

In Defence of Icons: Saint John of Damascus and Stefan Javorskij

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Abstract: The article compares the arguments in defence of images in *The Stone of Faith* by Metropolitan Stefan Javorskij (1658–1722), a prominent Russian prelate of the late 17th–early 18th century, and in the *Apologetic Treatises Against Those Who Calumniate the Divine Images (Apologies)*, by St. John of Damascus (675?–ca. 754) to see how the work of St. John of Damascus, an 8th-century theologian, was used almost exactly one thousand years later in the Orthodox-Protestant polemics. *The Stone of Faith* by Stefan Javorskij was written as a reaction to the Protestant influences challenging Russia during the reign of Peter the First (1672–1725). In some places Javorskij inserted large passages from the *Apologies* indicating a reference; in others he borrowed the argument expressing it in his own manner. The scope of this study will be limited to an attempt to highlight to what extent the response of Stefan Javorskij is similar to the theological methods of St. John of Damascus. The difference of the two approaches indicates the extent to which the Orthodox theology changed over the centuries.

Key words: icons, polemics, John of Damascus, Stefan Javorskij, Russian theology

This paper will compare the arguments in defence of images in *The Stone of Faith*¹ by Metropolitan Stefan Javorskij² (1658–1722), and in the *Apologetic*

¹ Metropolitan Stefan JAVORSKIJ, *Kamen Very. Pravoslavnym cerkve synom na utverždenie i duxovnoe sozidanie. Pretykajuščimsja že o kamen' pretykanija I soblazna, na vozstanie I ispravlenie*. [The Stone of Faith. For the affirmation and spiritual creation of the sons of the Holy Orthodox Church. For those who stumble against the block of stumbling and temptation unto restoration and correction] (Kiev: Typografija Kievo-Pečerskoj Lavry, 1730), hereafter: *The Stone of Faith*. The usual translation of the work is “The Rock of Faith,” where the Slavic word *kamen'* in the title (which in Slavonic bears the meanings of both “rock” and “stone”) is probably related to the Gospels’ “rock” (“...thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church” Mt 16: 18). Here, however, it refers specifically to the word “stone,” since Javorskij exploits the two-fold meaning of the “cornerstone,” upon which the whole building is based, and against which the deluded people are smashed. In his short introduction to the polemical part, he writes: “We have seen in the first part, the Stone of the affirmation of the Orthodox faith... Here, in the second part we will see the Stone of stumbling and offence, upon which the adversaries stumble and against which they are offended. For Christ Himself was the Stone of affirmation for the faithful, and the Stone of stumbling for the unfaithful...” (*The Stone of Faith*, 93). Cf. “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same was made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence...” (1 Pet. 2: 7–8). The structure of JAVORSKIJ’s *The Stone of Faith* in its “expositional” and “controversial” parts intentionally reflects this Gospels’ image of Christ, as a cornerstone who, in Javorskij’s view, supports the Orthodox in their faith but denounces Protestants’ opinions.

² Materials on the biography of Stefan Javorskij are presented in the introduction to *The Stone of Faith* (in the Kiev edition of 1730 which I worked with, this introduction precedes the text of *The Stone of Faith* itself without page numbers) and in I. S. ZAKHARA, *Stefan Javorskij* (Lviv: Kameniar, 1992). A basic but rather old monograph on *The Stone of Faith* is I. MOREV, ‘Kamen very’ Mitropolita Stefana Javorskovo: ego mesto sredi otečestvennyx protivoprotestantskix sočine-

Treatises Against Those Who Calumniate the Divine Images (Apologies), by St. John of Damascus (675?–ca. 754) to see how the work of St. John of Damascus, an eighth-century theologian, was used almost exactly one thousand years later in the Orthodox-Protestant polemics for purposes and in historical circumstances which the original author could hardly have imagined.

The Apologetic Treatises Against Those Who Calumniate Divine Images by John of Damascus (*Apologies*),³ were written as a response to the Iconoclastic measures of Emperor Leo III (717–41). *The Stone of Faith* by Stefan Javorskij was written as a reaction to the Protestant influences challenging Russia during the reign of Peter the First (1672–1725).⁴ It is only logical that Stefan Javorskij in his part concerning defence of icons which initiates *The Stone of Faith*, turned to the earlier polemics of St. John of Damascus, only a part of which had been by then translated into Slavonic.⁵ In some places Javorskij inserted large passages from the *Apologies* indicating a reference; in others he borrowed the argument expressing it in his own manner. The scope of this study will be limited to an attempt to highlight a very important problem: to what extent the response of Stefan Javorskij, a prominent Russian prelate of the late seventeenth-early 18th century, is similar to the theological methods of St. John of Damascus.

Here a methodological problem arises: what should be the criteria for our comparative analysis? The Byzantine Controversy was much richer from the doctrinal point of view than the later Orthodox-Protestant polemics. Thus, many times we will be comparing the sophisticated elaboration of an idea by St. John of Damascus simply with the absence of the same idea in Javorskij's work, which happens much more frequently than Javorskij introducing new ideas not present in St. John's work. I will argue, however, that the very absence of these issues in Javorskij's work have much to say about the fate of Orthodox theology over the centuries.⁶

In his polemics, Stefan Javorskij uses a particularly visual method of argumentation. He first makes a statement, then presents relevant scriptural quotations, and transfers their literal meaning into the realm of daily life. In this manner, he tries to force his adversaries to look at their arguments not only from

nij, xarakterističeskie osobennosti ego dogmatičeskix vozzrenij ['The Stone of Faith' by Metropolitan Stefan Javorskij: Its place among the national anti-Protestant writings, and the characteristic features of its dogmatic views] (St. Petersburg, 1904).

³ Critical edition: B. KOTTER, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 3, Patristische Texte und Studien 17 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), hereafter Kotter. In further references to the text of the *Apologies*, the number of the Apology, part, and line are indicated.

⁴ In the preface to *The Stone of Faith* Javorskij writes: "There was the case which encouraged me to write this: the perversion of some people deprived of our Orthodoxy. [слѣчай же въ поощрѣніе лигѣ вѣсть къ селѣ писанію, развращеніе нѣкѣихъ ѿ нашего православїа лишенникѣвъ]" (*Stone of Faith*, n. p.). In Slavonic the typography of the original is preserved wherever possible, abbreviations are opened, superscripts are put in line.

⁵ KOTTER, 44.

⁶ This topic was raised and excellently treated from the viewpoint of Russian theology in George FLOROVSKY, *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 5, in *Collected Works of George Florovsky* (Belton, Mass: Nordland, 1979).

the intellectual and impersonal viewpoint, but from an unusually personal and thus, particularly sensitive angle. A typical example of this is the following argument concerning the relationship to tradition (which by definition is based upon men's testimonies). Javorskij introduces this argument by a Scriptural quotation: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Mt. 18: 16). He goes on to say: "you draw me into impatience, oh, adversary!... Forgive me, but I will expose you that you are not a son of legitimate marriage. Tell me, how can I know that you are a legitimate son?"⁷ Javorskij explains this charge by the fact that only God and one's mother know about one's conception. He continues:

However, I call you a legitimate son because people say this about you. If you do not believe people who tell about miracles which happened through icons, so I, too, do not have faith in those people who say that you are a legitimate son. You see how with your disbelief, you overthrow all faith, even concerning your birth.

Язъ же по толико нарицаю тѣ законнымъ сыномъ, по елико людѣ ѿ тебе такъ глаголютъ. Но понеже ты не вѣррешши людемъ, иже повѣстѣють ѿ чсдохвореніи при Ікѡнахъ свѣтѣхъ вывѣдомъ, то ниже азъ имѣ вѣры, глаголющымъ тебѣ быти законнаго сына. Еидиши ли; іакѡ невѣрїемъ твоимъ всѣмъ вѣрр погублѣши: и самю тѣю вѣрр, юже оу людѣи имаша ѿ законномъ твоємъ рождѣніи, низринѣша еси⁸

In the beginning of his treatise on holy icons, Javorskij introduces a *Dogma on the Holy Images*, which is, in fact, the hierarchy of images established and developed by St. John of Damascus in his first and third *Apologies*. However, Javorskij's "Dogma" differs from the system of St. John in several important points:

St. John of Damascus	Stefan Javorskij
1. the Son, natural Image of the Father	1. the Son, natural image of the Father
2. the pre-existent providential plan of creation	2. man as the image of God
3. man as the image of God	3. anthropomorphic images in the Scripture
4. the images of Scripture	4. all creation as image leading to God
5. images as foretelling future events of salvation	5. images as foretelling future events of salvation
6. images as reminders of the past: a. by means of words b. by means of sensible contemplation which includes icons (<i>Apology III</i> , 28–33).	6. image-revealing miraculous deeds: a. by means of words (such as the Old Testament Law and the Lives of the saints) b. by means of visible material things c. embroidered, carved or painted icons

Writing about different kinds of images, Javorskij reserves icons as a separate group (he certainly would not equate them with any sort of material remind-

⁷ Къ нетерпѣнію ма движеша противниче Прости ми; обличѣ тѣ, іакѡ нѣси сынъ честнаго сѣпрѣжескаго лѡжа. Иво, оцы ми: по чсломъ имаша знати, іакѡ ты еси законный сынъ;

⁸ *The Stone of Faith*, 46B.

er, as St. John suggested in his *Apologies*). This fact reveals, perhaps, that he did not appreciate the *Apologies*' main point. St. John attempted to unite all images by proving the legitimacy of hand-made icons as an integral part of a wider universal system of images. This system rises from artificial icons, equal to Scripture, through man and God's providential plan of creation, and, finally, through Christ, to God the Father as the first Source and the Archetype of the whole hierarchy of images.⁹

Javorskij's "Dogma" simplifies St. John of Damascus' system in several ways. Javorskij put man as the image of God in the second place (whereas it is in the third place in St. John of Damascus' system). Furthermore, in the fourth place Javorskij put "all creation," as opposed to Damascus' problematic Patristic notion of a "providential plan," a *logoi* of yet uncreated things. Javorskij replaced it with a safer Scholastic notion of "all creation" leading men to the knowledge of God by means of analogy.

The difference of the two approaches can be clearly seen in their attitude towards tradition. Writing on tradition as a basis of the Church's teachings, Javorskij presented the Orthodox Church as based on two rocks, Scripture and Tradition, thus separating the two unlike John of Damascus, who equates them as one tradition coming from Christ and the Apostles but transmitted to us in different ways.¹⁰ This split indicates that Javorskij rationally divides them into two clearly separate authorities. The rational element, the supremacy of the writer's thought over the material of the Scriptural and Patristic literature is a predominant feature of *The Stone of Faith*: Javorskij reworked the set of Scriptural passages which had already been selected by the preceding polemical tradition. With a great skill Javorskij used his beloved syllogistic method by touching the same subject from different sides. Besides debating on the Protestants' inconsistency in the denial of tradition, he drew different arguments from psychology (inner and outer images, and the role of senses), history, moral benefit, and educational usefulness of icons as a basis of icon-veneration.

In the argument for an acceptance of the authority of the Ecumenical Councils, Javorskij had much less "polemical space," that is, doctrines shared by both sides to build his arguments upon, than St. John of Damascus who shared with his contemporaneous Iconoclasts all the heritage of the preceding Councils, Liturgical writers and common theological and exegetical tradition. Thus, Javorskij's forced again to appeal to formal syllogism. Since the Protestants always emphasised their traditionalism regarding the Trinitarian doctrine, and their distance from radical reformers like Unitarians, Javorskij urged the Protestants to obey the decrees on icon-veneration by the Second Council of Nicaea by drawing an analogy based on the same geographical location of the two Councils: if the Protestants deny the second Council of Nicaea which proclaimed the icon-veneration, they also deny the first Council of Nicaea, and therefore do not accept the divinity of Christ. As did the Arians condemned at this Council.

⁹ *Apology III*, 18–23.

¹⁰ Cf. St. John of Damascus: "They transmitted the rules of the Church not only through letters, but also through some unwritten traditions" (*Apology I*, 23, 1–6, KOTTER, 111).

The chapter on miracles brought about by icons is especially interesting because the argument on miracle-working icons had never been especially emphasised in the Eastern theology of image which primarily believed in the image-prototype connection without a special emphasis on external testimonies from miracles. Miracles were traditionally considered as a natural and in a way necessary outcome of that connection. The continuous use of the argument “from miracles” from the 16th century Russian anti-Protestant polemics on, may indicate that the perception of the image-prototype argument was losing its force. Javorskij starts his list of miraculous events brought by images from the image of Christ not made-by-hands (John of Damascus mentioned the Edessa image only in a remark to one of his *florilegium*’s items, and did not use it as an argument of justification in itself). As a source for this chapter, Javorskij apparently also used Damascene’s *florilegia*, though giving references to the Lives of the mentioned saints, and to the Prologue.¹¹

We should not forget that Javorskij was writing his work in a turbulent time for the Russian Church, the time of Peter’s ecclesiastical reform and the abolishment of the Patriarchy; like St. John of Damascus, he was very much aware that “the word of the King is powerful to make his subjects retreat.”¹² But unlike St. John of Damascus who wrote his treatises from the relative safety of the Umayyad Caliphate, Metropolitan Stefan Javorskij was not only a subject of the Empire, but he had to be in front of the eyes of the tsar day and night, unable to go anywhere without Peter’s permission. Many times, Javorskij begged the tsar to release him from his duties. He wrote to Peter in 1712: “Where shall I go from your spirit and how shall I flee from your face?.. I will not go to a foreign realm, for your power is given to you by God. In Moscow or in Rjazan’—everywhere your sovereign power reigns over me. It is impossible to hide from it.”¹³ It was not clear, who were the allies, whereas the enemies were obvious. Having inherited a Church split by the Schism, Javorskij could not lean upon Old Believers-traditionalists and the most devoted image-venerators, since they were opposed to any official Church hierarchy.

A very sharp issue on the intervention of secular powers into the realm of Church laws was introduced by the careful statement: “This argument is from St. John of Damascus, from his Second Treatise on the Icons.”¹⁴ “You, adversaries, boast, that kings were the initiators of the throwing out of the icons, and the

¹¹ Out of fourteen miraculous stories mentioned in Javorskij’s list, the story N5 (icon of Apostle Paul in possession of St. John Chrysostom (*Apology I*, 61; *II*, 57; *III*, 54, Kotter, 161–162), N7 (episode from the Life of St. Mary of Egypt when the icon of the Mother of God forbade harlot Mary to enter the church which led to her deep repentance (*Apology III*, 135, KOTTER, 198–199), N8 (miracle with the deer from the martyrdom of St. Eustathius Plakidas (*Apology III*, 83, KOTTER, 177–178), N10 (story of the ascetic who promised the demon not to venerate the icon of the Mother of God (*Apology I*, 64; *II*, 67, KOTTER, 165–166) seem to have been found by Javorskij in the *florilegia* of St. John of Damascus’ *Apologies*.

¹² *Apology I*, 1, 29, KOTTER, 66.

¹³ Quoted in R. MASSIG, *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (London: Abacus, 1982), 790.

¹⁴ *The Stone of Faith*, 81 B.

kings were given power from God.”¹⁵ However, God entrusted “the building of His Church, the regulations and the borders, especially concerning faith, not to the secular power, but to the religious.”¹⁶ Since Leo, Constantine, and the others changed the old traditions of the icon-veneration and established new laws, “for this destructive and not a creative, and unjust statute, one should not obey them... I know that there are many rules of many kings [in Church usage]. But on the civil courts and on the organisation of the Church order, and *not on the articles regarding the faith*.”¹⁷ This quite straightforward opinion concerning Emperor's prerogatives over the Church might have sounded too pressing, and this is why it is put in the mouth of St. John of Damascus. The reference is certainly not false: Javorskij reiterated here St. John's argument from *Apology II*, 12.¹⁸ His sentences are, however, filled with personal passion. In fact, Javorskij must have meant Peter the First while writing those lines—evidently feeling that he has entered in a rather dangerous field, in the next paragraph he softens his too obvious parallel and remarks: “This way, our Most pious Monarch of All Russia Peter the First piously established some regulations, concerning the Church order and piety...”¹⁹ And soon he finishes rather abruptly: “But here we talk about the articles of faith, and not about Church piety.”²⁰

A very distinctive feature of Javorskij's polemics is the discrepancy between the arguments which he wants to promote and reality. This can be discerned in several places besides the argument on the secular and church power. When speaking about the impossibility of depicting the Divine, he starts the reference to John of Damascus: “I have already said from the teaching of St. Damascene that we never dare nor we are able to comprehend the uncircumscribable and incomprehensible greatness of Christ, but we depict him in a human form.”²¹ However, the image of the invisible God the Father as the An-

¹⁵ “Они́къ въ протѣвницы хвалѣтеса, ꙗ́кѡ изверженѣа Ісѡвннѡгѡ начѡлннцы вѣхъ царѣе, царѣмъ же дадѣса вла́сть ѿ Бѡга” (*The Stone of Faith*, 82A).

¹⁶ “цѣркве своеа строѣніе, ѡста́вы же ѿ предѣлы наипѣче ꙗ́же къ вѣрѣ надлежѡща, врсчѣ Бѡгъ не мѣрско́й вла́сти, но дѡхѡвнѡ” (*Ibid.*, 83A).

¹⁷ “тогѡ рѡди разорителнѡгѡ а не созидателнѡгѡ ѿ непра́веднѡгѡ ѿхъ ѡста́вленѣа, слѡшати не надлежитъ Бѣ́лѣ ꙗ́кѡ мнѡгѡхъ царѣй мнѡгаа ѡбрѣта́ются пра́вила. Но ѿ гражда́нскихъ сѡда́хъ, ѿ ѿ строѣніи благочѣніа церкѡвнѡгѡ, а не ѿ членѡхъ къ вѣрѣ надлежѡщихъ” (*Ibid.*). Italicized statement is in bold letters in the original text.

¹⁸ “It is not for the emperors to give laws to the Church. For what does the divine Apostle say? ‘And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, second prophets, third pastors and teachers for the order of the Church,’—he did not say: ‘the emperors’... Political order is [a duty] of the emperors but ecclesiastical constitution is for pastors and teachers. This is, my brethren, an assault of robbers... We subdue to you, oh Emperor, in the affairs pertaining to daily life, in tributes, payments, in receiving those things in which you are given a prerogative over us, but in the ecclesiastical constitution we have pastors speaking their word to us and forming the ecclesiastical laws” (*Apology II*, 12, 1–6, 19–21, 38–43, Kotter, 102–104).

¹⁹ “Та́кѡ ѿ на́шѣхъ благочѣстивѣ́шѣй Мо́нархъ Всерѡсѣ́йскѣй Пѣ́трѡхъ пѣ́рвыѣ, благочѣстѣ́нѣхъ ѡста́вы нѣ́каа благочѣнію, ѿ благочѣстію церкѡвнѡмъ надлежѡща” (*The Stone of Faith*, 83A).

²⁰ “Но зде́ ѿ членѡхъ вѣ́ры глаго́летъ, а не ѿ благочѣніи церкѡвнѣ́мъ” (*Ibid.*, 83B).

²¹ “Реко́хъ ѡ́ужѣ ѿ Дамаскина́ свѣта́гѡ, ꙗ́кѡ мы на Ісѡвѣ́хъ христѡвѣ́хъ нико́гдаже вѣ́ща́ти дерзѡ́емъ, ни́же во мѡ́жемъ неѡпи́саннѡгѡ ѿ неѡсти́жимѡгѡ христѡ́ва вели́чествѡ́а ѡбразѡ́емъ же тогѡ́ во ѡбразѣ́хъ чело́вѣ́стѣ́мъ” (*Ibid.*, 118B).

cient of Days, forbidden by the Great Council of Moscow (1666–67),²² became so widespread by that time that Javorskij unwillingly had to take the reality in account: “Thus, icon-painters (for whom no law is prescribed) depict God the Father as an old man with white hair. He is not like this in His incomprehensible divinity, but was seen in this image by Prophet Daniel.”²³

As a man educated in scholasticism with its importance of logic, Javorskij was sometimes not satisfied with the brevity of St. John’s arguments. When explaining the difference between idols and icons in Chapter 5 of the Polemical Part, Javorskij used St. John’s argument from *Apology I*, 24, where St. John argued that representations made by Christians and the heathens are, in fact, opposite things, although they might share some outward similarity.²⁴ Javorskij applied his philosophical knowledge to this argument, and provided an Aristotelian system of categories within which the subjects share some common properties: on the stage of *essence* (ἐστὶς τὸν), all creations and the Creator Himself have common properties. All *substances* (οὐσίαι τὸν) have something in common, as well as all having *bodies* (τὸν σώμα): a man and a stone, a lion and a horse. The same happens at the stage of the *animated beings* (ψυχώδη τὸν) where trees, people, and animals have common characteristics. On the stage of *alive beings* (ζωόντων) all who can hear, see, touch, taste, and smell, have something in common. The same happens on the stage of *man* (ἑνὸς φύλου) where all people, Christians and Moslems, people of noble and low origin, good men and evil, have common features. We can find this exact system of categories in Javorskij’s philosophical work, notably called “Competitions of Peripatetics. Chapters of Peripatetics of Aristotle the Stagirite on the Arena of Orthodox-Russian Struggle,” in the Dispute Sixteen.²⁵

Explaining the radical change from the Old Testament prohibition of images to the New Testament’s necessity, St. John of Damascus operated with very deep theological parallels and juxtapositions of Old Testament and New Testament passages, concluding, that the very similarity between the revelations of God in

²² “To paint on icons the Lord Sabaoth (that is, the Father) with a white beard, holding the only-begotten Son in his lap with a dove between them is altogether absurd and improper, for no one has ever seen the Father in His divinity... St. John of Damascus likewise says: ‘Who can make an imitation of God the invisible, the incorporeal, the indescribable, and unimaginable?’” (Acts of the Great Councils of Moscow 1666–1667 (Moscow, 1893), quoted in L. OUSPENSKY, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 2, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 371).

²³ “Такъ и́ Бѣга Отца́ и́конописцы́ и́мже́ законъ́ неписанъ́ образуютъ́ въ́ видѣ́ старца́ съдѣи́ями прѣобра́шеннаго́, не́ такъ́ тако́въ́ есть́ въ́ своѣ́мъ́ сѣ́ непости́жимѣ́мъ́ Божествѣ́: но́ такъ́ въ́ сице́вомъ́ образѣ́ видѣ́нъ́ бы́сть ѿ́ Дани́ла проро́ка, и ѿ́ Исѣ́и” (*The Stone of Faith*, 119A).

²⁴ “The testimonies that you bring forward, do not disdain the veneration of images by us but by the Heathens who give them divine honour. Thus because of the Heathens’ foul custom one must not destroy ours which is pious. Magicians and sorcerers take vows from the demons and the Church takes vows from the catechumens. But those invoke the demons, and She invokes God against the demons. The Heathens erect images for the sake of demons and call them gods, but we [erect images] for the sake of the true incarnated God and God’s friends and servants who cast away the mass of demons” (*Apology I*, 24, KOTTER, 114–15).

²⁵ Stefan Javorskij, *Filosofs’ki tvorі* [Philosophical works], vol. 1, in *Pam’iatky filisofskoi kulturi ukrainskogo narodu* [Literary monuments of the philosophical culture of the Ukrainian people], ed. I. S. Zakhara (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1992), 467.

the Old and in the New Testaments, determined the striking difference between the Invisible God of the Old Testament, and Visible God in the New Testament. Javorskij, while responding to the same argument, again used his method of “bringing down to earth” the theological notions, by giving them daily applications:

By Divine grace we do not have the fear of idolatry... It is impossible to find a single person among us, who would venerate an icon as God. And every person, if you ask him, will tell you indignantly: How can the thing made by human hands be God! But I venerate (he says) the icon of Christ, because I have Christ in my heart, and believe in him, and not in an icon.

Божію благодатію нѣсть оу насъ страхъ ѿолопоклонства... Нижѣ вѣрѣшиши оу насъ и протѣйшаго челоуѣка, иже въ ѿвѣсѣ почиталъ ѿкъ Бога: и всѣмъ, аще вопрошиши его: есть ли ѿвѣсна бѣга; негодѣла рече ти: Какъ дѣло рѣкъ челоуѣческихъ можетъ быти бѣга; Но почитаю речеѣтъ ѿвѣсн Христѣвѣ, понеже самаго Христа ѿмаиѣ въ сѣрдцѣ своѣмъ, и въ негѣ вѣрѣю, а не во ѿвѣсн.²⁶

Both Stefan Javorskij and St. John of Damascus were deeply concerned about the question of the place and the role of matter in the universe. However, St. John of Damascus, with his all-pervading emphasis on the Incarnation in the material body of the divine Word, considered matter in its relation to and in its union with the Divinity. Javorskij, quite on the contrary, being a heir of Scholastic and Renaissance philosophy, considered matter in the context of hylomorphosis. Matter was thus regarded by him simply as a universal matrix. In this context there remained no place for the theological idea of the spiritualisation of matter through the Incarnation.²⁷ Thus, the Christological argument on depictable intact human properties of Christ's body (such as colour, size, shape, etc.) which simultaneously belong to God the Word, an argument so important for St. John of Damascus, again receives in Stefan Javorskij a purely polemical dimension:

You say: you confess two Christs, one circumscribable and one uncircumscribable. I respond: When the Apostles saw Christ, they saw him only according to flesh and not according to the divinity; and they saw that which was circumscribable in him but they did not see the uncircumscribable. For did the Apostles confess two Christs? Senseless words not worthy of listening! For does it seem to be two men when you see a human body but you do not see his soul? But it is not surprising: such apparitions are usual for drunken people, to see one person as a double.

речеши: оубо въ два христѣ исповѣдаете, единого ѿписаннаго, дрѣгаго же неѿписаннаго. (ѿ) вѣщаю: егда видѣша Христа апѣстоли, видѣша его тоѣчно по плѣти, а не по Божестѣвѣ: и ѿписанное въ немъ видѣша, неѿписаннаго же невидѣша. Оубо двѣхъ ли христѣвъ исповѣдаша апѣстоли; безъликиа глаголы, и слышаниа не достѣйны, едако два челоуѣцы лиаѣтиса быти, егда тѣло

²⁶ *The Stone of Faith*, 119 A.

²⁷ Javorskij says in the Preface to his Philosophical Competitions [*Filosofski zmanan'ja*], that “matter is the mother of forms, the subject of change, because all the earthly and material forms, subjectivised in it and adopted by it, are called mass, origin [*proiskhozhdeniem*], principle. Some people equate it with a mirror, since in the presence of an object, some natural force is reflected in it. Plato calls matter the place of acceptation of forms, the breasts, the nursing mother, the place of receiving a semen, for it accepts the seed of form, warms it up in itself.” (JAVORSKIJ, *Filosofs'ke zmanan'ja*, 196, quoted in ed. I. ZAKHARA, *Filosof'ski tvorі*, 28). “Matter is perfected by form, and not form by matter.” (JAVORSKIJ, *Filosofs'ke zmanan'ja*, 199, quoted in ed. I. Zakhara, *Filosof'ski tvorі*, 30).

человѣческое зрѣши, дѣши же ѿ нѣ видѣши; Но не дѣишъ: Пѣныи въ обѣчно бывають сицевѣ привидѣнїа, единого челоуѣка, аки сг҃сѣа зрѣти.²⁸

To sum up: in his polemics in defence of icons, Javorskij had to answer practically the same arguments which were raised by the Byzantine Iconoclasts in the 8th century. However, the arguments which have been repeated throughout the following millennium so often, by Javorskij's time seem to have lost all of their original force. They have turned into elements of religious self-identification, or into questions with "implied" answers to tempt the opposite side. Later many critics of icon veneration were popular writers and not necessarily theologians or clerics. Through such preachers the theological concepts "filtered down into popular imagination."²⁹

Now it is, perhaps, an appropriate time to ask the question as to why the two approaches, by St. John of Damascus and by Stefan Javorskij, differ so much? Was it a lack of education, loss of faith or shortcoming of Javorskij as a theologian? Neither of them, for Stefan Javorskij, excellent preacher, sincere believer, educated person writing poetry in Latin, was a typical figure of his time. Between the West, with its philosophy and scholastic theology, and the East, with its belief in the impossibility of a final knowledge of the Divine, Javorskij tried to solve theological problems by philosophical, and often by purely polemical means. He was a man of the new generation, for whom reason was the real instrument of discernment. As far as the primacy of reason was concerned, Javorskij had much more in common with Peter the First than he would have probably acknowledged himself. "Dialectics,"—he stated, "teaches us that the authority does not matter, if logic gives birth to some conclusion."³⁰ He also praised logic as a hammer in the hands of a smith.³¹ Unlike St. John, Javorskij perceived the tradition not as the foundation of the argument,³² but rather as a "database" providing material for the exercise of reason.

Both the Iconodules and the Iconoclasts involved in the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy operated in the same theological and cultural background. They perfectly understood all the weak and the strong points of each other, and this confrontation stimulated poignant theological thought. The later Orthodox-Protestant polemics were marked not only by theological but also by cultural differences, and maybe this was one of the reasons why these polemics did not yield any new theological insight. Notably, using the *Apologies* of John of Damascus in refuting Protestant views toward images, Javorskij did not use its main arguments, so strongly emphasised by St. John, namely, the Incarnation as a turning point from the Old Testament prohibition of artistic images to the New Testament revelation of the Divine on Earth, and the Incarnation as justification of matter and material representations. This probably happened because the

²⁸ *The Stone of Faith*, 119A.

²⁹ D. FREEDBERG, "The structure of Byzantine and European Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm*, eds. A. Bryer, and J. Herrin (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), 166.

³⁰ JAVORSKIJ, *Filosofs'ke zmahan'ja*, 37, quoted in ed. I. Zakhara, *Filosof'ski tvorci*, 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

³² *Apology I*, 2, 1–2, KOTTER, 66.

polemics by Javorskij were not aimed to theologically overcome the Protestant arguments but, rather, to overemphasise and to present the differences *ad absurdum*.

For Javorskij, the challenge of his contemporary iconoclasts was already more confessional than theological, and it was not his fault that he did not have the same enormous supply of spiritual force as St. John of Damascus. Javorskij, like St. John, did not pretend to be original, though for different reasons: for him the universal power of logic and reason was a more efficacious tool than Damascene's appeal to tradition. Javorskij chose the well developed and popular scholastic method, "cutting out" for himself the argument he needed from what was at hand. The result was a handbook of all possible arguments, pro and con, far from constituting an integral theological system as it was intended and announced in the title of his work.

Notwithstanding its all too obvious intellectual flaws, the book of Stefan Javorskij performed a very important role for its time. In the epoch of complicated interaction between Protestantism, Catholicism and Orthodoxy, it helped to define what Orthodox views really consisted of. In its two parts, expository and polemical, in its clear structure, *The Stone of Faith* delineated for hundreds of not necessarily well educated priests and laymen all over Russia, a clear border of what was Orthodox as opposed to non-Orthodox teaching in terms of dogmas, Church history, and worship.³³ Although it may not have deepened the theological understanding of images, it helped to conserve and preserve the Orthodox tradition of icon-veneration in a turbulent time for the Russian Church.

³³ *The Stone of Faith* became so popular that it ran into two more editions (Moscow, 1729, and Kiev, 1730) immediately after the first edition (Moscow, 1728).