sake of historical completeness and devoid of any narrative or moral Tendenz, at least in respect of the penitential practices described.[46] The confession itself is not recounted in any detail and is put forward as a natural response to the rather peculiar circumstances in which the young men find themselves.[47] The "holy men" or holy γέρων to whom confession is made are not specifically identified as priests, but this is in no way excluded by the text, and the phrase "καὶ τυχὸν ἀφέσεως" in the case of the fourth son may be said to favour, although it does not

demand, the latter interpretation.[48]

[Theodorus Studita] Twenty hagiographical texts associated with the figure of Theodore of Stoudion may be considered here as reflections of the iconophile monastic milieu in the City during the first quarter of the ninth century.[49]

On the one hand it is curious that these texts, which include Theodore's own writings as well as certain works written about him by others, contain virtually no allusions to ecclesiastical penance (excommunication, suspension, ἐπιτίμια) administered by the episcopacy, a silence which is all the more startling as Theodore's own positions brought him into open conflict with the hierarchy and he was himself exiled three times before he died.[50] Indeed, if they are taken in isolation from the rest of his work, Theodore's hagiographical writings give scarcely any sign of tension between the monastic order and the secular clergy and seem to promote only an ideal of harmony.[51] The evident incompleteness of such a picture provides a salutary reminder of the limitations of hagiography as an historical source.

On the other hand, monastic penance is amply illustrated in these Lives. There is a very strong emphasis, for example, on ἐξαγόρευσις (the manifestation of λογισμοί to a director) as a fundamental, and indeed as the most important, discipline of the ascetic life not only for monks but also for serious persons among the laity as well.[52] The assiduous practice of ἐξαγόρευσις recommended by Theodore requires the services of someone to receive the λογισμοί. This is the "spiritual father", and in these writings of Theodore, perhaps for the first time in the hagiographical sources, unambiguous reflections may be glimpsed of the developed role of the πνευματικὸς πατήρ whose spiritual relationship to his (sometimes lay) "sons and daughters" with its attendant responsibilities and privileges is a lasting and irreplaceable one.[53]

There is no doubt either that it was this kind of relationship which obtained between the hegumen of a monastery and his monks and that it was in the context of this same relationship that the hegumen's own power of "binding and loosing" was to be exercised.[54]

In these Lives forgiveness and reconciliation are always thought possible, even for a monk who has left his monastery.[55] Another passage may suggest that the mere fact of wearing the monastic σχῆμα was thought to effect by itself the forgiveness of sins, but the terseness of the language makes interpretation a problem.[56] References to any "sacramental" character of penance are not to be found in these texts, but the calculating approach to μετάνοια attested in the Life of the Bulgarian martyrs witnesses to a crude belief in the power of penance to secure the remission of sins almost apart from the dispositions of those who make use of it.[57] Much the most significant of these texts, however, occurs in the encyclical letter describing the death of Theodore which was written by Naucratius of Stoudion (BHG 1756). On his deathbed Theodore sends final greetings to all and then Naucratius asks him what he wants done about those brothers, and indeed about the externi as well, who are still undergoing particular penances: περὶ τῶν ἐν ἐπιτιμίοις ὄντων ἀδελφῶν, ἢ καὶ ξένων, τί ἂν κελεύοι.[58] Theodore proclaims that the Lord will forgive them all, blesses them three times and gives the kiss of peace to all those present.[59] This incident has a number of important implications: firstly, that both monks and lay people received ἐπιτίμια from Theodore (a priest and hegumen); secondly, that the fulfilment of these ἐπιτίμια required some time and that forgiveness might be given in some cases only when the ἐπιτίμια had been completed; thirdly, that the forgiveness was granted or proclaimed only by the one who himself imposed the ἐπιτίμια (hence the need to resolve the matter of outstanding cases before Theodore died),

and finally, that the proclamation of forgiveness seems to have taken the indirect and impetratory form still characteristic of absolution in the Greek church.[60] The shape and practice of penance thus implied is in all important respects the same as the developed form of ecclesiastical penance in the later mediaeval Greek church.

2. Other Vitae [Vita Gregorii Agrigentini] The Life of Gregory of Agrigentum by Leontius of St. Sabas (BHG 707) is a rich source of evidence for ecclesiastical penance, but inasmuch as the penitential anecdotes frequently involve the major hierarchs of the Christian church, some allowance must be made in interpretation for the author's special pleading in matters of ecclesiastical politics.[61]

Regarding ecclesiastical penance in the episcopal sphere, the Life portrays the excommunication of clerics in the case of a certain Leucius. Excommunicated first by a local synod at Laodicea, Leucius makes his way to Italy and there is later anathematized once again and sent further into exile by a Roman synod presided over by the Pope.[62] In such matters the jurisdiction of the bishops is unquestioned and is recognized explicitly at one point in the Life.[63] The judicial activity that flows from this jurisdiction is also illustrated in matters concerning the laity as well as clerics.[64] Moreover, the spirit in which the bishops exercise their power to judge is itself a matter of concern. The now-familiar medicinal interpretation of penance and church discipline still prevails, but there are undeniable elements of vindictive punishment also reflected in the Life, especially in the final judgement against Gregory's false accusers.[65] Anxiety for canonical ἀκρίβεια is balanced by the author's disapproval of episcopal severity in dealing with sinners.[66]

Still in the sphere of episcopal discipline, the Vita Gregorii

reflects a custom of reconciling heretics by means of written statements of orthodox faith (διὰ τίτλων ἤτοι λιβέλλων), a procedure which implies that reconciliation, at least in the case of those publicly notorious for heresy (πολλοὶ δὲ ἐκ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι πρῶτον αἱρετικῶν) still required a formal, individual exercise of ecclesiastical authority.[67] An ideal description of the local ministry of a bishop in Vita 92 also makes much of his duty to be rigorous in rooting out heresy from among the ordinary people.[68]

Illustration of confession and absolution/forgiveness in the episcopal sphere is limited to the single case of the girl who conspired to bring the false charge of πορνεία against Gregory. At Gregory's trial she falls at his feet and asks him to pronounce συγχώρησις over her. Gregory does so but only after proclaiming (the topos) that forgiveness belongs to God only.[69] The raising up of the girl suggests immediate reconciliation/absolution but it should not be overlooked that the girl then goes off to a convent and spends the next twenty-two years living a life of penance.[70] A final description of Gregory's renewed pastoral activity at Agrigentum shows that an eighth-century text could still cast a bishop credibly in the role of spiritual director.[71]

Monastic penance is not an important subject in the Vita Gregorii although the familiar language and rituals of monastic penance are certainly found in the Life, as is the belief that the whole of the monastic life is by nature penitential.[72] One theme which is of some narrative importance, however, is the conviction that forgiveness of sin can come directly from God to the sinner in response to personal prayer. Before the young Gregory puts himself under the direction of a γέρων in the desert he prays privately to God for the forgiveness of his sins, and later at Constantinople he prays in a similar way for the forgiveness of his daily sins.[73]

This more private context of forgiveness also reveals a distinction between what may be called the "subjective" and "objective" senses of sin. On two occasions in the Life when Gregory confesses his own sinfulness, he is assured by others (in the first case by an older monk, in the second by the people of his diocese) that they would be quite happy to have only his sins to answer for on the day of judgement.[74] The saint's protestations of sinfulness are thus recognized already as a convention of humility, and the people's "objective" judgement about sinfulness is much more lenient. Yet the Life also makes it clear that the saint does regard his own failures as real and serious, in part because he measures them against the sanctity of the great heroes of the past, as, for example, John Chrysostom, and that in the end this "subjective" judgement approaches more closely to a truly objective perception of the real evil of sin.[75] This reflection of two distinct kinds of judgement about sinfulness and holiness, the one proper to the monk and the saint, the other to the mass of ordinary lay people, must be taken seriously as part of the background to the practice of confession and forgiveness of sin among Byzantine Christians.[76] Moreover, the distinction provides reason to believe that confession was a more common practice among those advanced in virtue than among ordinary Christians.

In matters of church discipline, or indeed in any other domain of church life, the Vita Gregorii gives no indication of any monastic encroachment upon episcopal jurisdiction. It is true that the "man of God", even at the age of twelve, can assure a sinner that God will forgive him, but there is no reason in the text to interpret this assurance as an arrogation of the episcopal power to bind and loose.[77] Indeed the author of the Life is at pains to illustrate the mutual deference of hierarch and monk and he plainly assumes that the χαρίσματα of holiness are found most aptly in the person and office of the bishop himself.[78]

[Vita Stephani Sabaitae] The Life of Stephen the Wonderworker of the monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem.(BHG 1670) is another substantial hagiographical document from the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries which provides valuable evidence for the history of penance in the Greek church.[79]

The Vita Stephani is an almost wholly monastic document and references to and descriptions of the sphere of activity of the bishops, including the administration of ecclesiastical discipline and penance, are very limited.[80] One oblique allusion to the anathemas incurred by the patriarchal usurper Theodore may perhaps be taken as a sign that excommunications (at least of the clergy) were still being imposed in eighth-century Palestine, and it is plain that the monks themselves had a firm legal grasp on the canonical traditions of the church.[81] Nevertheless it remains true that penitential themes in the Life of Stephen find their focus almost exclusively within the monastery itself and within the monastic sphere of influence.

There are no cases of monastic excommunication in the Vita Stephani but there is one highly instructive example of the reconciliation of a monk who had left the monastery of his own accord.[82] Convinced by a miracle to go back, the fallen monk prostrates himself before the hegumen and asks for pardon and for intercession to be made on his behalf.[83] The hegumen prays for the monk, blesses him, strengthens him with his exhortations and returns him to the brotherhood.[84] The language strongly implies that this reconciliation is complete and that the brother is restored to the community as a full member without further prejudice. If this is the correct interpretation of the incident, it suggests that the conscious aim of monastic penitential discipline was shifting gradually away from the maintenance of the health of the monastery understood as a single organism towards the forgiveness of the sins

of the individual members.[85]

The Vita Stephani preaches very strongly that the voluntary confession of sins is a work of the highest spiritual benefit.[86] The anecdotes themselves show, however, that many monastic sinners did not find it easy to admit their sins voluntarily even to their own ἐπιστάτης.[87] Consequently, the ἔλεγχος of sin by the saint is much emphasized throughout the Life as an integral part of Stephen's monastic cura pastoralis and as an immediate fruit of that διόρασις which he received as a particular divine grace soon after his priestly ordination.[88] This ἔλεγχος functions especially in two kinds of circumstances: when a sinner is overcome by shame and cannot bring himself to reveal his sin or the particular nature of his πόλεμος, and when a sinner only appears to repent but lacks the true dispositions of sincere conversion.[89] Ἔλεγχος is also used as a means of making the consciences of others more sensitive so that what is known by the deeper discernment of the saint to be sinful can then be perceived by lesser men in the same way.[90] Ἔλεγχος can be public as well as private and can even be carried out by letter at a distance.[91]

Thus there are few instances of voluntary confession recounted in the Life of Stephen and no allusions at all to what might be called a normal or routine confession of sin, even on the deathbed.[92] Conversely, the disclosure or confession of λογισμοί is presumed to be a regular part of the monastic life and it involves the revelation of hidden temptations and "thoughts" which may or may not be sinful depending on the degree of internal consent given to them.[93]

The actual forgiveness of sins is not a particularly prominent theme in the Vita Stephani. The Life asserts the topos that God alone has the power to forgive sins, and here as elsewhere the absolution requested by sinners and administered to them takes the form of an intercessory prayer made to God on the sinner's behalf.[94] Such forgiveness

is nowhere explicitly linked to the power of binding and loosing as has been true in other Lives already examined. There is one case, however, in which direct and explicit assurance is given. The monk Leontius is plagued with blasphemous λογισμοί which he finally brings himself to confess to Stephen.[95] Afterwards the λογισμοί return and the young man confesses them once again to Stephen, but this time the saint has Leontius place his hand on his (Stephen's) neck. Stephen then assures Leontius solemnly three times that he (Stephen) will answer for Leontius' sin on the day of judgement.[96] After this assurance has been given, Stephen tells the young man, however, that inasmuch as these λογισμοί of blasphemy were involuntary and resisted by him, no guilt has been incurred in the matter.[97]

The incident is significant and deserves closer scrutiny. At first sight it seems another excellent example of the penitential phenomenon to which Gouillard has given the name "le répondant du péché", that is to say, a ritual transfer or substitution by which one person (the "répondant du péché") assumes the guilt of another's sin. The transfer is accompanied by a gesture in which the hand of the sinner is placed upon the neck of the confessor/"répondant".[98] This assumption of responsibility for the guilt and indeed for the eternal fate of another is connected by Gouillard with the hegumen's responsibility for the monks under his rule and with that of the baptismal sponsor (ἀνάδοχος) for the one to be baptized.[99]

Patient examination of the context of the incident in the Vita Stephani, as indeed of the contexts in all the other sources cited by Gouillard, reveals, however, that the real transfer to be observed in these texts is concerned not with the transfer of guilt for sin but with the transfer of the πόλεμος or violent temptation towards sin from a spiritually inexperienced person to another of greater experience.

In this particular case the struggle consists of blasphemous and sacrilegious thoughts, in other cases of a frenetic and all-consuming πορνεία.[100] The struggle, not the sin, is transferred, and the natural result of this transfer, not only in the Vita Stephani but in all the other instances of the répondant theme, is the immediate cessation of the temptation in the penitent. Such a sudden change possesses a high degree of spiritual and psychological plausibility, for the very act of transferral is not an arbitrary act; it is at one and the same time a true diagnosis of the penitent's condition and a true remedy for the underlying evil, not just for the visible symptoms.

In the first place, as the word itself suggests, the πόλεμος to be transferred is a real battle. This battle may seem to be located in the minds and souls of individual men, but according to the monastic understanding of sin, the true struggle is taking place on a far more cosmic scale where those ultimately opposed are God and the demons. Such a battle is waged more aptly, therefore, in a soul (the soul of the répondant) which accurately reflects the true balance of power between the opposing forces than in the inexperienced, and to that degree unrepresentative, soul of the younger monk. In the second place, the πόλεμος is aptly transferred from the less experienced to the more experienced soul because the real aim of the attacking demons is not just to win a few tactical victories with the weapons of blasphemy and lust, but to inflict the overwhelming strategic defeat of despair and to create the ultimate delusion that God's mercy is finite by encouraging the lesser delusion that God's creatures are utterly depraved (blasphemy, lust). Thus to assume another's πόλεμος is to issue a direct challenge to evil and, at the same time, to demonstrate powerfully to the penitent that his own subjective condition (prolonged helplessness, scrupulosity, confusion and torment) is itself a delusion

fostered by the enemy and a monumental lie. When the horror of the πόλεμος is revealed in this way to be only an elaborate stage device, its power over the mind evaporates.[101]

Understood in this light the phenomenon of the répondant must be distinguished from the direct proclamation of the forgiveness of sin (whether this is made on the basis of the power to bind and loose or on that of a direct revelation from God) as well as from the more complex reality of intercession with God for the forgiveness of another's sin. It is a conviction of the author of the Vita Stephani that in spite of an evident and real decline in Christian holiness in his own time, God still raises up in every age men of great holiness whose very existence is so pleasing to God that the sins of the many are overlooked for their sake, or at the very least do not receive the full retribution they deserve.[102] For the author, Stephen himself is just such a chosen intercessor and Stephen's ministry of intercession a conscious one, for he has requested and been given the special gift of securing whatever he asks for from God as necessary to the salvation of others.[103] Therefore the prayer of intercession for sin that Stephen offers (or the responsibility for sin that he assumes) is at once the prayer of the chosen intercessor "guaranteed" by a previous divine πληροφορία and the prayer of the ordained priest whose office it is to intercede, for men with God.[104]

In one place in the Life Stephen himself reflects on the nature of the gift he has received and declares that the extraordinary grace at work in him is no result or reflection of his own virtue, but a gift given through him, in function of their spiritual needs, to those who put their faith in him and in the monastic σχῆμα he wears.[105] He does not mention priestly ordination in this context nor make any distinction between those who have and those who have not been ordained, but the

text itself recalls unmistakably a theme and an argument familiar from earlier Vitae, namely, that the ministerial and liturgical acts even of an unworthy priest are sources of grace for the faithful because the priestly ministry exists not as an extension of personal spiritual worth but for the spiritual good of others.[106]

Within such a perspective distinctions between Charisma and Amt recede before the more fundamental principle that grace (of whatever kind) is not a personal possession, but works for the good of the church as a whole. Certainly nothing in the Vita Stephani suggests that Charisma and Amt ought to be considered as in any way hostile to one another by nature. The authority of office, in the person of the bishops, is explicitly accepted by Stephen, and the fact of ordination is itself considered a great gift.[107] Neither scorn for the generality of those in orders nor direct denial of the validity of their ministry - such as is found in the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian - has any place in the Vita Stephani, and careful scrutiny reveals no basis on which to interpret the Life as an expression of that "enthusiastic" sacramental theology which Holl and Hörmann have sought to establish as a continuous tradition from Pseudo-Dionysius to Symeon.[108]

Although the Life of Stephen is evidently a monastic composition, it also contains a certain amount of information about patterns of penance among the laity. Lay visitors come to see Stephen to be healed of their πάθη ψυχικά and this necessarily implies some kind of manifestation (confession) of these "spiritual ills".[109] Stephen's own allusion to others' "belief in the σχῆμα" probably and perhaps especially includes such lay visitors.[110] In general it may be said that the Life gives the impression that Stephen's monastery was a spiritual centre attracting a regular stream of lay people and providing for them not only spiritual teaching but very probably also the opportunity for

confession and direction as well. However, nothing is said in the Life about ἐπιτίμια, although the medicinal language used of penance implies that appropriate "treatments" of some kind must have been prescribed for the different species of sins and sinners.[111]

[Vitae miscellaneae] The end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth centuries may also be taken as the probable date of composition for a further group of four Vitae: the Passions of the martyrs Nicephorus (BHG 1334) by John of Sardis, Elias the Younger (BHG 578-579), Bacchus (BHG 209) and the Twenty Sabaite Martyrs (BHG 1200).[112] None of these Lives contains any direct evidence for the practice of ecclesiastical penance.[113]

3. Conclusions (a) Evidence for ecclesiastical penance in the Lives surveyed from the period 787-829 reflects a more and more exclusively monastic reality. The episcopal presence is absent, at least de facto, from the administration of penance within the monastery. More surprising, it is equally absent, it would seem, from the administration of penance to those among the laity who were resorting to the monasteries. Reasons for such an absence may well be different in different areas (Theodore of Stoudion, Stephen of St. Sabas), but by comparison with equally "monastic" Lives from an earlier period (for example, the corpus of Cyril of Scythopolis) the episcopal absence in the eighth and ninth centuries is clearly more pronounced. To this the Vita Gregorii Agrigentini and perhaps some of the other Italian Lives are exceptions, but both the geographical and the earlier chronological settings of most of these Lives set them apart from the main current of Byzantine hagiography during the iconoclast years.

(b) Within the sphere of monastic penance the act of confession itself (ἐξαγόρευσις) has become more and more clearly the heart of all penitential discipline, and references to the laity in these documents

suggest that confession was becoming a more common practice among ordinary lay people. There is still no trace anywhere in the Lives, however, of the idea that confession was considered obligatory, whether as a general religious duty or in particular circumstances (before communion, on the deathbed).

(c) The hagiography of the period 787-829 provides no direct evidence that unordained monks either heard confessions or forgave sins. Hostility or even simple rivalry between Charisma and Amt is not a theme to be found in these sources, and where such hostility is often presumed to be lurking beneath the surface (as, for example, in accounts of the répondant du péché), close analysis of the texts reveals that the stories are more appropriately explained as reflections of the developed psychological casuistry of confession than as evidence for a dispute about the nature of church order.

(d) When taken together, all the prece ding observations confirm the more general impression left by the Vitae that by the end of the first quarter of the ninth century ecclesiastical penance in the Byzantine church followed a procedure which was normally "private" by nature. This is not to say that the more public expressions of penitential discipline in the episcopal sphere (excommunication, suspension, ἔλεγχος) had disappeared altogether by this time, nor that an elaborate and positive ideal of secrecy had begun to invest penitential practice even within the monasteries. Neither is true. However, by the time of the death of Theodore Studites the hagiographical evidence does present an image of ecclesiastical penance as a procedure not directly or normally administered by the bishops (or by their secular clergy), and about which, in the normal course of events, there would have been no public knowledge. This gradual change may find a small reflection in the inner transformation of the penitential topos of amputation (τομή). Originally the image referred to the excommunication of a hopelessly diseased

and therefore dangerous member of the ecclesial body, but by the time of the eighth and ninth centuries it can also be used in the Lives to describe one of the ways in which a spiritual father deals with the λογισμοί and πάθη of his sons and daughters in the course of individual private spiritual direction.

## C. From the Death of Theodore of Stoudion to the Triumph of Orthodoxy 829-843

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vita Euthymii] Gouillard's account of the Life of Euthymius of Sardis (BHG 2145) found in Ms. Chalcensis 88 adds little to the history of ecclesiastical penance apart from witnessing to the continued use of canonical penalties such as deposition (κανονικὴ καθαίρεσις) as an element of imperial iconoclast politics.[114]

[Vitae Theophanis Confessoris et Theodori Grapti] The Life of Theophanes by Methodius (BHG 1787z) and part of the later Life of Theodore (BHG 1746a) were composed before the end of the iconoclast period.[115] They contain no description of any of the institutions of ecclesiastical penance, but they do demonstrate that any period of persecution, whether of the third century or the ninth, will produce a class of lapsi whose fate is intimately bound up with ecclesiastical penance.[116]

[Vita Georgii Amastrensis] The Life of George of Amastris (BHG 668) is attributed to Ignatius the Deacon by Ševčenko and has been put forward by him as the unique example of an "iconoclast Life".[117]

When the author touches on penance he does so mostly in very general terms.[118] The one specific example in the Life of a confession/conversion involves some enemies of George who had slandered him. Their leader repents, confesses his sin and promises διόρθωσις. His example leads the others in the revolt to ask forgiveness from George for their own sins.[119] The language in which this request is described probably implies some form of ecclesiastical reconciliation (ἐξομολογεῖσθαι τὸ ἁμάρτημα,

τῶν ἐνταισμένων ἐξαιτῆσαι τὴν συγχώρησιν), but as is so frequently the case with confessions in the Vitae, the sin confessed is a sin committed against the saint himself, and this makes it exceedingly difficult to distinguish his own act of personal forgiveness from a properly ecclesiastical reconciliation or absolution.[120]

The Life also contains a reference to the keys of Peter taken up by George on his being made bishop; the keys are not explicitly linked to penance by the author but symbolize the more general care and responsibility for the church that is assumed by a bishop.[121] However, one of the reasons for George's episcopal appointment was the success he had achieved in bringing sinners to repentance (ἐπιστροφή) even before he was ordained, a skill which any bishop is presumed to need.[122] Like so many other hagiographers the author interprets the sufferings of Christians in this life as both punishment and remedy for their sins.[123] He closes with a prayer to George to intercede with God for the forgiveness of the sins of those left behind on earth.[124]

[Vita Nicephori] The Life of Nicephorus, abbot and founder of the monastery of Medikion (BHG 2297), is generally accepted as having been composed before 843 although a more exact date is not possible.[125]

The Vita Nicephori contains little of direct relevance to this study. The lifelong pursuit of penance is reckoned as the true business of the monk and the proper way to root out faults and weaknesses even among the saints.[126] And while some emphasis is placed on Nicephorus' role as spiritual guide to those both inside and outside the monastery, there are no descriptions in the Life of anything that might be identified as a form of ecclesiastical penance, no suggestion, for example, of any confession or reconciliation as part of the deathbed ritual.[127] There is a welcome reminder in the text that the Vita was very probably read out annually on the feast of the saint to an audience of pilgrims to the monastery; the teaching and the exempla contained in the Lives

of the saints thus had a natural point of entry into the minds of ordinary Christians, and this will have been as true of penitential matters as of other patterns of Christian life reflected in the Lives.[128]

[Vita Nicetae] The Life of Nicetas, successor to Nicephorus as the hegumen of Medikion (BHG 1341), may also be dated to the period just before the triumph of orthodoxy in 843.[129]

The Life is an important witness to the practice and principles of monastic penance. Nicetas, promoted to the priesthood at the orders of the probably unordained hegumen Nicephorus, exercises an important pastoral role within the monastery. He hears the confession of λογισμοί from all the monks and relieves the πόλεμος of those troubled by particular πάθη .[130] Because of his own charismatic gifts Nicetas knows when another monk has actually given way to sin; in such cases he brings the sinner into his cell and has him make confession there.[131] Those sinners who tend towards discouragement and despair he dispenses from the customary ἐπιτίμια, a policy of moderation which marks Nicetas' treatment of sinners in general.[132] In the same vein Nicetas assures the monks that God forgives sins in this life seventy times seven times, but he also warns that death puts an effective end to the divine mercy.[133] When Nicetas rebukes the iconoclast emperor, however, he implies that the deathbed is not the proper place for repentance and that should anyone leave conversion deliberately to the end, such repentance ἐν καιρῷ ἐξόδου may well prove fruitless.[134] The impression of monastic penance as left by the Vita Nicetae is thus of a traditional and well-regulated body of practice which includes confession (of both λογισμοί and σφάλματα) to a priest, the imposition of various ἐπιτίμια adapted to the diversity of sins and sinners, and repeated συγχώρησις. The whole process is likened to the medicinal treatment of disease and corresponds very closely to the spirit and practice of the earliest Greek penitentials which are thought to have been composed at about this same period.[135]

One question remains unanswered. Was Nicetas' cura animarum understood as a ministry dependent upon his priestly ordination, or did it depend upon his (later) role as hegumen of the monastery, or even upon his personal charisms of holiness?[136] The Life does suggest that Nicetas was active as a confessor and penitentiary in the monastery before he became hegumen, but precise distinctions between the activities proper to different stages of a saint's life may be foreign to the genre of the Vita.[137] A more general observation which may be allowed, however, is that the Vita Nicetae betrays no sign of any rivalry between the hegumen and the "priest of the monastery" in the sphere of penance.[138]

With respect to ecclesiastical penance outside the sphere of the monastery, the Life refers in passing to an ἀνάθεμα directed against the Patriarch Nicephorus and certain others. This is interpreted by the author as a curse which, it is hoped, will recoil upon the heads of those who first pronounced it against the just.[139] Finally, an interesting anecdote at the end of the Vita recounts the "fall" of Nicetas himself who is persuaded by certain monks, for the sake of οἰκονομία, to communicate with the iconoclast Patriarch Theodotus (815-821).[140] Afterwards Nicetas repents of his σφάλμα and returns to Constantinople, the scene of his fall, so that his διόρθωσις can also be seen there. The implication is certainly that Nicetas' interior conversion and subsequent confessio (ὁμολογία) effected the forgiveness of his sin, but the author nowhere states or suggests that Nicetas ever had recourse to the institutions of ecclesiastical penance at any time during the whole incident.[141]

[Vitae ante 843 conscriptae] The year 843 can be taken as probable terminus ad quem for a further group of nineteen Lives, although it is not impossible that some of these are much earlier compositions. This group includes five documents that make no substantial contribution to

the history of penance: the Lives of the apostle Andrew (BHG 102) and of the Virgin Mary (BHG 1049) by the monk Epiphanius, an anonymous Life of the emperor Constantine (BHG 364), a Vita Nicolai by Methodius (BHG 1352y) and a Narratio about the conversion of the soldier Nicholas into a monk (BHG 2311).[142] Because precise dates cannot be given to the remaining Lives they will be presented here in alphabetical order.[142a]

[Vita Ioannis Calybitae] The Life of the young nobleman John (BHG 868, 868f) who left his home in Constantinople and later reappeared as a beggar living in a hut (καλύβη) by the door of his parents' house is of the stuff of legends.[143] It contains one excellent example of a disclosure of "thoughts" made by the young monk John to the hegumen of the monastery of the Acoemetae and an allusion to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem undertaken in order to do penance for sin.[144]

[Vitae Ioannis Eleemosynarii] Two reworkings of the Life of John the Almsgiver probably belong to the period before 843. The first (BHG 887v) is a metaphrasis based not only on the Life by Leontius of Neapolis but also on the earlier but no longer extant Life of John composed by John Moschus and Sophronius.[145] The second (BHG 887w) is an epitome of the lost Life by Moschus and Sophronius and appears to have been composed independently of BHG 887v.[146] Both are examined here for variations, conscious and unconscious, on the original text of Leontius although it should be stressed that the longer of the two Vitae (BHG 887v) also contains (and therefore repeats for a new audience) all the references to penance found in the seventh-century Life.[147]

BHG 887v changes the text of Leontius in at least two places relevant to this study. A monk who in the original Life is described simply as having tonsured a woman becomes in the metaphrasis her "πνευματικὸς πατὴρ καὶ καθηγητής"; the change suggests that by the ninth century πνευματικὸς πατήρ had certainly become the terminus technicus for that

particular spiritual relationship implied by the giving of the monastic σχῆμα to another.[148] To an account of John's excommunication of certain clerics who misbehaved in the sanctuary, BHG 887v adds the supplementary information that this sanction was imposed only after two attempts at νουθεσία had failed to change the offending conduct. It is not possible to determine whether such an amplification of the text reflects the procedure current in such cases in the author's own time or whether it is merely an echo of general hagiographical traditions regarding excommunication.[149] Other changes from Leontius' text are merely rhetorical.[150]

[Vita Nicolai] The Vita per Michaelem (BHG 1348) may also be placed with some confidence in the period before 843.[151] It portrays the episcopal office as one that demands holiness in those who hold it and requires them to prevent sinfulness (especially injustice) among the people.[152] The ἔλεγχος of fornication in the story of the sailors is a clear example of this, although it may be remarked at the same time that the account makes no allusion to any forgiveness of their sin by Nicholas.[153]

[Vita Theodori Chorensis] The Life of Theodore (BHG 1743), hegumen of the Chora monastery at Constantinople in the sixth century, may have been written earlier than the mid-ninth century, but in the absence of more precise dates 843 is a conservative terminus ad quem.[154]

The Life contains little or no evidence relevant to the history of penance but it is valuable for the picture it draws of the situation and activities of the hegumen in a small monastery.[155] As hegumen Theodore is shepherd and πνευματικὸς πατήρ of his flock, healer of spiritual as well as physical ills.[156] There is no specific reference in the Life to prove that the laity who came to the monastery in large numbers confessed their sins or received absolution, but the author does show Theodore actively rebuking the sinful injustice of public officials

and bringing a heretic back to the orthodox faith by tactical use of harshness and severity.[157] Like the Lives of Nicephorus and Nicetas of Medikion, the Vita Theodori also implies that a cleric within the monastery, although not himself the hegumen, could exercise a pastoral ministry towards other monastic sinners.[158]

2. Other Vitae [Vita Ioannis Gotthiae] The Life of John of Gotthia (BHG 891) is one of the rare non-Constantinopolitan Vitae that can be ascribed to the period 829-843.[159] It contains one story which finds its central theme in the necessity of revealing thoughts and temptations (ἀναδέσθαι τὸν λογισμόν) to the spiritual father, and portrays in some detail the confession that John extracts from his recalcitrant disciple.[160]

[Vitae Martyrum XLII Amoriensium] Four documents recounting the Passion of those martyred at Amorion in 838 (BHG 1209, 1212, 1214) are generally held to be near-contemporaneous works.[161]

These Passiones bear witness to the traditional belief that the act of martrydom in itself effects the forgiveness of sins in a way analogous to that of baptism, and that after their sacrifice the martyrs become μεσῖται with God, interceding on behalf of the sins of Christians.[162] In preparation for their deaths the martyrs offer final prayers to God, but the Lives record nothing resembling a final absolution, in spite of the fact that one of their number was, or had been formerly, a priest.[163] The authors also firmly reject the view (familiar from other Lives of the iconoclast period) that a public denial of Christ may be excused on the grounds of necessity so long as it is not also made internally (κατὰ ψυχήν).[164]

[Vitae in Italia conscriptae] Four Lives written in the Greek circles of Italy and Sicily have their terminus ad quem in the period

829-843, although once again some of these may well be earlier than the ninth century: the Martyrs of Lentini [Alphius, Philadelphus and companions (BHG 57-62)], Gregentius bishop of Taphar (BHG 705, 706, 706h), Januarius (BHG 773y), Nicon (BHG 1369) and Phantinus the Elder (BHG 1508, 1509).[165] All these Vitae are set in a legendary past, but recently an attempt has been made to interpret them against the background of the political and ecclesiastical politics of the eighth and ninth centuries.[166] To the historian of penance, however, these Lives prove to be a disappointment. Many of them contain nothing at all about ecclesiastical penance and the few allusions to the theme in the rest are fleeting and unsubstantial.[167]

In the Prologue to that section of the Vita Gregentii known as the Leges Homeritarum a story is told of a monk guilty of drunkenness and fornication. He is upbraided for his sins by a huge snake and then allowed to go free only if he promises to repent. Repentance in this case takes the form of returning to the monastery, desisting from further sin and living the rest of his life ἐν μετανοίᾳ.[168] The cycle of penance thus portrayed seems to be complete despite the absence of any reference to confession, absolution or ἐπιτίμια.

The only direct evidence that the traditions of ecclesiastical penance may have had some influence on the composition of the Leges is an allusion to ecclesiastical canons in the matter of second and third marriages.[169] The lawgiver's manifest concern to avert God's retribution from the whole community by regulating closely the punishment of individual crimes and sins may also owe something to the ecclesiastical experience of discipline and punishment, but such an influence would be too diffuse to be relevant to this study.[170]

The Miracula Phantini provide one example of a confession of sin and a request for forgiveness by way of direct prayer to the saint but once again the offence in question is a slighting of the saint's power,

and this makes it difficult to use the incident as representing any broader pattern of penance.[171] All the scattered references to penance in the Acta of the martyrs of Lentini remain firmly within the context of baptismal rather than post-baptismal forgiveness.[172]

3. Conclusions (a) Hagiographical sources for the period 829-843 are few and undistinguished. It could hardly be expected that an interval of only fifteen years, however eventful for the history of Byzantium, should produce startling changes in age-old ecclesiastical institutions, and indeed such poor evidence for penance as the sources do provide only serves to confirm the main outlines of the picture of ecclesiastical penance already sketched above from the hagiography of the eighth and early ninth centuries.

(b) One further observation may be made, however, if a later Life such as that of Nicetas of Medikion is compared with an earlier one like the fifth-century Vita Syncleticae. The ninth-century Life does reflect the gradual changes which have taken place in the institutional structure of penance (development of the discipline of confession, organized monastic ἐπιτίμια, presence of lay clients for monastic confessors), but much more striking is the fact that over an interval of nearly four hundred years the theory underlying the pastoral treatment of sinners within the monastic sphere has not changed in any way.[173] This inner continuity of theory deserves at least as much attention as any details of outward change and development.

## III GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS (692-843)

1. If by the time of the Trullan council all the constitutive elements of the developed Greek practice of ecclesiastical penance could be found individually in the Lives of the saints, by the time of the

triumph of orthodoxy in 843 these same elements have certainly come together into a coherent and consistent pattern of practice. This pattern is visible as a whole in the earliest Penitentials and is increasingly reflected in the hagiographic sources of the period as well. If parts of the general pattern remain only obscurely attested in the Lives (for example, repeated συγχώρησις of serious sins for the laity, deathbed confession and absolution), this is due in no small measure to the limitations of hagiography as a narrative genre. Anecdotes recounting the forgiveness of sins tend to imply - aedificationis causa - that the sinners lived happily (that is, virtuously) ever after, and deathbeds in the Vitae are normally occupied by saints not sinners. Neither circumstance leaves much room to accommodate the perspective or the fate of ordinary laymen who live neither as extravagant sinners nor as great saints.

2. For the same reasons it remains impossible to determine solely on the basis of the hagiographical evidence the extent to which ordinary laymen had recourse to ecclesiastical penance during this period. Devout Christians will certainly have had their own πατέρες πνευματικοί whom they visited regularly, and great sinners, then as before, will have come forward in irregular moments of conversion to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. But was there any established pattern of use among the great majority who lived between these poles? Crowds of the ordinary laity were attracted to the monasteries on particular feast days and holy days, and these circumstances would at least have provided the opportunity for something like an "annual confession", or confession before communion on important feasts. The plain fact must be faced, however, that no trace of any such practice, or any such custom exists in Lives composed before the restoration of orthodoxy in 843.

3. During the period 692-843 the centre of gravity of ecclesiastical

penance may fairly be said to have shifted even more markedly away from the episcopal towards the monastic sphere of influence. The shift can be explained at least in part by the disruption of public church life under iconoclasm and by the imprisonment, exile or estrangement of many bishops from their flocks. Such conditions will have made it all the more difficult for bishops to minister in any settled fashion as penitentiaries to their people, and the openly political use to which many of the institutions of ecclesiastical penance were being put (excommunication, deposition, suspension) cannot have encouraged ordinary Christians to approach many of their bishops in matters of conscience.[174]

Some Lives of the iconoclast period seem to reflect such a change when they distinguish - more sharply than was customary in earlier Vitae - the public activity of a saint (defending the faith, relations with the imperial court) from his private and domestic activity (personal ascesis, pastoral ministry). Moreover, by comparison with previous chapters, the period 692-843 boasts fewer episcopal saints, and while "good" bishops are normally shown as exercising some kind of penitential activity (Leo of Catania, Gregory of Agrigentum), the decline in the number of such Lives and the more and more exclusively monastic control of hagiography as a genre combine to remove the episcopacy (and a fortiori the lower secular clergy) from the penitential perspective of the Vitae.

4. The penitential topoi discussed in previous chapters show little change or development during the period 692-843. A shift of meaning in the surgical metaphor of τομή has already been noted and to this may be added the observation that topoi linking penance to the worthy reception of communion continue to decline in importance. More interesting is the appearance of something like reportage in the Lives, especially those set in Constantinople and its environs, as the "public"

activity of the saints becomes in itself a focus of the hagiographer's interest. In Lives of an earlier period the narrative style was such that even highly circumstantial accounts appear to be the distillation of what might have been a dozen similar events in the career of the saint. By contrast the Vitae of the ninth century present many events as unique and immediate historical moments. Few of these deal directly with ecclesiastical penance, but it begins to be possible, perhaps for the first time, to catch actual historical reflections of penitential practice in these Lives (Philaretus, Theodore of Stoudion) and therefore to relate them to the actual religious conduct of real people.

5. The relationship between Charisma and Amt has been discussed already in connexion with particular texts. The iconoclast period is often indicated as the time when this relationship became particularly acute and actual owing to the disruption of church life and to a shortage of priests. It need only be observed here that the Lives of the saints show no indication that before 843 the issue was a conscious one in the minds of the hagiographers, still less that the Vitae were being used to promote a particular theological "line" in such a debate.

# CHAPTER FIVE: FROM THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY TO THE DEATH OF PATRIARCH ANTONIUS III STUDITES (843-983)

# I QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE PENANCE

1. Byzantine church life during the century and a half that followed the triumph of orthodoxy was marked by a series of problems and events relevant to the history of ecclesiastical penance: difficulties of ecclesiastical reconciliation which followed upon the confusion of the Iconoclast era and the bitter disagreements and schisms of the Photian age;[1] increased estrangement between Eastern and Western traditions during the Photian period;[2] the fourth marriage of Emperor Leo VI and its penitential and canonical resolution.[3] Monastic influence over Byzantine church life is usually also placed at its zenith during this period, but further scrutiny of the sources is required before a balanced account can be given showing the real effects of this influence on the administration of ecclesiastical penance.[4]

2. Canonical works produced during the period from 843 to 983 are also of great interest to the historian of penance. The sixth-century Nomocanon in XIV Titles was re-issued in 883 in an expanded and revised edition which included additional synodal and patriarchal canons from the seventh to the ninth centuries.[5] Many of the spurious canonical works and collections of penitential ἐπιτίμια ascribed to earlier Fathers such as John Chrysostom and John the Faster appear to have originated at this time, and while they provide invaluable evidence for penitential practice and theory, the historical usefulness of these documents is much diminished by the lack of precise information about their date and provenance.[6] Moreover, chancery precedents and decisions directly related to ecclesiastical penance continued to accumulate in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, and are of particular significance for understanding the procedures of reconciling lapsi, schismatics and heretics, and for establishing the existence of ecclesiastical courts and their relationship to the administration of ecclesiastical penance.[7]

3. Certain miscellaneous documents from the period under review also require integration into the history of Byzantine penance. In this connexion

the treatise De confessione of Patriarch Antonius III Studites (974-979) has already been mentioned, although it deals more with the theory of confession than with details of practice.[8] A more important document, however, is the Brief an einen Sünder published by Diekamp and dated by him to the ninth century, which shows that while a good deal of the charismatic language of the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian (πληροφορία, ἀπόδηξις of divine grace) can be found before the time of Symeon, it does not necessarily imply any challenge to priestly authority in matters of penance.[9]

4. Examination of the hagiographical evidence for ecclesiastical penance during the period from 843 to 983 will differ in a fundamental way from that in the earlier sections of this study. By the middle of the ninth century external evidence in the form of the penitentials demonstrates the existence of ecclesiastical penance in a form not greatly dissimilar to that of the modern ritual of the Greek church.[10] There is no need, therefore, to look to the Lives of the saints any longer in order to establish the fact of such penance. The Vitae retain their value for the historian, however, as reflecting the manner in which this penance may have been used and understood, especially by the laity, during the ninth and tenth centuries. The present chapter will concentrate on these matters and particular attention will also be paid to any evidence which suggests that it was customary for unordained confessors to forgive sins. In addition to these specific interests, it may also be possible in the course of this chapter to form a more realistic interpretation of the true value of the Vitae as historical sources for penance inasmuch as the assured knowledge that ecclesiastical penance existed during this period gives the historian a hindsight in the use of his sources that he has not enjoyed hitherto.

## II THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

### A. The Photian Age 843-886

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vita Theodori Studitae] The account of the

translation in the year 844 of the relics of Theodore and his brother Joseph (BHG 1756t) adds nothing to this study.[11]

[Ignatius Diaconus] The Lives of Patriarchs Tarasius (BHG 1698) and Nicephorus (BHG 1335), and the Life of Gregory Decapolites (BHG 711) are accepted as the works of Ignatius the Deacon who wrote them after 842 and probably before 845.[12] The Ignatian Vitae, as might be expected from an author who suffered personally from the workings of episcopal discipline, do reflect various aspects of episcopal penance and, when the context permits, of monastic penance and spiritual direction as well.[13] Among these, two elements deserve notice. The first is that penitential ἐπιτίμια, especially in the episcopal sphere, could provoke bitterness and distaste, a reminder that the medicinal interpretation of penance remains an interpretation only, and that some people will certainly have understood and experienced the ἐπιτίμια as vindictive rather than therapeutic.[14] The second element is that none of the Ignatian Lives portrays monastic Geist as a rival to hierarchical office. Indeed it has become a topos of the Vitae that charismatic holiness is a requirement for ordination.[15]

[Michael Syncellus] Problems of literary ascription surrounding the name of Michael Syncellus are complicated and still unresolved. Perhaps the encomia for Dionysius the Areopagite (BHG 556) and for the Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorion (BHG 1213) may be taken as from the pen of Michael, and for convenience' sake they will be examined here together with the Vita Michaelis Syncelli (BHG 1296).[16]

The Life of Dionysius contains one valuable passage, a résumé of the dispute over penance between a priest and the monk Demophilus originally found in Pseudo-Dionysius' Epistula 8 ad Demophilum.[17] Michael portrays Dionysius as lending the full weight of his apostolic approval to a policy whereby penance is available to all sinners and the penitential rigorism characteristic of Novatianism is flatly rejected.[18] In Michael's own Vita allusions to penance are few and unimportant, but the Life is of some interest for showing that "charismatic" language also came quite naturally to the lips of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, a

plain enough sign that the bishops did not equate it with an attack on the nature of ecclesiastical authority.[19]

[Vita Nicetae] Although it is true that the final redaction of the Life of Nicetas the Patrician (BHG 1342b) may not have been completed until well into the third quarter of the ninth century, the extant Vita is probably based on first-hand accounts.[20] There is one important description of an episode in which a layman comes to visit Nicetas in order to bare his soul.[21] Nicetas, the hegumen of the monastery, but probably unordained, heals the man's condition definitively with a prayer, but the text does not interpret this explicitly as an absolution.[22]

[Vita Methodii] The Life of Patriarch Methodius of Constantinople (BHG 1278) is commonly ascribed to Gregory Asbestas although Ševčenko has shown some reservations with respect to the dating.[23] The Vita Methodii contains only passing references to ecclesiastical penance, but it reflects very strongly the Studite criticism of the episcopate during and after the time of Methodius.[24] The author not only attacks the character of the outright Iconoclast bishops; he also raises the Studite charge that Methodius consecrated many men of unworthy life and motivation in his excessive zeal to restore the episcopate after Iconoclasm.[25] This kind of pointed criticism of "current events" is new to hagiography, and the author goes so far as to cast doubt upon the validity of the Eucharist as celebrated by Iconoclast priests and bishops. The connexion between criticism of the hierarchy and doubts about sacramental validity recalls the language of the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian, but here it more probably reflects the general lack of a developed Byzantine sacramental theology than any alternative vision of church order.[26]

[Vita Theodori Studitae] The "Vita A" of Theodore of Stoudion (BHG 1754) has a terminus post quem of 868 and clearly falls within the Photian era.[27] None of the evidence it provides for ecclesiastical penance whether in the episcopal or monastic sphere introduces any new element into this study.[28] Moreover, while the opposition of the monastic τάγμα to the hierarchy is an essential

part of the Vita, the theological enjeu is orthodoxy not church order. Under Theodore it is the monks who champion canonical ἀκρίβειαι against the οἰκονομία and weakness of the hierarchs.[29] Thus, opposition between monks and bishops is not always to be taken simpliciter as the expression of a theological opposition between Charisma and Amt in the Byzantine church; the lines are not so neatly drawn.[30]

[Photius] Photius' own hagiographical writings are few and unimportant; they will be grouped together here with those other hagiographical texts which he gathered and preserved in the Bibliotheca. The list includes Lives of Athanasius (BHG 184 = Codex 258), Metrophanes and Alexander (BHG 1280 = Codex 256), Paul the Confessor (BHG 1472 = Codex 257) and the encomium for Thecla (BHG 1721).[31] None of the infrequent allusions to ecclesiastical penance in these documents changes the pattern of evidence already familiar from previous chapters of this study.[32]

[Vitae miscellaneae] A number of other Lives and hagiographical documents may be assigned to the Photian period: the Index discipulorum et apostolorum attributed to Dorotheus (BHG 151, 152), an apocryphal martyrdom of the apostle Andrew (BHG 99), various miracles of Nicholas of Myra (BHG 1352, 1352v, 1353-1356), the Life of Andrew of Crete by a certain Nicholas Quaestor (BHG 113), an encomium on all the saints by Theognostus (BHG 1617) and an Inventio and Passio of the martyr Menas (BHG 1254m, 1254).[33] Only the Life of Andrew of Crete, the encomium by Theognostus and the Inventio et Miracula Menae allude to matters penitential, but not so as to break any new ground.[34]

2. Other Vitae [Vitae Ioanicii] The original Life of the Bithynian monk and "holy man" Joannicius (BHG 936) was written by his disciple Peter not long after Joannicius' death in 846. Another version of the Life, edited and corrected by the monk Sabas (BHG 935), probably appeared before 855.[35]

Joannicius may fairly be claimed as a prime example of the Byzantine "holy man". Consulted by hierarchs, nobles and hegumens on matters of wider

public interest, the saint is also confidant to a stream of ordinary monks and lay people who come to visit him on Mt. Olympus ὠφελείας χάριν.[36] The position of the unordained Joannicius is admittedly extraordinary, but it remains to be determined whether it implies any challenge to the episcopal control over penance, or any claim to wield the apostolic power of binding and loosing such as is found explicitly in the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian.[37] The fact that Joannicius is portrayed many times in the Life dispensing forgiveness (συγχώρησις) would seem to support such a claim, but the circumstances and the precise nature of these συγχωρήσεις merit closer examination.

In every case in the Vita Ioannicii where the term συγχώρησις or συγχωρεῖν is used, the saint grants pardon only at the request of those who have sinned, and in every case it is against Joannicius himself that the sinners in question have transgressed, either by doubting his charismatic gifts or by putting him to the test in some other way.[38] The sins forgiven are thus mostly internal, directed specifically against Joannicius himself, and, significantly, committed by monks alone. When it is limited in this manner συγχώρησις is no more than a traditional aspect of domestic monastic discipline.[39]

More interesting are two examples of the theme of the répondant du péché which occur in each of the two redactions of the Vita Ioannicii. In the first of these incidents a young woman is so driven to distraction by the demon of fornication that she roams like a maenad over the hills until at last she is brought by providence to meet Joannicius. He announces healing to her, tells her to do penance and then declares to her that he is taking her battle (πόλεμος) against the demons upon himself.[40] In the other incident Joannicius meets two nuns on the roadway. The younger of the two, discouraged by the struggle (πόλεμος) against the flesh, is returning to the world. At the urging of the elder nun, who is in fact also the mother of the girl, Joannicius tells the younger woman to put her hand on his neck. He then assures her solemnly three times that he will take her πόλεμος upon himself.[41] In both cases the women

are relieved of their trouble immediately and return home in peace.[42]

The meaning of this action of the répondant du péché as it has been examined above in the Vita Stephani Sabaitae holds true for these cases in the Vita Ioannicii as well.[43] Joannicius is not said to forgive the sins of the women, nor even to take their sins upon himself. It is rather the πόλεμος, the "unseen warfare", that he assumes. The act is clearly extraordinary and "charismatic" but it ought not to be confused with a claim to forgive sins, which it is not, nor with the language of binding and loosing which is used neither here nor anywhere else in the Life when the author describes Joannicius' ministry to sinners. But although these distinctions are necessary, they should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Joannicius does act in the Life as confessor to both monks and laity, and that there is no sign that his ministry has to be completed by further recourse to an ordained priest, as, for example, to secure "absolution" from sin or even from ἐπιτίμια which Joannicius himself imposes.[44] The hagiographical sources mention nothing like this and the structure of the narratives leaves no room for it.[45]

In general, the sources suggest the following pattern: an unordained monk celebrated for holiness (Joannicius) hears the confessions (of both λογισμοί and sins) from monks and laity alike; he responds to the situation of the penitents first by imposing penances (ἐπιτιμᾶν, κανονίζειν) suited to their needs, and then by praying over them. De facto this is the "forgiveness of sins", but the texts do not show that the holy man was thereby claiming for himself the episcopal power of binding and loosing. And in the absence of direct evidence for such a claim, it should not be read gratuitously into the subjective understanding either of the confessor or of his penitents. The impetratory nature of the prayers said over penitents in the Greek rite makes it more likely that when these were pronounced by an unordained monk, they were understood as an exercise of the powers of intercession and πληροφορία universally ascribed to the saints.[46] Indeed, such is precisely the interpretation contained in the most serious instance of sin found in either of the two forms of the Life, the

case of the monk Antonius who had lapsed repeatedly into the iconoclast heresy. Joannicius provides him with a penitential regimen, but he does not absolve him. Instead he assures Antonius that the forty days of life remaining to him will be enough to secure God's forgiveness for his sins: καὶ ἐλπίζω εἰς τὴν ἄφατον φιλανθρωπίαν αὐτοῦ ὅτι ποιήσει τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ μετὰ σοῦ, συγχωρῶν σοι πάντα τὰ πεπλημμένα.[47]

On the basis of these Vitae it may fairly be argued that Joannicius occupies a position slightly independent of, perhaps even slightly above, that of the hierarchy. He is a prophetic figure whose authoritative support enables the Patriarch Methodius to proceed confidently against his many opponents. Nevertheless, this prophetic position supplements the established ecclesiastical order; it does not compete with it nor challenge the other's legitimate authority. Joannicius appears as a further, not an alternative, source of grace, and this observation is as true of his penitential ministry as of the other spheres of his influence and activity.[48]

[Vitae Petri Atroensis] The Life of Peter of Atroa also appears in a double form: the original edition of the Life by Sabas (BHG 2364), and a Vita retractata (BHG 2365), recast and re-edited by the same writer. Both forms of the Life were in existence by 865 and the dates for both may lie even closer to the middle of the ninth century.[49]

The Life of Peter is a Vita of some distinction for the historian of penance. Whereas all previous Lives have illustrated one aspect or aspects of ecclesiastical penance while leaving others unattested, the Vita Petri represents the first document to display in one place all the elements of the pattern of penance: confession, absolution, ἐπιτίμια, deathbed confession, deathbed reception of the monastic σχῆμα, the irreplaceable character of the spiritual father, νουθεσία, ἔλεγχος and excommunication.[50] An example will indicate the quality of this evidence, so much more detailed than in similar stories from older Lives. In one place in the Life, Peter is portrayed celebrating the liturgy at the monastery of St. Porphyrius. He notices a noble of consular rank among those approaching to

receive communion. Knowing the man to be guilty of a flagrant injustice (προφανῶς ἀδικήσαντα καὶ τὸν θεὸν λυπήσαντα), Peter refuses him communion.[51] When the liturgy is ended he calls the man into the κεφαλιαρχεῖον of the church and rebukes him. At this, the consul confesses his sin and promises amendment, whereupon Peter provides the man with ἐπιτίμια and allows him to receive communion after an interval of seven days.[52] The story is valuable not only for these specific details but also for the clear link it establishes between penance and the Eucharist. A notorious sinner, or at least one known to the priest as a serious sinner, is not to be given communion. The structure of the story demands, however, that it is possible for the consul to approach communion on his own initiative, that is, without having to receive beforehand either the permission of a confessor or leave from the celebrant, a point which suggests therefore that confession may not yet have achieved any great place in the religious practice of ordinary people.[53]

Another detail of this same incident, the seven-day interval established by Peter before the consul returns to communion, also deserves attention. It is unfortunate that the context does not make plain whether this period of seven days represents the complete term of the ἐπιτίμια imposed by Peter, or whether the penitential regime as defined in the ἐπιτίμια is to continue after the week is over, but the man is to be allowed back to communion before the penance is "complete".[54] Absolution is nowhere explicitly mentioned, but other incidents in the Vita Petri give every reason to expect that it will have been accorded by Peter in this case too. Restoration to Eucharistic communion after a week can probably be understood, therefore, as the full ecclesiastical reconciliation of the sinner.[55]

Elsewhere in the Life the author makes it abundantly clear that absolution from sin is an exercise of the apostolic power of binding and loosing. This power can be exercised by a direct assurance or proclamation of divine forgiveness (λύσις, συγχώρησις), especially at the moment of death, but it can also be expressed in the indirect and rather drawn-out fashion familiar from earlier

Lives where the sinner is given a penitential regimen, but some additional divine sign of forgiveness ( πληροφορία ) is awaited by both sinner and confessor alike before full reconciliation is held to be complete.[56] Thus the circumstances of the sinner and the nature of particular sins may directly affect the shape which absolution/reconciliation assumes, a further complexity of ecclesiastical penance not to be overlooked when examining the relationship between Amt and Geist in this area.[57]

Finally, the Vita Petri casts some welcome light on other juridical matters not unrelated to penance. The Life contains an exchange of letters between Paul, the hegumen of Atroa, and the Patriarch Tarasius in which fundamental questions of ecclesiastical jurisdiction are raised.[58] Paul acknowledges the canonical datum that no priest may exercise the sacerdotal ministry outside the geographical boundaries of the diocese in which he is ordained.[59] However, as Paul is planning to go on an extended period of travel, he asks the patriarch himself to ordain one of Paul's monks (in fact, Peter) to serve him as chaplain on his travels because in this way the chaplain's ministry may be exercised wherever the patriarch's own authority and jurisdiction hold sway.[60] Such a request constitutes clear recognition of episcopal jurisdiction over the monastic τάγμα in matters pertaining to ordination and control of the priestly ministry. Most tantalizingly absent from this exchange, however, is any indication that the parties involved considered the administration of ecclesiastical penance to be part of this sacerdotal ministry - and hence directly subject to episcopal jurisdiction - in the same way as the Eucharist.[61] Taken as a whole, the exchange between Paul and Tarasius demonstrates that a "charismatic" understanding of ecclesiastical order and authority, blithely oblivious to canonical rights and obligations, was not characteristic of all Byzantine monasticism.

[Vita Eustratii] The Life of Eustratius, hegumen of the monastery of Τὸ Αὐγάρου in Bithynia (BHG 645), was probably composed during the reign of Basil I (867-886).[62] With the Lives of Joannicius (Eustratius' spiritual father), Peter of Atroa and Macarius of Pelekete, the Vita Eustratii bears important testimony

to the inner life of Bithynian monasticism during the first half of the ninth century as well as to the relationship between the Bithynian monasteries and the lay world.

Eustratius is celebrated in the Life as a type of the sympathetic and compassionate confessor. His kindness towards even the most heinous sinners is clearly indicated by the author to serve as a model for other confessors to imitate.[63] Three examples of this approach to sinners are given, and each is a kind of limiting case: the first involves a man guilty of the Unnamable Sin who is rushing off in despair to hang himself; the second concerns a mother and her son who have committed incest and produced a child from their sinful union; the third deals with a certain Theodore who has also committed another unspeakable crime. this time one of violence.[64] In the last two cases the author points out that the sinners had already revealed their sins to other "fathers" among the monasteries of Mt. Olympus, but had been turned away (ἐκδιωχθῆναι) by them.[65] Thus, Eustratius remains a final refuge for all; the fact that he is not the <u>first</u> point of repair for sinners may be a matter of some importance as he was most probably not an ordained priest.[66]

Eustratius' treatment of these sinners should be examined. In every case he receives the sinner with great kindness and instills in him (or them) the confidence that there is no need to despair.[67] Where this confidence can only be instilled by extraordinary means, Eustratius is prepared to assume the role of the <u>répondant du péché</u>, as, for example, in the case of the man on his way to kill himself. Exceptionally, this same text makes it clear that it is the man's <u>sin</u> which Eustratius takes upon himself, not simply the battle against sin: "Ἐπ' ἐμὲ αὕτη ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὦ τέκνον, κἀγὼ ὑπὲρ ταύτης ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἀντεκδόσεως ἀπολογίαν παρέχω."[68] Nevertheless, it may be observed that nowhere is Eustratius said to absolve these sinners himself. He does give them counsel (συμβουλεύειν), and whereas they seem eager to take upon themselves harsh penances in reparation for their sins, Eustratius places no emphasis on ἐπιτίμησις, insisting instead on God's eagerness to forgive freely.[69] Absolution (ἄφεσις)

is referred to once in the Life but it comes from God, not from Eustratius. Theodore, whose sin is probably murder, accepts the saint's advice and spends the rest of his days serving God faithfully in religious seclusion. When he dies he is confident that God has granted him pardon: γέγονέν τε οὗτος ἐκλογῆς καὶ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἀπεριστάστως δουλεύσας μετέστη πρὸς αὐτόν, ἀδιάψευστον πληροφορίαν ἐσχηκὼς τῆς ἀφέσεως.[70]

These episodes in the Vita Eustratii suggest most forcefully that lay people could and did turn to the monks, the "holy fathers", in moments of great spiritual distress. They also suggest that even limiting cases of sin could be and were resolved through the ministry of an unordained monastic confessor without additional reference either to the bishop or to an ordained priest so as to complete what was lacking to the ministry of the unordained monk.[71] These incidents do not imply, however, that the pastoral resolution of such cases by the unordained monastic confessor was necessarily understood by him or by his penitents as an absolution from sin, an exercise of the apostolic power of binding and loosing. Even in admittedly extraordinary circumstances like those of the répondant du péché, not the apostolic prerogative of binding and loosing, but the prophetic charisms of παρρησία and πληροφορία are at stake, and the genuineness of these is normally confirmed in the event by God. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that this kind of distinction between the apostolic and the prophetic was part of the conscious interpretation of the author of the Life, since he compares Eustratius' relationship to his spiritual father Joannicius with that between the prophets Elisha and Elijah.[72] The notion of a διαδοχή of charismatic powers might easily have developed into a rival to the traditional apostolic διαδοχή of the bishops, but no sign of any conscious theological development of this theme can be traced in these ninth-century Bithynian Lives.[73]

[Vita Macarii Pelecetis] The Life of Macarius (BHG 1003), hegumen of the monastery of Pelekete, perhaps in the region of Mt. Olympus, is the work of another monastic hagiographer named Sabas who is to be distinguished from the author of the Lives of Joannicius and Peter of Atroa.[74]

One important anecdote touching on penance occurs in the Life. Macarius, who is a priest and in his exile has become hegumen of a second monastery, hears the confession of another priest much compromised with the Iconoclasts: τῇ τῆς αἱρέσεως κοινωνίᾳ κεκραμένῃ.[75] Macarius deposes the man from the priesthood and assigns him to a lesser rank.[76] Subsequently, however, the former priest unlawfully celebrates the Eucharist, and those who received communion from him are punished with a kind of demonic possession until they are cured by Macarius.[77] The author then proceeds to point out that these punishments are the work of the Holy Spirit whose power sets its seal on whatever the saint commands.[78] The anecdote thus not only attests to a practice of reconciling heretical clergy by means of confession and ἐπιτίμια but also claims a direct connexion - rare in the Vitae - between the efficacy of ecclesiastical discipline and the power of the Holy Spirit.[79]

[Vitae miscellaneae] Two remaining documents from this period, an encomium of the martyr Demetrius (BHG 534) by Plotinus of Thessalonica, and the Life of George of Mitylene (BHG 2163), contribute nothing to the history of ecclesiastical penance, while the few penitential details on the Slavonic Lives of Cyril and Methodius are more a reflection of Latin than of Greek practice.[80]

3. Conclusions (a) The picture of penance that emerges from the Vitae of the period 843–886 is a much more unified and detailed one than has been the case in previous sections of this study. Whereas before this time the elements of ecclesiastical penance are reflected sporadically and often in isolation from one another, in the years after the restoration of orthodoxy these same elements appear in the Lives as parts of a coherent pattern of penance based on confession, absolution and the imposition of ἐπιτίμια - the same pattern, in fact, that is found in the earliest Greek penitentials. There is still no suggestion in the Vitae of this period, however, that the people were either obliged or accustomed to confess their sins to a priest before receiving Eucharistic communion. By way of contrast, the custom of assigning ἐπιτίμια to penitents appears very widely, and although ἐπιτίμια might have been regarded with bitterness in some

circumstances, in others they were welcomed as a tangible expression both of repentance and of reconciliation.

(b) With respect to the general penitential practice of the laity, the Lives of Joannicius and Eustratius may imply some growth in the frequency of voluntary confession. Previously, the hagiographical evidence dealt in the main with the confessions which had to be provoked, often miraculously, by the subjects of the Vitae. What may be called a corollary to this kind of voluntary confession among lay people emerges in the Life of Eustratius, namely, the necessity for a confessor to be sympathetic and gentle. When he is not, penitents become discouraged and confession again ceases to be spontaneous.

(c) The Lives from the period 843-886 also provide abundant material to illustrate the problem of the relationship between Charisma and Amt in Byzantine religious life. The relationship depicted is far more complex, however, than a simple dialectical opposition. "Apostolic" and "prophetic" prove in practice to be complementary rather than rival aspects of Christian ministry, and neither is the exclusive characteristic or claim of a single group, whether clerical or monastic. In such matters nothing can replace the patient examination of text and context, for the evidence is usually more difficult and many-sided than it may appear to be.

## B. The Age of Leo VI and Constantine Porphyrogenitus 886-959

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vitae miscellaneae] Eighteen minor and rather disparate hagiographical documents can be assigned to the period from 886 to 912. Of these the most important are those that recount the events attendant upon the death of Theophilus, the last Iconoclast emperor, and the absolution procured for him post mortem by his empress Theodora.[81] Evidence for ecclesiastical penance is either absent from the other Lives completely, or merely adds further testimony to points already firmly established.[82]

It is hardly possible to determine the extent to which the details of the Absolutio Theophili correspond to the actual events of the years 842 and 843.[83]

The main outlines of the story, however, prompt the following observations: firstly, the whole drama is rooted in the situation of deathbed repentance and what it means. Theodora tries to make the most of the ambiguous gestures and intentions of the dying Theophilus, whereas the hierarchs are disposed to look for more definite signs of repentance.[84] Secondly, the story forces the resolution of a hitherto unresolved theological problem: against the traditional teaching that the καιρὸς τῆς μετανοίας ends with death, Theodora casts into the balance her firmly expressed belief that God has given to men the power of binding and loosing from sins: "ἐπίσταμαι γὰρ ἀκριβῶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων εὐαγγελίων, ὅτι ὑμῖν δέδοται ἐξουσία παρὰ θεοῦ τοῦ δεσμεῖν τε καὶ λύειν τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πλημμελήματα."[85] Thirdly, taken as a whole the document shows only the harmonious collaboration of hierarchy and monastic τάγμα in finding a solution to the problem; none of the tension and acrimony known to have marked this period is allowed to show through.[86] Monks and bishops intercede together for the emperor, and their prayers are answered when Theodora receives in a vision the πληροφορία that her husband has been freed from his torment.[87] The vision is confirmed by the miraculous disappearance of Theophilus' name from a list of heretics that the patriarch had written and sealed with his own hand.[88] If the absolution of the dead emperor must remain for the history of penance simply an extraordinary tale, some of these points inherent in the story are more widely significant, especially the interest in deathbed repentance.

[Nicetas Paphlago et Nicetas David] The many rhetorical encomia attributed to Nicetas the Paphlagonian in the later ninth century and to Nicetas David in the middle of the tenth century contribute little to this study.[89] Most of the allusions to penance in the corpus of Nicetas the Paphlagonian have merely been repeated from the sources he uses - this is especially true of his Life of Gregory of Agrigentum - while the rest are unimportant.[90] By comparison with the rhetorical works of the Paphlagonian, the Life of Patriarch Ignatius (BHG 817) by Nicetas David is a more substantial document. It contains valuable descriptions of, and allusions to, the many excommunications and depositions that so

marked the Photian age, and although most of these concerned only the clergy, the account of the excommunication of Caesar Bardas for incest proves that public ecclesiastical discipline could extend to the laity as well, at least in cases of public scandal.[91]

[Vitae hegumenorum sanctorum] Lives of four important Constantinopolitan hegumens also fall within the period 886-959: Nicholas of Stoudion (BHG 1365), Euthymius of Psamathia (BHG 651), who was also Patriarch of Constantinople during the years 907 to 912, and Evaristus of Kokorobion (BHG 2153); to these may be added the later Life of Theodore of Stoudion by the monk Michael (BHG 1755).[92]

The Lives of Theodore and Nicholas, and to a certain extent that of Evaristus as well, are concerned with the last period of Iconoclasm and the difficulties of the transition back to orthodoxy. The few references to penance in these Lives merely confirm established patterns.[93] One incident in the Vita Evaristi, however, deserves brief notice. Evaristus announces his own imminent death to an elderly monk and friend. The older man recalls to Evaristus various things he (the older man) had confessed to him in the past, and asks for absolution (λύσις). Evaristus, who seems not to have been ordained, apparently grants this, but the whole episode is so compressed that it is possible, and perhaps more plausible, to interpret it not as an absolution granted by an unordained monk, but as a promise of intercession which Evaristus will discharge upon his imminent arrival at the heavenly court.[94]

The Vita Euthymii is a much richer source of detailed information about ecclesiastical penance. Like the other three Lives in the group it confirms the various patterns of episcopal and monastic penance described above. However, inasmuch as the controversy over the fourth marriage of Leo VI looms so large in the Life, certain themes and details of ecclesiastical penance also appear which have not been encountered in the Vitae examined to this point.[95]

The first of these is the explicit testimony that the Byzantine emperor had a personal πνευματικὸς πατήρ whom he consulted regularly and who directed

him in matters of conscience, providing both ἔλεγχος and συγχώρησις.[96] From the time of Constantine the Great it has not been unusual to see in the Vitae emperors and members of the higher nobility visit monks and holy men to obtain their blessing and spiritual advice, but Leo VI is the first emperor clearly attested as having his own spiritual father and following his directions faithfully.[97] A second theme of the Vita Euthymii which is of importance here is the testimony it gives to the existence of a discipline of public penance, at least in cases of grave scandal. After his fourth marriage Leo is forbidden to receive communion or even to approach ἔνδοθεν τοῦ ναοῦ μεχρὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς κιγκλίδος.[98] The description of the emperor's penance (under both Nicholas Mysticus and Euthymius) does reflect the language of the fourth-century Bussstufen (ὑποπίπτειν, προσκλαίειν, ἵστασθαι) but it is most unlikely that such classes of penitents actually existed in the tenth century.[99] The situation of the emperor is clearly unique; he is not to be thought of as simply the most illustrious member in a familiar and established ordo of public penitents.[100]

The different stages of the controversy surrounding Leo's fourth marriage, especially the frequent changing of patriarchs, also give rise to a number of passages which clarify the term ἐπιτίμιον both as to its effect and as to its relationship to absolution. Most significantly, ἐπιτίμιον can denote a canonical sanction imposed for irregularities, such as a third or fourth marriage, and in this guise it can appear as much vindictive by nature as therapeutic.[101] Moreover, the ἐπιτίμιον may continue even after a sinner has been "received" back, and this suggests that a distinction existed between two kinds, or perhaps two stages, of excommunication, one banning the sinner completely from the church, and another excluding him only from Eucharistic communion.[102] Finally, the ἐπιτίμιον appears to have been understood popularly as a kind of bond that was loosed by the episcopal power of binding and loosing; this power is recognized explicitly in the Life.[103]

[Vitae monasticae variae] A further four documents from the period 886-959 directly reflect the monastic milieu of the City; these are the Lives of

Anthony the Younger (BHG 142), Basil the Younger (BHG 263), Blaise (BHG 278) and Thomais (BHG 2454).[104] Evidence for ecclesiastical penance in these Vitae is substantial, but reflects no change from the patterns already described.[105]

Two points touching on the question of holy men are worth recording. The author of the Vita Basilii Iunioris remarks that true spiritual fathers are difficult to find, and that, in any case, it is a mistake to believe that the intercession of a holy man will be sufficient of itself to secure the forgiveness of one's sins; the cooperation of the sinner is also required.[106] These cautions from a monastic source must also be taken into consideration by the historian who wishes to describe accurately the position which holy men actually occupied in the lives of ordinary Byzantine Christians. In another place, however, the same author claims that Basil, who was not ordained, is to be ranked with the apostles inasmuch as he purifies sinners from their sins by means of the "ἔλαιον νοητόν" of his pastoral care.[107] Although the author nowhere asserts that Basil exercised the apostolic power of binding and loosing, the distinction between an assertion of that kind and what he is actually claiming here for the saint has become very fine indeed.[108]

[Vitae miscellaneae] Another four Constantinopolitan Vitae can be assigned to the age of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (912-959): an anonymous Life of Constantine the Great (BHG 365), a late Life of Maximus the Confessor (BHG 1234), the Vita compilata of Nicholas of Myra (BHG 1348c) and the curious Epistula ad sanctum Gregorium Nazianzenum de translatione (BHG 727) composed by Constantine VII himself.[109]

Evidence for ecclesiastical penance in the Lives is of a familiar and rather general kind.[110] The only text of special interest occurs in the anonymous Vita Constantini. To an otherwise faithful transcription of the incident from Socrates' Ecclesiastical History in which the emperor taxes the Novatianist priest Acesius for an inhuman rigorism ("Set up a ladder, Acesius, and climb up to heaven on your own."), the author of the Life adds the following words which he puts into the mouth of Constantine: "Ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἀνθρώποις ἱερεῦσι τὰς

ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἐξομολογούμενοι καὶ δι'αὐτῶν παρὰ θεοῦ λαβεῖν ἐντελῆ τὴν συγχώρησιν πεπιστεύκαμεν."[111] The context makes it certain that this forthright view of confession (ἀνθρώποις ἱερεῦσι τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἐξομολογούμενοι) and absolution (καὶ δι'αὐτῶν παρὰ θεοῦ λαβεῖν ἐντελῆ τὴν συγχώρησιν) is to be understood as a kind of "plain man's theology of penance", and the testimony is all the more valuable for that reason. It should also be noticed that the ordained priesthood is a constitutive part of such a popular understanding of penance, although the context makes it equally clear that absolution belongs sovereignly to God and comes through but not from the priest.[112]

[Vita Andreae Sali] The extraordinarily rich Life of Andrew the Fool has been left deliberately to the end of this section because of the problems attached to the date of its composition.[113] A tenth-century date is accepted with Rydén, in part because the policy towards dating the Vitae which has been adopted for this study demands a conservative date, and in part simply because in the end some decision must be made. Nevertheless, the Life of Andrew the Fool remains a puzzle in many ways, and the last word about the time and manner of its composition may not yet have been heard.[114]

The Vita Andreae Sali is unique as a source for the history of Christian life in Byzantium because no other Life gives such an important place to the religious understanding of ordinary men and women, nor adopts so frequently the narrative perspective of the "streets" in preference to that of the court or the monastery. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent this uniqueness is reflected in the domain of penance.

The popular perspective is marked by the belief that the forgiveness of sins, including grave sins, comes primarily and most importantly through διόρθωσις, and that the essence of διόρθωσις is simply to sin no more and to begin the task of living as a Christian.[115] A striking illustration of this belief occurs in the story of the depraved husband whose wife tries to convince him to end his abandoned way of life and return to God.[116] One night she urges him to accompany her to church in the morning and to receive communion as the beginning

of his repentance; she mentions no recourse to ecclesiastical penance either in the form of confession or absolution. To "start all over again" is itself a sign of grace.[117]

Another dimension of the popular view of forgiveness as it is seen in the Vita Andreae Sali is that forgiveness comes through the intercession of others, both that of living holy men and of the saints who have died.[118] This belief is connected very closely with the idea that human life is an arena where the angels and the demons contend to achieve supremacy.[119] All of this may have little to do directly with the institutions of ecclesiastical penance, but the author of the Life redresses the balance in one passage of capital importance.

In the section Περὶ τοῦ μοναχοῦ Andrew upbraids a monk for simony because the man accepts and keeps for himself money given him by people who come to him to confess their sins.[120] The incident establishes beyond a doubt that confession of sins to a monk - nothing in the whole incident implies that he is a priest - was customary with at least some sections of the people (Τινὲς δὲ τῶν πολιτῶν), and it is also significant that such a practice of confession is assumed as part of the background to an anecdote about simony, and does not itself constitute the "point" of the story.[121] The author also makes it clear that these confessions issued in forgiveness (συγχώρησις) and that it was this circumstance which led to the possibility of abuse.[122] This picture of the unordained monastic confessor dispensing συγχώρησις in the streets of the City leads on, however, to the more fundamental problem of the relationship of Geist and Amt in the Byzantine church and the ways in which this problem is relected in the Life of Andrew the Fool.[123]

It cannot be denied that the interest of the Life is focussed firmly on Geist rather than Amt. Andrew himself, former slave turned lay apostle and "fool for Christ", lives wholly outside the familiar norms of life both secular and ecclesiastical. His παρρησία with God, his privileged intercession for the salvation of others, his confident assumption of the charismatic role of the répondant du péché - all these form the main lines of his spiritual portrait.[124] Nevertheless, the Life of Andrew the Fool does not set the workings

of the Holy Spirit over against the acts of ecclesiastical office, nor does it cast any doubt upon the worth of Amt as such. Amt is simply absent, and the author describes a world where bishops and priests seem curiously remote figures.[125]

With particular reference to penance, it has already been seen that, at least de facto, Amt is not much taken into account. Sin finds forgiveness through the διόρθωσις of the sinner, and this can be provoked directly by God in the heart (κατάνυξις) or indirectly through the ministry peculiar to the "fool for Christ" (ἔλεγχος).[126] Where confession and absolution are described, little attention is given to problems of church order.[127] Certainly, a layman can function as πατὴρ πνευματικός in such a milieu without apparent difficulty.[128] Although the author of the Life does not address himself expressly to the power of binding and loosing and its relationship to church order, the Vita does show signs that the argument of the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian might have been well received by him. The most conspicuous of these signs is the author's assertion that when unworthy priests celebrate the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit does not come down upon the gifts they offer, and thus those who attend such liturgies are deprived of the presence of the Spirit.[129] This view may be compared with the condemnation of the simoniacal monk in Vita 108 where the author seems to presume that Christ's promise to give the Holy Spirit to his apostles εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν may be applied as much to the ministry of an unordained monastic confessor as to that of bishops and priests.[130] If the implications of these two passages are combined, they suggest a position not far removed from that of the Letter on Confession.[131]

2. Other Vitae[132] [Asia et Asia Minor] Four Lives will be examined here: a later Life of Euthymius of Sardis (BHG 2146), Lives of Stephen of Sugdaia in the Crimea (BHG 1671) and of Nicephorus of Sebaze in Bithynia (BHG 2300), and the hagiographical novel written about Theodore of Edessa (BHG 1744).[133] Of these only the Vita Theodori contains materials relevant to ecclesiastical penance but they add nothing new to this study.[134]

[Graecia] Twelve works may be gathered under this heading which is broadened to include Crete, Cyprus and the Aegean islands as well as mainland Greece and the Peloponnese. The list includes: Lives of Theodora of Thessalonica (BHG 1738, 1739), Athanasia of Aegina (BHG 180), Demetrianus of Chytrii in Cyprus (BHG 495), Theoctista of Lesbos (BHG 1723-1724), Euthymius the Younger of Thessalonica (BHG 655), Athanasius of Methone (BHG 196), Peter of Argos (BHG 1504) and Martha of Monembasia (BHG 1175), the third book of the Miracles of St. Demetrius (BHG 524-531) and two encomia for the Ten Martyrs of Crete (BHG 1196, 1197b).[135] The scattered references to penance in these works do not reflect any changes in the established patterns of evidence.[136]

[Italia] The Lives of Philip of Argyrium (BHG 1531) and Stephen of Rhegium (BHG 1668) probably all fall within the period 886-959 but neither is important for the history of penance. The Life of Elias the Younger (BHG 580) has been dated to the fourth decade of the tenth century and is more significant.[137] It witnesses, for example, to the fact that a sympathetic monk was able to get ordinary people to overcome their shame and confess their sins.[138] Confession is not presented in the Life, however, as a prelude to absolution - Elias is not ordained - but as the fruit of a more general ministry of ἔλεγχος that leads directly to the διόρθωσις of sinners.[139] While Elias is certainly a charismatic figure, the author of the Life never portrays him in conflict or competition with the hierarchy.[140]

3. Conclusions (a) The Lives of the period 886-959 reflect at least two important aspects of ecclesiastical penance not frequently encountered, or not encountered before, in the hagiographical evidence. The first of these is a provision of a kind of "exemplary" penance of excommunication as an ecclesiastical response to the challenge of scandalous sin committed by public figures (Caesar Bardas, Leo VI). Excommunication in such cases has a distinctly dramatic and public dimension to it which answers to the public role of those so condemned. There is no reason to believe, therefore, and no evidence to support

the view, that the sin for which Bardas was so ostentatiously excommunicated brought a similar fate upon private persons guilty of the same sort of crime.

The appearance of this kind of "public penance" in the ninth and tenth centuries must, however, be correctly understood. The structure and terminology of public penance had been written into the canons from the fourth century and were familiar to all, at least as ideas. From the sixth, perhaps the fifth century onwards, however, this kind of open ecclesiastical discipline for sinners seems to have been restricted in practice to the sins of clerics and, to a lesser extent, the reconciliation of apostates and heretics. Normally, therefore, both the sins and the penance of the laity were left in anonymity. The decision to lift the cloak of anonymity and to deal publicly with those sinners, like the emperor, whose actions reverberated through the whole of society was by nature more a political decision reflecting the changing relationship of emperor and patriarch (or the peculiar character of individual hierarchs) than an ecclesiastical innovation. Certainly nothing in the Vitae suggests that this kind of public excommunication and public penance was taking place at any other level below that of the imperial court itself.

The second development reflected in the Lives of this period is the emergence of the custom whereby a layman would have his own personal spiritual father in the unambiguous sense of "confessor". This is certainly true of Leo VI and it is also suggested at a humbler level by several passages in the Life of Basil the Younger. In previous Lives most references to the πνευματικὸς πατήρ have either been in the monastic context or have not explicitly included the confession and forgiveness of sins.

(b) As regards the penitential practice of ordinary layman, the Lives of the period 886-959 reflect a very important truth. While it is the case that the "modern" discipline of ecclesiastical penance (confession, absolution, ἐπιτιμία) was in existence and seems to have been a normal practice, at least of some, at this time (Vita Constantini, Vita Andreae Sali 106-113), it is equally the case that this particular pattern of penitence was neither obliga-

tory nor by any means universal. For many Christians penance and conversion took a form (διόρθωσις, intercession of the saints) which may have had little or nothing to do with confession, absolution or any other form of recourse to the clergy. It must not be forgotten in this respect that the whole of the Byzantine liturgical tradition constituted a school of penitence and provided an environment that made personal διόρθωσις ecclesial at the same time: Θεὸς ἐστι Θεὸς τῶν μετανοούντων.

(c) The Vitae of the period 886-959 also reflect development in the sphere of Geist and Amt. In several Lives (Andrew the Fool, Basil the Younger) a gathering of the elements that will soon come together in the writings of Symeon the New Theologian can already be perceived. However, according to the witness of the late ninth-century and early tenth-century Lives, these elements (exaltation of the "apostolic" character of personal holiness, criticism of the validity of sacraments celebrated by the unworthy) still remain merely juxtaposed, not fused. Indeed, as a genre, hagiography in the period 886-959 may still be said to project an overly optimistic vision of the harmony that obtained in relations between hierarchs and monks.

## C. Pre-Metaphrastic Undated Vitae

More than one hundred further Lives can be accepted as pre-Metaphrastic compositions even though it is not possible to determine dates for them more precisely.[141] For the purpose of examination and analysis these Lives have been divided into Constantinopolitan and non-Constantinopolitan compositions and further subdivided into groups according as their subjects are martyrs, bishops or monks. A last group has been formed in each section to include whatever documents remain over. Particular notice will be taken only of evidence not already familiar and of materials that touch directly upon the penitential practice of the laity or the problem of the relationship of Charisma and Amt.

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vitae martyrum] Thirteen documents fall

into this group, the Passiones of Acacius (BHG 13), Agathonicus (BHG 40), Georgius (BHG 676), Lucillianus and companions (BHG 999, 999a, 999b), the Persian martyrs Manuel, Sabel and Ismael (BHG 1023), Mocius (BHG 1298d), Thallelaeus (BHG 1708), Theodotus (BHG 1780, 1781), Epicharis (BHG 2123) and Paula (BHG 2361).[142] The genre of the Passio allows little scope for reference to ecclesiastical penance, and none is found in these works.[143]

[Vitae episcoporum] Six pre-Metaphrastic episcopal Lives may be taken together here, those of the Patriarchs Anatolius (BHG 91) and Germanus (BHG 697), of John Chrysostom (BHG 874), Metrophanes and Alexander (BHG 1279), Nicholas (BHG 1364c), and the encomium of Theodore of Sykeon by Nicephorus Sceuophylax (BHG 1749).[144] Only a single reference to Germanus' penitential ministry during the time of his episcopate is of any significance to this study.[145]

[Vitae monachorum] This third group consists of eighteen Vitae, and many of these are only later versions of Lives already discussed above in their original form: Alypius (BHG 66d), Auxentius (BHG 201), Daniel the Stylite (BHG 490e), Matrona (BHG 1223), Symeon Stylites the Younger (BHG 1691, 1691b, 1691c) and Theophanes the Confessor (BHG 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792). Evidence for ecclesiastical penance in these Lives simply repeats that found in the originals.[146]

Lives not yet studied in any form include those of the converted Jew, Constantine (BHG 370), the nuns Dommica (BHG 562), Irene (BHG 952) and Eustolia and Soprata (BHG 2141), and certain narrationes animae utiles concerning Theodulus the Stylite (BHG 1785), Xenophon (BHG 1879) and Rabulas (BHG 2378k).[147] Evidence for penance in these Vitae exhibits no new themes or emphases, but it can be observed that Lives dealing with subjects who lived in the ninth and/or tenth centuries (Constantine, Irene) contain much more about confession and absolution that those of the earlier figures.[148]

[Vitae miscellaneae] This last group comprises six works: Lives of Constantine the Great (BHG 365n) and the priest Marcianus (BHG 1032), a narratio

concerning the patrician Philotheus (BHG 2372), and certain apocalyptic texts, the Visio Mariae (BHG 1050), and two of the Visions of Daniel (BHG 1871, 1872).[149] The Vitae proper add nothing to this study, but the apocalyptic writings bring to the fore themes which are relevant to a discussion of the relationship between Geist and Amt. Of these the most striking are the traditional apocalyptic pessimism about the holiness of the ordained clergy and the conviction that the clergy as a whole are losing their place as mediators between God and man.[150]

2. Other Vitae [Vitae martyrum] Of the very large number of pre-Metaphrastic Passiones a sample of twenty yields no direct evidence for the history of ecclesiastical penance.[151]

[Vitae episcoporum] Twelve Vitae are included in this group and nine of these recount the lives of fourth- or fifth-century bishops: Amphilochius (BHG 73), Athanasius (BHG 185), Hypatius of Gangra (BHG 759a, 759b, 759c), Nicholas (BHG 1351), Cyril of Alexandria (BHG 2095), Eusebius of Samosata (BHG 2133) and Maruthas of Mayferqaṭ (BHG 2265).[152] Some themes in these documents merit attention, but they do not reflect any changes in the established patterns of penance.[153] Two remaining Lives have as their subjects bishops of the ninth century, Theophanes of Monembasia (BHG 2446) and Theophylact of Nicomedia (BHG 2451), but neither deals with ecclesiastical penance.[154]

To these Lives must be appended at least a brief mention of the Life of Agapetus (BHG 35), fourth-century bishop of Synaos in Phrygia.[155] The only extant text of the Life comes from the eleventh-century imperial menologion of Michael IV and so falls outside the strict limits of this study, but there can be little doubt that the extant text of the Vita Agapeti is an epitome of a longer pre-Metaphrastic original.[156] The Life is remarkable for the picture it draws of the bishop's activity as spiritual director and penitentiary to all those under his care, clergy, monks and laity alike.[157] No other episcopal Life makes penance so central to the πολιτεία of its subject, a fact which

makes the loss of the original text that much more regrettable.

[Vitae monachorum] This group consists of twenty-one Vitae, eighteen of which have as their subjects monks who lived before the end of the seventh century: Arsenius (BHG 168), Eusebia (BHG 633), Gerasimus (BHG 694, 695), John Climacus (BHG 882b, 882g, 883, 883d, 883h), John "in puteo" (BHG 894z), Julian (BHG 968), Niphon (BHG 1371z, 1372b), Pachomius (BHG 1400, 1400c), Paisius (BHG 1402-1403), Tychon (BHG 1860) and Isidore of Pelusium (BHG 2209).[158] As is to be expected, most of the evidence for penance in these Lives remains within the sphere of monastic discipline.[159]

One incident in the Vita Paisii is relevant to the question of Charisma and Amt. In return for Paisius' zeal and ascetic labours Christ appears to him and rewards him with a special χάρισμα: "'ἵν' ὅ τι ἂν αἰτήσῃ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου δοθήσεταί σοι· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὧν δεήσῃ ἁμαρτιῶν ἀφεθήσεται τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσιν."[160] Nothing in the Life implies that Paisius was ordained, and in the context, therefore, this special gift of guaranteed intercession for sinners represents a kind of "private arrangement" which is made between Christ and the saint for the benefit of sinners, and which seems to operate quite independently of the administration of penitential discipline within the wider church.[161]

The remaining three documents in this group are the Acts of David, Symeon and George (BHG 494), the legend of Martinian (BHG 1177) and an extract from the Life of John of Hermopolis (BHG 2187h).[162] The Acta Davidis Symeonis et Georgii appear to attest in one place at least the practice of written confessions, but literary echoes from earlier Lives (Vita Basilii Magni, Vita Ioannis Eleemosynarii and the Absolutio Theophili) are so clear that the story can hardly stand as an independent witness to such a custom.[163] The rest of the evidence for penance in these works adds nothing to this study.[164]

[Vitae miscellaneae] A mélange of ten hagiographical documents from the pre-Metaphrastic corpus remains to be considered: the narrationes animae utiles of Galaction and Episteme (BHG 665), Macarius (BHG 999n, 999t, 999w) and Philemon (BHG 2368), the legend of the apostle Archippus (BHG 2039) and various fragments

from the vie folklorique of Sisinnius, Sisinnodorus and Melitene (BHG 2401, 2402, 2403).[165]

Although the other documents do touch on penitential themes, direct evidence for ecclesiastical penance is restricted to the "Macarian" narrationes.[166] The Narratio Macarii de angelo custode teaches, for example, that a single day is time enough for even an abandoned sinner to repent and be saved from hell, and that deathbed confession to a priest suffices to deliver a man from the most serious sins, because in virtue of the very act of confession, all sins confessed διὰ ἱερέων will not be taken into account at judgement.[167] Conversely, sins kept hidden must be punished in hell, and only for despair can there be no divine remedy.[168]

3. Conclusions These Lives cannot be treated precisely within the overall chronological progression of this study, but some general points about them ought still to be made.

(a) It is interesting to note that the authors of these Lives continue to portray bishops - and not monks only - as penitential figures, that is, as teaching their people how to repent and as themselves dispensing forgiveness to sinners (Hypatius, Nicholas, Agapetus, Germanus).

(b) In the perspective of these pre-Metaphrastic Vitae, χαρίσματα, even of the most extraordinary kind (Paisius), operate in harmony with the established ecclesiastical order, never in conscious opposition to it.

(c) Some of the miscellaneous hagiographical documents in this section (narrationes and visiones) furnish an important reminder that popular, less sophisticated theological beliefs about the nature of judgement in the after-life and about the providential course of world history made up an important part of the background to the ordinary Byzantine Christian's experience of sin and repentance. These beliefs and images may not always be consistent or inwardly coherent, but the historian of penance leaves them out of account at his peril, especially when seeking to determine the influence of ecclesiastical institutions

on ordinary life.

## D. Symeon Metaphrastes fl. c.960

The enormous hagiographical oeuvre of Symeon Metaphrastes will not be examined here in its entirety,[169] but a valid assessment of the evidence for ecclesiastical penance in the corpus as a whole may still be possible. Only six of the 148 texts in the Metaphrastic menologion represent the earliest extant (or available) texts in the hagiographical dossiers of their subjects. If these are examined by themselves and if judicious selections from among the other metaphrased Lives are compared with the original texts which served as their models, the resulting picture may properly be taken as representative of penitential evidence in the entire menologion.[170]

The six Metaphrastic Lives which have the character of "originals" are those of Autonomus (BHG 198), Eudocimus (BHG 607), Menas, Hermogenes and Eugraphus (BHG 1271), Romulus and Eudoxius (BHG 1604), Sampson of Constantinople (BHG 1615) and Theodorus Graptus (BHG 1746). None of these contributes anything to the history of penance.[171]

Among the metaphrased versions of older Vitae a sampling has been made to determine whether or to what extent Symeon's handling of the themes of ecclesiastical penance found in his older models may betray, consciously or unconsciously, the penitential language and customs of his own later age. Five Metaphrastic Lives have been compared in this way, and the choice has been restricted to Lives whose originals are known to contain definite and substantial information about ecclesiastical penance. The selection includes the following Vitae: Euthymius, (BHG 649, compared with BHG 647-648 by Cyril of Scythopolis), John the Almsgiver (BHG 888, compared with BHG 886 by Leontius of Neapolis), Joannicius (BHG 937, compared with BHG 936 by Peter), Pelagia (BHG 1479, compared with BHG 1478 by James the Deacon) and Spyridon (BHG 1648, compared with BHG 1647 by Theodore of Paphos).[172] The results of such a comparison prove disappointingly thin.

Penitential episodes in the originals are all duly taken over intact into the metaphrased Lives, but the few minor changes that can be observed in the transposition of the technical vocabulary of penance can all be explained on rhetorical grounds alone; nothing suggests a change either in the practice or in the theological understanding of penance.[173] The rare Metaphrastic additions to the original models in penitential contexts can also be explained by the peculiarities of Symeon's style.[174]

It need only be said by way of conclusion that the vast Metaphrastic corpus is a meagre source indeed for the historian of penance.

## E. From Symeon Metaphrastes to the Death of Patriarch Antonius III Studites c.960-983

1. Constantinopolitan Vitae [Vitae miscellaneae] Only three hagiographical works can be placed within this period: a Life of Alexius the "man of God" (BHG 51), an encomium for the martyr George (BHG 684d) and the Life of Luke the Stylite (BHG 2239).[175] The first two of these Vitae add nothing to this study, but the Life of Luke the Stylite contains a good deal of evidence illustrating various aspects of ecclesiastical penance: spiritual direction of the laity, disclosure of λογισμοί, confession of sins and the assigning of penances chosen to suit the nature of the sins confessed.[176]

A new aspect of Byzantine penitential practice, the written absolution, also appears in the Vita Lucae Stylitae.[177] In two incidents, one involving the cleric Euthymius and the other a count named Cyrus, the narrative centre of the story is a written absolution. Euthymius, apparently at the point of death, requests from Luke a written absolution for his sins, although in the event the absolution which he receives is given viva voce; the layman Cyrus, however, does actually receive absolution from Luke by letter shortly before he dies.[178] Do these examples justify the belief that such συγχώρησις ἔγγραφος was widely practised in the Greek church of the tenth century?

Some particular features of these incidents must be taken into account

before the incidents themselves can be appraised. It should be noted, in the first place, that the two men in question are both spiritual sons of Luke and that both are accustomed to opening their consciences to him and living according to his directives.[179] Secondly, both men are, or think they are, on the point of death when they make their requests; their circumstances are thus by definition out of the ordinary. Finally, and most significantly, the absolution which is requested in the one case and actually sent off in the other is an absolution for sins which have already been confessed to Luke at some time in the past.[180] When all these limiting details are taken into account, especially the fact of a spiritual son dying, unexpectedly, far from the presence of his πνευματικὸς πατήρ, the probable significance of these unusual absolutions for the wider history of penitential practice diminishes greatly. Given Luke's situation as a stylite, it is scarcely possible for him to discharge his duties to his spiritual sons in any other way. Absolution at a distance, whether by letter or by message, cannot be put forward as anything more than an exceptional means inspired by exceptional circumstances.

Conversely, these same circumstances make it more difficult to identify the precise object of these absolutions. To what do the "sins already confessed" (τῶν ἐξαγγελθέντων πάλαι σφαλμάτων and ὧν ἔπραξας καὶ ἐξηγόρευσας ἤδη κακῶν) refer? If, on the one hand, they refer to all the sins confessed by these men to Luke over the years, then the absolution requested will be a kind of "general absolution", and the two anecdotes will then imply that it may have been customary for spiritual fathers to grant such a συγχώρησις to their spiritual children at the time of death as a way of sealing the spiritual relationship of father and son. But if, on the other hand, these "past" sins (πάλαι - ἤδη) refer only to particular sins revealed to Luke in some particular confession, it may well then be the case that the Vita Lucae Stylitae provides here the earliest hagiographical testimony to a practice whereby in certain cases absolution was deferred and granted to the penitent only when he had completed the ἐπιτίμια assigned him by his confessor.[181] According to this latter interpretation, Euthymius and Cyrus

will be asking Luke to make an exception and grant them absolution before the completion of their ἐπιτίμια on the grounds of their imminent and unexpected deaths. It must frankly be admitted, however, that the texts give just enough detail to make the two interpretations possible but not enough to settle the choice between them.[182]

2. Other Vitae The post-Metaphrastic Lives in this section have been grouped according to geographical regions of composition. While it has not been possible to be sure in every case that the Lives admitted here fall strictly within the chronological limit adopted for this study (983 AD), no obviously later Lives have been included.[183]

[Asia Minor] Two Lives make up this group, those of Paul the Younger of Mt. Latros (BHG 1474, 1474h) and Michael Maleinus of Mt. Kyminas (BHG 1295).[184] Further illustration of various familiar aspects of ecclesiastical penance can be found in these Vitae,[185] and even a literary echo from the Testament of Theodore of Stoudion concerning the link between the monastic habit and the forgiveness of sins.[186]

By far the most important element in any of these Lives, however, is the claim made by the author of the Vita Pauli Iunioris that Paul, although unordained, possesses the apostolic charism of binding and loosing.[187] Holl and Hörmann interpret the passage as proof that it was customary for unordained monks to forgive sins.[188] Examples of such a practice, though by no means common, have been encountered in previous Lives, but nothing resembling such a claim has occurred in the hagiographical tradition before this. The anonymous author of the Vita Pauli Iunioris, writing perhaps around 970, would appear to be, therefore, the first hagiographical witness to a transition from the unconscious practice of certain monks to a conscious theory of the relationship between charism and order in the domain of penance.[189]

Inasmuch as the claim is the first of its kind to be found in the Vitae, and its implications are so far-reaching, it deserves careful scrutiny. And indeed,

the first thing revealed by a closer examination of the text is that the "binding and loosing" to which the writer refers does not seem to be identical in his mind with the direct absolution or forgiveness of sin. The context shows instead that "to bind" means "to impose an ἐπιτίμιον" involving the exclusion of the sinner from Eucharistic communion for a stated time (εἴργει μὲν τῶν ἁγιασμάτων ἐπὶ τριὰ χρόνους), and "to loose" means to allow the sinner to return to communion after the completion of the ἐπιτίμιον.[190] "Binding and loosing" in this sense is to be identified not with the authoritative forgiveness of sins properly so called, but with the determination and administration of penitential ἐπιτίμια and remedies. This can properly be styled a χάρισμα or special grace because it is backed up by a particular divine promise given to the penitent that if he carries out the saint's penitential prescriptions faithfully, the forgiveness of his sins will be assured.[191] Such a guarantee of the efficacy of the saint's treatment of sin recalls the text in the Vita Paisii where the saint's prayers of intercession were similarly guaranteed by God to be efficacious in securing forgiveness for the sins of others.[192]

Closer scrutiny of the text also leads to a second conclusion, namely, that the guarantee in the Life of Paul, like that in the Vita Paisii, represents a second string to the bow of ecclesiastical forgiveness, not an attack on the established order. Nowhere are bishops and priests said to have lost the power of binding and loosing or to have become "useless". Paul's own "share" in this power supplements that of the bishops and priests, it does not displace it, and, as has been shown above, it is not strictly true to say that this share in the apostolic power of binding and loosing is even identical with the power to forgive sins directly ("Sünden zu vergeben": Holl).[193] The distinction can be clearly seen if Paul's exercise of this power is compared with the straightforward absolution dispensed by the ordained priest, Luke the Stylite: "ἰδοὺ γὰρ κἀγώ σοι τὴν συγχώρησιν σήμερον ὧν ἔπραξας καὶ ἐξηγόρευσας ἢ μὴ κακῶν δίδωμι".[194] Nevertheless, even when the proper distinctions are made, the claim remains a bold one, and its impact on an audience, both lay and monastic, which was probably less

sensitive to these subtleties, will have been real; it certainly justifies the rapprochement of the Vita Pauli Iunioris with the Epistula de confessione.[195]

[Graecia] This group includes five works, the Lives of Luke the Younger (BHG 994), Peter of Athos (BHG 1505), Theocletus of Sparta, Nicholas Bunenis (BHG 2309) and Theodore of Cythera (BHG 2430).[196] Of these only the first contributes directly to this study.[197]

Two incidents of real importance for the history of Laienbeichte in the Byzantine church occur in the Vita Lucae Iunioris. In the first of these three laywomen go to visit Luke who is an unordained hermit living not far from their village. The women inform Luke that the aim of their visit is to confess their sins to him and receive forgiveness. They insist that they have been moved to do this by the words of the prophets and by the grace of God.[198] Luke refuses twice but finally agrees to hear the confession of the women's secrets. Afterwards, having received absolution for their sins, the women return home.[199] The story is an undoubted example of an unordained monk dispensing ἄφεσις to the laity for what may be presumed to have been grave sins.[200] It also witnesses to the fact that ordinary lay people approached local holy men expressly to obtain forgiveness (συγγνώμη, ἄφεσις), not merely to seek counsel and spiritual direction.[201]

The second incident in the Life of Luke the Younger concerns a murderer who makes his way to see Luke in the wild. The saint shows that he is aware of the anomaly of his own position when he taxes the man with having turned away from the priests and bishops of the church to seek out ἀγροίκους ἄνδρας καὶ ἀμαθεῖς.[202] Luke then makes the man confess his sinful deed openly and in detail.[203] Only at this point does he show himself sympathetic to the sinner, encouraging him and providing him with an ἐπιτίμιον before he sends him on his way.[204] If, technically, there is no explicit mention of an absolution in the story, it is abundantly clear from the context that the pastoral care of this grievous sinner begins and ends with Luke himself. No further recourse to the ecclesiastical authorities is required or even envisaged; the man simply goes on his way to fulfil the "canon" enjoined upon him by Luke.[205]

Further examples of forgiveness, both of monks and of laymen, can be found in the Vita Lucae Iunioris, but these conform to patterns of penance already familiar from other Lives, and do not raise questions of theological principle in the same way as do the two stories of the three women and the murderer.[206]

[Palaestina] Two documents may tentatively be put into this group: the earliest Greek Life of John of Damascus (BHG 884), and the much-disputed hagiographical novel, Barlaam and Ioasaph (BHG 224).[207] Neither is particularly rich in evidence for ecclesiastical penance, but a few gleanings are still possible.[208] Barlaam and Joasaph, for example, contains a valuable discussion of post-baptismal sin. The author emphasizes the "laborious" nature of penance undertaken after baptism in comparison with the ease of forgiveness achieved through the bath of regeneration.[209] This theme is as old as Origen, but the author adds to it some consideration of the psychology of post-baptismal sin that clearly owes much to later monastic analysis, and more importantly, he presumes that repeated forgiveness is always available for repeated post-baptismal sin, a presumption not made explicitly in the early Christian literature.[210]

[Italia] Of the later Italian Vitae only the life of Elias Spelaeotes (BHG 581) may confidently be ascribed to the period c.960-983.[211] The Life is noteworthy for its teaching that forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσις) cannot be secured without confession, and for its insistence that suitable penance must be performed to purify the conscience before communion may be received worthily.[212] No direct link is made between these two themes in the Vita Eliae, but if they are taken together they lead on to the practice of requiring confession before Eucharistic communion, a custom not explicitly attested in Greek hagiography before the turn of the first Christian millenium.[213]

3. Synaxaria A last class of hagiographical texts may be surveyed briefly at the conclusion of this study, the synaxaria, short biographical notices of the saints arranged in the order of the ecclesiastical calendar

of feasts and liturgical commemorations.[214] Few of these texts can be dated precisely, but Delehaye assigns the majority of synaxarial Lives to a time before the end of the tenth century.[215]

About thirty notices deal with figures who lived before the turn of the millenium and who otherwise have no extant Vitae of their own.[216] The vast majority of these, however, make no mention at all of ecclesiastical penance, while those that do refer to it touch only on themes already well-documented from the Vitae studied above.[217] In all these texts the only detail of particular interest to this study is a reference in the Vita Sophiae that may describe a reception of the monastic habit on the deathbed.[218]

4. Conclusions (a) Lay penitential practice as reflected in Lives of the second half of the tenth century reveals a growing concern, even anxiety, to secure absolution for sin from the priest or holy man as a separate and definite act both at the moment of death (Luke the Stylite), and at particular times of spiritual crisis (Luke the Younger). This concern to "get" absolution for one's sins is far more sharply focussed in these Lives than in earlier ones, but it does not by any means displace other forms of reconciliation and repentance (ἔλεγχος, confession, διόρθωσις) in which absolution as a discrete moment has little if any place at all (Elias the Younger, Paul the Younger).

(b) In the discussion of Charisma and Amt in the hagiographical tradition the Vitae of the period 960 to 983 are of prime importance. Evidence that lay people resorted to unordained monks in order to confess their sins and receive συγχώρησις is strong and clear in some of these sources (Paul the Younger, Luke the Younger), and it is most striking to compare such unambiguous allusions to the practice with the vague and general references in earlier Lives to spiritual direction of laymen by monks. The comparison suggests that confession of sins must have spread more widely as a part of the religious practice of ordinary lay people during the ninth and tenth centuries.

In the author of the Life of Paul the Younger (an anonymous monk of Mt. Latros) the same period also sees the closest hagiographical approximation to the language of Symeon's Epistula de confessione concerning the "apostolic" powers of the holy monk. The thought of the two men is not in all respects identical, but the Life of Paul the Younger points to a continuing preoccupation with the relationship of holiness and office during the course of the tenth century. The clear reflection of this development in the Lives of the period from 960 to 983 throws into greater relief, however, the absence of any such discussion in Vitae composed before that time.

## III GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS (843-983)

These concluding remarks will be gathered under three headings noted above in the introduction to the chapter : the laity's use and understanding of ecclesiastical penance, the custom of confession to unordained monks, limitations of Vitae from the period as sources for the history of penance.

1. The hagiography of the period 843-983 suggests that voluntary recourse to ecclesiastical penance, administered in the form of confession and absolution, was becoming a more common experience among Byzantine Christians. Although evidence can be found in these Lives for the continued existence of more directly judicial forms of ecclesiastical penance in the episcopal sphere, the Vitae are marked more deeply by certain new themes or emphases, such as the anxiety of individuals to secure absolution for their sins, or stress on the necessity of confession and on the qualities of the good confessor (πρακτής, ἱλαρότης). It must not be overlooked, however, that the Lives still plainly show that confession was not considered obligatory or necessary by many ordinary people who were guilty of serious sin. Forgiveness could be secured from God through many different means (διόρθωσις, intercession of the saints, almsgiving, fasting and prayer, entry into the monastic life); recourse to the clergy and the institutions of ecclesiastical penance was thus only one of

many courses open to the sinner.

2. With regard to the custom whereby unordained monks heard confessions of sin and granted absolution, the hagiographical evidence leads to the conclusion that this practice, like voluntary confession itself, only grew to be important during the course of the ninth and tenth centuries.[219] This phenomenon of Laienbeichte obviously rests on monastic values and customs which go back many centuries (confession of λογισμοί, charismatic intercession and πληροφορία, the répondant du péché), but the evidence of the Lives does not support the view that this practice was traditional or that it formed an important undercurrent in the history of Greek penance. The custom is more accurately interpreted as an episode in that history, for as soon as this Laienbeichte passed the bounds of its role as a useful pastoral supplement and complement to the bishops' authority over binding and loosing, and began to emerge as the expression of a challenge to that authority, it provoked a firm, measured reaction on the part of the bishops and the canonists.[220]

3. Many details from the earliest Greek penitentials (ἐπιτίμια, the use of interrogation by the confessor, his πρακτής) are reflected in hagiographical sources of the period following the triumph of orthodoxy. The Lives may be taken, therefore, as providing confirmation that the written provisions of the penitential books were in fact being put into practice. However, it would be naive for any historian to trust himself too quickly to the Vitae of this period. These documents were written only too evidently for the edification of the reader or listener, and in the period under review part of this process of edification consisted precisely in glorifying monastic holiness and covering over the traces of any friction between monks and the secular clergy, including the bishops. But inasmuch as any developments in the history of Byzantine penance during the period 843-983 are linked inseparably to this central issue of monastic-episcopal relations, the Lives consequently lose much of their value as unconscious reflectors of religious practice, and must be treated more and more circumspectly as vehicles for particular monastic

interests and theological views. Moreover, themes of real interest to the historian of penance, as, for example, the actual effectiveness and scope of the pastoral activity of Byzantine bishops during this period, become increasingly difficult to separate out from the accumulated topoi and other literary conventions of the hagiographical genre. To the weight of these difficulties the Metaphrastic achievement of the late tenth century comes as something of a last straw.

# CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The worth of the present study must lie primarily in the value of the corpus of evidence which it makes available to scholars and which it has tried to interpret faithfully within the context of what can already be known about the history of Byzantine ecclesiastical penance and about the literary and historical characteristics of the documents themselves. There is perhaps no great profit to be gleaned simply from repeating once again here all the particular conclusions listed at the end of each of the various sections and chapters above. Instead, an attempt will be made to answer two questions raised in the introduction to this study. Firstly, what does the hagiographical evidence contribute, by way both of confirmation and correction, to the generally accepted account of Byzantine ecclesiastical penance? Secondly, what can be said in the light of this study about the value of the hagiographical sources for the ecclesiastical historian?

## I THE CONTRIBUTION OF HAGIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE TO THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE ECCLESIASTICAL PENANCE

1. The Lives of the saints confirm that Byzantine ecclesiastical penance did indeed continue in existence throughout the period from the fourth to the tenth centuries. This confirmation is at the same time, therefore, a correction of the view which holds that Patriarch Nectarius effectively abolished all ecclesiastical penance at Constantinople and that his action subsequently took effect in all the other Greek-speaking churches as well.[1] This existence continued under many forms: in the canons of local and ecumenical synods and of certain church Fathers as these were preserved and later confirmed by the Trullan council; in the procedure of excommunication and public reconciliation (readmission to the Eucharist) of penitents guilty of grave public scandal, particularly in cases involving noble and imperial persons; in the normal disciplining of sinful or recalcitrant clergy (suspension, deposition, excommunication and reconciliation); in the reconciliation of heretics, schismatics and apostates; and

especially in the ἔλεγχος of sinners by bishops, a duty which remained firmly a part of the episcopal charge throughout the period under review and brought the bishops, according to the measure of their pastoral zeal, into direct contact with lay sinners.

2. But while the hagiographical evidence thus witnesses to the continued existence of ecclesiastical penance, it also paradoxically confirms the truth of the statement in Socrates that the effect of Nectarius' decision was to leave every Christian to his own conscience with respect to participation in the sacred mysteries.[2] The Lives leave no doubt that de facto this was the case, for in many situations, and especially in the larger cities, the ἔλεγχος of the bishop cannot have been an effective means of controlling or rooting out sinners, and no trace of any other means of episcopal control (priest-penitentiaries, Bussstufen) is found in the Vitae. In the matter of μετάνοια for sin the initiative thus remained for all practical purposes with the sinner. In effect this meant that he could choose not to do penance at all - a course which many people obviously followed - or, if he did repent, that he could seek forgiveness in a wide variety of ways not of necessity involving recourse to the clergy or to the institutions of ecclesiastical penance: simple private διόρθωσις, the assumption of a private penance such as the care of the sick, service at the shrine of a saint, entry into the monastic life, deathbed assumption of the monastic habit (not before the ninth century in the Vitae), almsgiving and fasting, faith in the powerful intercession of the martyrs and saints or in the charismatic πληροφορία of living monks and holy men. Thus, while voluntary confession of sin to the bishop or other clergy was also a possible form of this μετάνοια, it cannot be stressed too highly that μετάνοια included much more than ἐξαγόρευσις, and the hagiographical evidence as a whole implies that voluntary ἐξαγόρευσις only very gradually became a common practice among Byzantine lay people.

3. The Lives of the saints also confirm, however, that as the practice of confession grew among the laity, effective monastic control over the admin-

istration of penance grew apace. This assertion of monastic control carries three important provisos. The first is that this control was never exclusive, for as has been seen, evidence of episcopal activity in the sphere of ecclesiastical penance can be found in the Lives right down to the end of the period surveyed. The second proviso is that the process whereby monastic influence over ecclesiastical penance became preponderant was a gradual one. The Vitae offer abundant evidence to correct Holl's view of a sudden change in the pattern of Byzantine penitential practice occasioned by the expulsion of monks from their monasteries during the Iconoclast period. The third and final proviso is that monastic control over ecclesiastical penance must mean just that and not be expanded to refer loosely to any and every kind of pastoral or penitential activity in which monks may have taken part. According to the definition of ecclesiastical penance which has been followed in these pages, monastic control over ecclesiastical penance means that a greater and greater percentage of the clergy who heard the confessions of sinners and reconciled them to the Eucharistic community by the exercise of the power of binding and loosing were also in fact monks, ἱερομόναχοι in the language of a later time.[3] This pattern of gradual growth in monastic control is confirmed by the evidence of the Lives, and finds its most probable explanation in the fact that as the administration of ecclesiastical penance gradually became conformed to the monastic paradigm of ἐξαγόρευσις-συγχώρησις-ἐπιτίμιον, the monastic clergy were rightly perceived by the laity to be more experienced and more helpful in their pastoral use of this form than the secular clergy.[4]

But what, then, is the significance of the unordained monastic confessor, an acknowledged phenomenon in the history of Byzantine penance? It is at this point that the hagiographical evidence makes its most serious correction to the usual accounts of the Bussgeschichte of the Greek church.

4. Holl made hostility between Charisma and Amt fundamental to understanding the history of Byzantine penance, and he located the cutting edge of that hostility in the claim of monks to exercise the apostolic power of binding

and loosing not on the basis of due ecclesiastical ordination but on the basis of their own holiness and charismatic gifts. He claimed, moreover, that the exercise of this power by unordained monks was not uncommon during the period surveyed by the present study. As has been seen, however, the evidence from the Lives does not support this view or this claim. Indeed, before the middle of the ninth century the Vitae furnish no examples of unordained monks administering ecclesiastical penance, and even after that date the evidence remains ambiguous. In order to make this matter clear, however, some important distinctions which emerged in connexion with individual Lives examined above will have to be recalled here.

Much of the activity of an unordained monastic confessor had nothing whatever to do with the power of binding and loosing. A monk might act simply as a spiritual director, receiving the confidences of another (ἀναδέχεσθαι τοὺς λογισμούς) and giving him counsel for the conduct of the man's πόλεμος against the passions and the demons. This kind of pastoral activity was widespread and must not be confused with ecclesiastical penance. However, even in cases where the unordained confessor is said to have forgiven the sinners who came to him, closer examination of the text and context has revealed that the nature of this "forgiveness" must be distinguished from that of ecclesiastical absolution. In some instances forgiveness consisted in the proclamation of the confessor's assurance (πληροφορία) that God had forgiven or would forgive the sinner directly. Such a proclamation was based on the confessor's own powers of intercession with God (παρρησία) or on his own personal experience of God's all-merciful nature. It is thus prophetic and charismatic, but it does not claim to be ecclesiastical absolution. In other instances the forgiveness of the unordained confessor could take the form of a prayer of intercession with God for the forgiveness of the sinner. This is more ambiguous than the πληροφορία, because the form of such a prayer might not have differed greatly from the impetratory form in which ecclesiastical absolution was cast in Greek usage. Nevertheless, intercessory prayer of this kind had always

been a fundamental dimension of Christian κοινωνία, both liturgical and personal, and should not simply be equated with a claim to exercise the apostolic power of binding and loosing unless the context makes it clear that such a claim was being made.[5] Instead, the Lives regularly indicate that this kind of intercession, even in the extreme cases where its effects were "guaranteed" by a promise from God, was not understood as replacing or challenging the episcopal power of absolution, but as constituting a special grace or "favour" made available for the pastoral good of all in a particular age. The possibility for misuse or misunderstanding of this intercessory gift was real, but the Lives contain no evidence that such abuse was widespread.

In a final set of instances the συγχώρησις dispensed by the unordained confessor could even be described as a "loosing", but the loosing referred not to the direct forgiveness of sins but to the lifting of the burden of the ἐπιτίμιον imposed by the confessor. The actual forgiveness of sin was secured from God by the sincere repentance and διόρθωσις of the sinner himself, guided as he was by the regimen of the ἐπιτίμιον. Even when exclusion from Eucharistic communion was one of the elements of the ἐπιτίμιον imposed by an unordained monk, the loosing from such a bond must still be distinguished from ecclesiastical absolution. In practice it is closer to the πληροφορία, an inspired recognition that forgiveness has already been granted by God; it does not claim to mediate that forgiveness directly.[6] In fact it is only at the end of the period surveyed in this study (later ninth and tenth centuries) that the Lives give any sign that unordained confessors were beginning to think of their activities as being in some way a challenge to the episcopal control over binding and loosing. Taken as a whole, therefore, the hagiographical sources do not substantiate Holl's view that penance was the focal point for a hostile struggle between Charisma and Amt throughout the history of the Byzantine church. At most it may be said that at some point during the century and a half preceding the Epistula de confessione of Symeon the New Theologian, the matter of penance began to be drawn into whatever currents of friction and hostility were then disturbing the relationship between monks and the hierarchy.

5. Alongside these confirmations and corrections of the usual accounts of Byzantine penance the Lives of the saints leave one major question unresolved: at what point did ecclesiastical penance, in the form of confession, συγχώρησις and ἐπιτίμιον begin to be an habitual part of the religious way of life of the ordinary Byzantine Christian, perhaps in connexion with the periodic reception of the Eucharist? This question is certainly related to the growth of monastic influence among the laity, but evidence touching upon it is almost wholly absent from the Vitae. Certainly no trace is to be found in the hagiography of any canonical obligation requiring lay people to have recourse to ecclesiastical penance, nor are there any signs that a custom of confession had become so entrenched as to acquire the force of a moral obligation that weighed on the Byzantine conscience universally.

## II THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

The present study has passed in review hundreds of Vitae from the period 330-983. It ought now to be able to offer some appreciation of their worth to the ecclesiastical historian.

1. One of the motives behind this study was the desire to examine a kind of evidence which held out the hope of revealing, in Halkin's phrase, "ce que les auteurs y avaient mis presque sans le savoir".[7] Perhaps the most valuable lesson which this study has to teach, therefore, is that the Lives of the saints cannot simply be treated by the ecclesiastical historian as if they provided him with unselfconscious reflections of everyday Byzantine religious life pris sur le vif. The pervasiveness of the topoi affects the work of even the most candid and sincere among Byzantine narrators and diminishes the usefulness of their compositions for the later historian. The narrative limitations of the Vita, the Passio and the Laudatio - and of the anecdote which is their main building block - also conspire to frustrate many modern questions and interests. In the particular case of the history of penance, the centrality

of μετάνοια as a theme in the monastic vision of life means that at least some element of parainesis is almost always present in hagiographical descriptions of penitential practice. Thus a contaminating factor is introduced into the evidence from the Lives at the very beginning, and this factor increases in importance with the growth of monastic Selbstbewusstsein during the crucial period from the eighth to the tenth centuries. Nevertheless, this is grounds for caution only, not for despair. Familiarity with the widest possible range of Lives and a sensitivity to the topoi and the other narrative techniques of the hagiographer should enable the historian to reach a balanced judgement about the real worth of his sources, and about what he can and cannot extract from them for his own purposes. Without these tools, however, the historian courts certain danger in the use of the Vitae, especially if he skims off the "best" of them (for example, that of a Theodore of Sykeon or a Joannicius) and generalizes on the basis of what he finds there. In the domain of penance that kind of selection would be profoundly misleading, for the reader will recall how large a proportion of all the Lives surveyed contained no information of any kind that was relevant to ecclesiastical penance.

2. Moreover, when hagiographical evidence is presented in isolation from other sources, it leaves a curiously two-dimensional impression. In this regard the character of the present study as Vorarbeit to a history of Byzantine penance that is still to be written has been confirmed by the results. Its findings will have to be integrated with those from similar studies of the canonical and liturgical traditions before their full value can be finally appraised.

Thus, enthusiasm for the Vitae as a unique kind of historical source in the investigation of Byzantine religious life must be tempered by a healthy dose of realism. The Lives have their own distorting mirror. They will not provide answers for all the questions of the historian, and if this is true for the historian of the cura pastoralis of the Byzantine church, how much more for those looking for answers to questions less central to the concerns

of the hagiographical genre as a whole. Nevertheless, the patient reading of the Vitae has its own rewards, and not the least of these is an enhanced appreciation for that richly various religious background which lies hidden behind the spare pronouncements of canonists and synods.