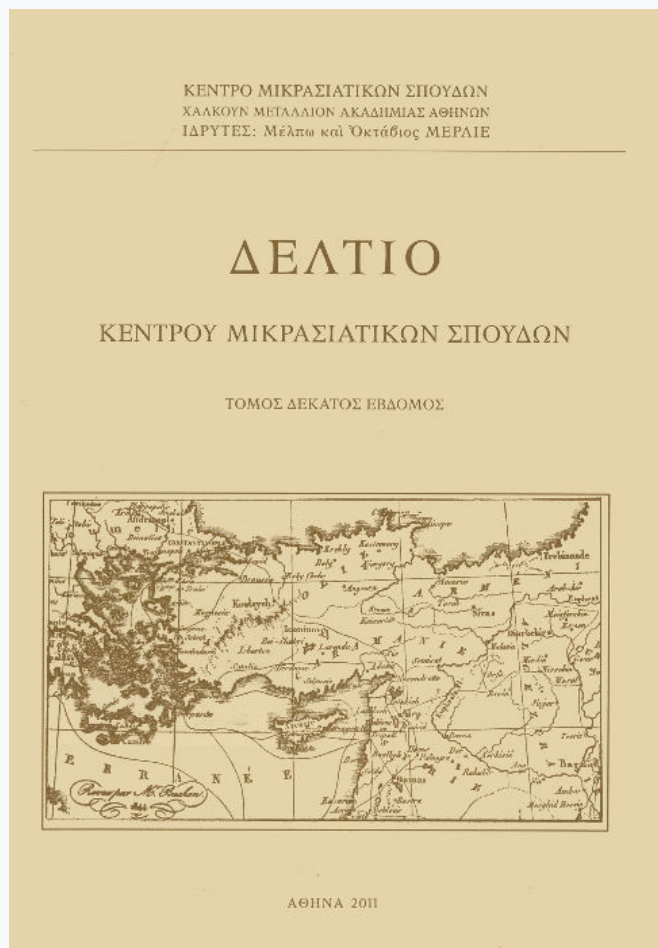


## Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών

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### Το τέλος των αυτοκρατοριών, η Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή και το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο

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Paschalis M. Kitromilides

THE END OF EMPIRE, GREECE'S ASIA MINOR CATASTROPHE  
AND THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE<sup>1</sup>

In the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople, the first quarter of the 20th century could be considered in a broader interpretative perspective to illustrate the definition of tragedy by Aristotle in the life of the Church Militant. More precisely this story could be viewed as a reenactment in real historical life of Aristotle's remark on the radical reversal of human fortunes which he includes in the definition of tragedy using the concept of *περιπέτεια*: a reversal, a change of the situation into the opposite (*ἡ εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν πραττομένων μεταβολή*).<sup>2</sup> Indeed if we were to compare the condition of the Church of Constantinople in the year 1900 or 1901, when Patriarch Joachim III returned to the throne for his second patriarchate (1901-1912), with what was left of the Great Church of Christ just a quarter of a century later, we would be able to see exactly how the fortunes of Orthodox Christianity in Turkey in the period in question reenact the tragic essence of Aristotle's concept of *περιπέτεια*.

These momentous developments in the life of the Church of Constantinople constituted an integral component of the epoch-making transformation marking the history of Europe and the Near East during the first quarter of the 20th century: the transformation followed the convulsions brought about by the First World War and revolution, the end of the great multi-ethnic and multinational empires, and the advent of

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1. This paper was originally presented at the XXXII Settimana Europea, 'Storia Religiosa Euro-Mediterranea (I): Da Costantinopoli al Caucaso. Imperi e popoli tra Cristianesimo e Islam', organized by the Fondazione Ambrosiana Paolo VI at Villa Cagnola, Gazzada, Varese, Italy, in September 2010. An Italian version of the text is appearing in the proceedings of the conference.

2. Aristotle, *Poetics* XI, 1.

the modern state system in that part of the world. The Ottoman Empire, whose presence had been receding in Europe since the early 19th century, reached its definitive end with defeat in the Great War and the overthrow of the imperial institution by the Turkish Revolution that gave birth to the Turkish Republic. These revolutionary changes affected deeply the fate of the several Christian minorities in Turkey, their churches and ecclesiastical institutions. The most dramatic consequences were reserved for the principal Christian communion in Turkey, which in fact had been represented by the oldest institution with a continuous existence of almost two millennia in the country, the Church of Constantinople.

# I

Let us look at the historical record. In the first decade of the 20th century the Church of Constantinople comprised eighty four dioceses in Asia Minor and the Balkans.<sup>3</sup> Of these eighty four dioceses, the newest five in Asia Minor and Thrace had only been created after the turn of the century (of Kallipolis, Krini, Rhodopolis, Saranta Ekklesies, Tyroloi). In 1908 a new metropolis was created for the important, almost entirely Greek-populated city of Kydonies (Ayvalik) on the Western coast of Asia Minor. There followed the metropolis of Dardanelia and Lampsakos based at Cannak-kale in 1913, that of Metron and Athyrion in Eastern Thrace in 1914, and that of Myriophyton and Peristasis, also in Eastern Thrace, in 1917. As late as March 1922 three new dioceses were set up in Asia Minor: of Vryoulla, in the outskirts of Smyrna, of Pergamos, and of Moschonisia.

The proliferation of the number of dioceses in Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace was a clear indication of the rising Orthodox population in these regions which, after the detachment of major parts of the Balkans from the jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople with the advent of the new autocephalous churches in the course of the 19th century, formed the primary territorial basis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. A major census taken by the Church in the years 1910-1912, just on the eve of the Balkan

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3. See R. Janin, 'Constantinople. Le Patriarcat grec', *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. XIII, Paris 1956, col. 715.

Wars, which ushered in a period of persecutions and displacements of the Orthodox population, provides the closest approximation available on the quantitative magnitudes involved. On the basis of the most conservative estimates, the number of Orthodox Christians subject to the Ecumenical Patriarchate rose in 1912 to about 1,547,000 in Asia Minor and to 256,000 in Eastern Thrace.<sup>4</sup>

The upward demographic trend and the increasing population, both urban and rural, provided the sociological basis of another important development in the life of the Orthodox Church in Asia Minor, the reemergence of monasticism. In that land which had been the cradle of coenobitic monasticism, the end of Byzantine rule had also brought the extinction of monasticism. By the 15th century, the decline of Medieval Hellenism in the peninsula and the Islamization of the greatest number of the population had led to the disappearance of the great monastic centres on the 'Holy Mountains' of Olympus in Bythinia and Latmos in Caria and of the monastic communities in the rock-cut monasteries of Cappadocia. The only region in which monasticism had survived, carrying the Medieval Byzantine religious traditions of the area into the modern age, was Pontos in Northeastern Asia Minor. In the Pontic Alps four great monastic foundations had been in continuous existence since the time of the Medieval Empire of Trebizond and were experiencing a revival in numbers in the late 19th and the early 20th century: these were the monasteries of the Dormition of the Virgin at Sumela in the highlands of Trebizond, of St. John the Baptist at Vazelon, of St. George Peristereota and of St. George Choutoura further inland. Other smaller monasteries and convents were reappearing elsewhere in the Pontic regions by the early 20th century. Their ruins have been identified by the extensive surveys of the Christian topography of the Pontos carried out by Anthony Bryer and his collaborators from the 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> The survival of monasticism in Pontos has been convincingly explained

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4. See P. Kitromilides and A. Alexandris, 'Ethnic survival, nationalism and forced migration. The historical demography of the Greek community of Asia Minor at the close of the Ottoman era', *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* [Centre for Asia Minor Studies Bulletin] 5 (1985), p. 9-44, especially p. 32-34.

5. See Anthony A. M. Bryer and David Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies No 20, Washington D.C. 1985.

by the great historian of Byzantine Asia Minor, Speros Vryonis Jr., as the result of the survival of extensive rural populations in the region, protected in the isolation of the Pontic Alps.<sup>6</sup> It was these populations that supplied the human and material resources necessary for the continuing functioning of the Pontic highland shrines, which also attracted the respect of the Muslim populations in their regions.<sup>7</sup>

By the early 20th century monasticism was reappearing beyond Pontos in other regions of Asia Minor with substantial rural populations. The most important of those was Bythinia on the Asiatic side of the Sea of Marmara (Propontis), which formed the immediate hinterland of Constantinople in Asia Minor. This region had preserved significant Orthodox rural populations, scattered in villages along the coast of the Sea of Marmara and inland into the highlands. The area was divided among the dioceses of Chalcedon, Nicomedia, Nicea, Cyzicus and Proussa (Bursa), which were among the senior sees of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The numbers of the rural population in Bythinia had been rising since the end of the 18th century on account of internal migrations in the Ottoman Empire, with people coming from continental Greece, especially Epirus, and also from Eastern Thrace, in search of work in the more agriculturally fertile areas of Northwestern Asia Minor. By the late 19th and certainly in the early 20th century, monastic establishments were reappearing in Bythinia and in the islands off the peninsula of Cyzicus in the Sea of Marmara. A significant pilgrimage centre had emerged in Nicomedia itself (Ismidt) with the establishment of the monastery of St. Panteleimon at the site of his martyrdom.

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6. Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism and the Process of Islamization in Asia Minor from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Centuries*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971, p. 41-42, 155-157, 195-197. For details on the history of Pontic monastic foundations see Metropolitan of Trebizond Chrysanthos Philippides, *Ἡ Ἐκκλησία Τραπεζοῦντος* [*The Church of Trebizond*], *Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου* [*Pontos Archives*] 4-5 (Athens 1933), p. 463-503.

7. See Vryonis, *op. cit.*, p. 486 and Anthony Bryer *et al.*, *The Post-Byzantine Monuments of the Pontos*, Aldershot: Variorum, 2002, Part 3, p. 277. Extensive evidence on the broader phenomenon of religious syncretism in Asia Minor had been recorded by F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, edited by Margaret M. Hasluck, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929, vols I-II.

In the interior of Asia Minor, beyond the Salt desert and the river Halys (Sakarya), the denser Orthodox Christian settlement was in Cappadocia, St. Basil's country with its impressive Byzantine painted, rock-cut monasteries. In this area an important monastic foundation had been set-up in the outskirts of Caesarea (Kayseri) at Zincidere, in the name of St. John the Baptist. It also provided the site for the establishment of a seminary for the training of clergy for the diocese of Caesarea in 1882, which was the senior metropolis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, its bishop ranking first in precedence of honour after the Ecumenical Patriarch.

The most visible sign of the revival of the Orthodox Church, and of the self confidence with which it was imbued at the time of the rapid Westernization of the Ottoman Empire during the closing decades of the 19th century, was provided by ecclesiastical architecture and the massive construction of new churches. It was in this period that imposing domed churches were built in the cities of the Empire, suggesting that the Orthodox population was no longer afraid to display publicly its identity. This was the period of the construction of the imposing domed churches of the Holy Trinity at Pera, overlooking Taksim square in Istanbul, and in Kadiköy on the Asiatic side. These newer structures suggested a considerable contrast to the earlier half-hidden behind high surrounding walls of undomed church buildings in old Constantinople within the walls.

Such was the condition of the Great Church of Christ when Patriarch Joachim III returned to the throne for his second patriarchate in 1901. It appeared for a moment after the long sad centuries of Ottoman rule that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was no longer the 'Church of Christian paupers', as its foremost chronographer was to describe it,<sup>8</sup> but, thanks to the devotion and prosperity of its flock, it was able to assume a more active pastoral role among the faithful and to assert its position of leadership in the Orthodox world. Despite heightened nationalist tensions in the Balkans, which in the ecclesiastical domain were dramatized by the Bulgarian schism, and armed conflicts between Greeks and Bulgarians in Macedonia, the Patriarch refused to submit to Greek nationalist

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8. Manuel Gedeon, *Ἡ ἱστορία τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ πενήτων* [*History of Christian paupers*], Athens 1939; and now the complete edition in two volumes, Athens 2010.

dictates both within the Church and from the Greek state and followed a policy of openness to the other Orthodox nations, especially Russia and Serbia, in order to bring the forces of Orthodoxy together and lead the Church into the new century.<sup>9</sup> This involved important inter-Orthodox and ecumenical initiatives, reflected in especially good relations with the Anglican Church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, despite many difficulties, was entering a new age of optimism and revival of ecclesiastical life.<sup>10</sup>

## II

In contrast to the situation in the early years of the 20th century this far described, let's consider the condition of the Great Church of Christ a quarter of a century later, in the period from 1923 until 1925. After a decade of large-scale warfare (1912-1922), persecution, displacement, and repeated massacres of its flock in Asia Minor, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had been reduced to a shadow of its former self. The Greek defeat in Asia Minor in August 1922, which is conventionally known in Greek historiography as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, was an unmitigated disaster for the Orthodox Church and its flock in the peninsula. The defeat of the Greek army, which had landed on Asia Minor in 1919 under a mandate of the Allied Western powers at the end of the First World War, left the Christian population of Asia Minor prey to a Turkish nationalist counter offensive. The Turkish troops and Turkish irregulars unleashed a total war against the Christians in the

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9. See P. M. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe*, Aldersot: Variorum, 2007, Study VI, p. 15-18.

10. A noteworthy contemporary appraisal by a well informed Anglican clergyman, Adrian Fortescue, is worth quoting: 'of the reigning patriarch, Joakim III, there is nothing to say but what is very good. He began his second reign by sending an Encyclical to the other Orthodox Churches in which he proposed certain very excellent reforms (for instance that of their Calendar), wished to arrange a better understanding between the sixteen independent bodies that make up their communion and expressed his pious hope for the reunion of Christendom'. See C. D. Cobham, *The Patriarchs of Constantinople*, Cambridge: University Press, 1911, p. 39-40.

peninsula. According to the most conservative estimates about 850,000 Orthodox Christians perished in Asia Minor between 1914 and 1922.<sup>11</sup>

On the 9th of September 1922, the Turkish troops entered the city of Smyrna, the metropolis of Asia Minor, and set it ablaze, while tens of thousands of destitute Greeks in desperation thronged on the water front of the city hoping against hope to be salvaged by foreign vessels in the Ionian port. This is how Orthodox Christianity came to a tragic and violent end in one of its most ancient cradles. The light of the seven churches of Asia Minor, to which St. John the Evangelist addressed the *Apocalypse*, was extinguished. The Turkish nationalists, inflamed by the rage of war, reserved their greatest hatred for the Orthodox hierarchy. The metropolitan of Smyrna, Chrysostomos, one of the most distinguished prelates of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who had refused to leave his flock in view of the imminent disaster, was massacred in the streets of his city. The metropolitans of Kydonies, Gregorios, and of Moschonisia, Ambrosios, had a similar fate. Many other bishops and innumerable priests in the interior of Asia Minor also met martyrdom.

By the late autumn 1922 the Greek Orthodox of Eastern Thrace were also evacuated. The Greek army, before withdrawing West of the river Evros, covered the evacuation of the East Thracian population, which for weeks was crossing the river in their oxen-drawn carts, leaving behind their ancestral hearths. At least, thanks to the presence of the Greek army under General G. Katechakis, the Thracian Greeks were spared large scale massacres.

At the peace conference that convened at Lausanne in the late autumn of 1922, the Turkish plenipotentiary Inonu pasha insisted that the Christian population that had remained in the interior of Asia Minor, in Cappadocia and Pontos, had also to be evacuated. The Turkish nationalist government was adamant in its determination to build an ethnically homogeneous national homeland in the territories of modern Turkey. This led to the Lausanne Convention of the 30th of January 1923, whereby Greece and Turkey agreed upon an obligatory exchange of their respective religious minorities. Thus, the remaining Orthodox in Asia Minor were exchanged with the Muslims in Greece, mostly from

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11. See Kitromilides and Alexandris, *op. cit.*, p. 34.



Epirus, Western Macedonia, Crete and the Eastern Aegean islands. Religion rather than language was used as the criterion of exchangeability. This involved the paradox that most of the Muslims from Greece, especially from Western Macedonia, Ioannina and Crete, were Greek-speaking and the great majority of the Orthodox from Cappadocia were Turkish-speaking. These groups, which paid dearly for the conflict of nationalisms in the Eastern Mediterranean, had for the most part been totally uninvolved in the confrontation and very often had been unaware of what had happened until the moment they were told they had to go. One further paradox of the exchange was that Turkey subjected the Turkish-speaking Orthodox to it, but allowed the Arabic-speaking Orthodox of Southeastern Asia Minor to remain, because they belonged to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch rather than to that of Constantinople.

Two population groups were excluded from the exchange: the Greek Orthodox population of the prefecture of Istanbul, which included communities not only in old Constantinople and Pera, across the Golden Horn, but also communities along the Bosphorus as well as communities on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, in the urban areas of Scutari (Üsküdar) and Kadiköy and in the four Prince's Islands in the Sea of Marmara. The Greek population of the islands of Imbros and Tenedos that had to be returned to Turkey were also excluded from the exchange and were allowed to remain under a special regime of local autonomy. The other population group excluded from the exchange of Greek-Turkish populations were the Muslims of Western Thrace, who were allowed to remain in Greece.<sup>12</sup>

At the Lausanne conference the Turkish plenipotentiary Ismet pasha originally insisted that the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which in his judgment had proved a disloyal institution, had to be removed from Istanbul. After considerable pressure from the Western allies and protests from Orthodox countries like Romania and Serbia, on the 23rd of January 1923, the Turkish delegate agreed to the continuing presence of the

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12. See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, 'The Greek-Turkish population exchange', in Erik J. Zürcher (ed.), *Turkey in the Twentieth Century*, *Philologiae et Historiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. II, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2008, p. 255-270.

Patriarchate in Istanbul, but only as a spiritual institution whose mission was to minister to the religious needs of the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul. The Patriarch and the clergy of the Patriarchate were excluded from the population exchange. When the Treaty of Lausanne between Greece and Turkey was signed, however, in July 1923, the Patriarchate and its status were not mentioned in the text and this left its legal position ambiguous and the institution itself and its operation subject to the whims of Turkish policy.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, at the end of 1923, as a consequence of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the subsequent exchange of populations, the condition of the Great Church of Christ stood in stark contrast to what it had been at the dawn of the 20th century. Its flock in Turkey from almost two million was reduced to just about 120,000 in Istanbul and the islands of Imbros and Tenedos. Of its extensive and expanding network of dioceses in Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace remained only a truncated metropolis of Chalcedon in the Asiatic part of the prefecture of Istanbul and an equally truncated metropolis of Derkoi in the distant suburbs of Istanbul.

The metropolis of Imbros and Tenedos remained in its entirety, but a bitter future turned out to be in store for the islanders and their church later in the 20th century.<sup>14</sup> A new diocese was set up in the Prince's Islands in December 1923, detaching the islands from the jurisdiction of Chalcedon and setting them up as a separate metropolis. Thus the Ecumenical Patriarchate was left with the archdiocese of Constantinople in the old City, Pera and along the European coast of the Bosphorus, as well as with four dioceses in Turkey.

Another significant ecclesiastical consequence of the Asia Minor Catastrophe was the disappearance of Orthodox monasticism, reference to the revival of which in the early 20th century has been made above, from one of its original abodes. Only some Syrian Jacobite monasteries remained in the deep hinterland of Eastern Turkey along the Syrian border. The only Orthodox monasteries that survived within Turkey

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13. Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974*, Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1992, p. 87-95.

14. Alexis Alexandris, 'Imbros and Tenedos: A study in Turkish attitudes toward two ethnic Greek island communities since 1923', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 7 (1980), p. 5-31.

were several monastic houses on the four Prince's islands, including the monastery of the Holy Trinity on Halki (Heybeliada) which also housed the Patriarchal Theological School, and the Patriarchal monastery at Balıklı, just outside the Byzantine walls of Istanbul. These monastic foundations, however, suffered seriously as a consequence of the depletion of the Christian population of Turkey and saw their numbers gradually dwindle to the point of virtual extinction of their human resources.

A further visible consequence was the definitive termination of the construction of ecclesiastical edifices in the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. No new church building has been constructed in Turkey after 1923 and the existing churches were left to decay on account of the refusal of Turkish authorities to grant permissions for restoration and conservation. Not until the last two decades of the 20th century, during the patriarchates of Demetrios I and Bartholomaios I, was it possible to undertake reparation and restoration work on churches in the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate.

The Lausanne settlement allowed the survival of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in its historic see, but it soon became clear that the Turkish state had no intention to make life easy for an institution, which to the Turkish mind represented a living recollection of Istanbul's Christian and Byzantine past. From the outset the Turkish authorities refused to recognize the ecumenical character of the Patriarchate and treated it as a religious institution of the Greek Orthodox (Rum) minority of Istanbul and called its head the 'chief priest' (Başpapaz) of that community. The election of the patriarch was limited to clergymen of Turkish citizenship both in terms of electors and candidates.

In September 1923, soon after the Lausanne settlement, a serious problem arose in the life of the Church with the movement of the so called 'Turkish Orthodox Church', led by a married Turcophone priest, Eftym Karachissaridis, who sought to create an independent Turkish-speaking Orthodox church with himself as patriarch. With the abeyance of Turkish authorities he attempted to invade and set himself up in the patriarchal house at the Phanar but the reaction of foreign embassies in Turkey forced the Turkish authorities to remove him. In February 1924 he occupied by force the church of the Virgin of Kaffa at Galata and set

his headquarters there. The Ecumenical Patriarchate under Patriarch Gregorios VII excommunicated Papaefthym as 'an apostate and traitor of Orthodox faith'. But he took the Patriarchate to court for defamation and the Patriarch was fined. The 'Turkish Orthodox Church', however, remained totally isolated and ignored by the Orthodox in Turkey and by the Orthodox world in its entirety and lingered on just as a family business of Papaefthym and his descendants, who have usurped the income of real estate belonging to the three churches in Galata under their control.<sup>15</sup>

The official attitude toward the Patriarchate remained hostile. When Gregorios VII was succeeded in January 1925 by Constantine VI, the new Patriarch was arrested and expelled to Greece on the 30th of January 1925 as a 'non-établi', a person who under the provisions of the Convention for the population exchange, had no right to be in Turkey. This action caused consternation in Greece and the Orthodox world at large and it made plain to everyone that Turkey's motivation was not just to enforce the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty and Convention but to take measures that would gradually lead to the extinction of the Patriarchate. Greece appealed to the League of Nations but Turkey refused to discuss the issue, arguing that the whole affair was a purely domestic matter. The Council of the League referred the issue to the International Court of Justice, at the same time attaching a copy of the proceedings of the Lausanne Conference of the 23rd of January 1923 whereby Turkey, yielding to concerted pressure by all powers taking part in the conference, had accepted the presence of the Patriarchate and its international spiritual character. Eventually the problem was resolved through a compromise between Greece and Turkey. Greece withdrew its appeal to the International Court of Justice and Turkey undertook to exclude all prelates resident in Istanbul at the time from the provisions of the Lausanne Convention. Patriarch Constantine, however, had to resign and remain in Greece.<sup>16</sup> The Ecumenical Patriarchate emerged greatly weakened from this affair, appearing vulnerable to the designs

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15. For details see Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul*, p. 151-154, 168-170.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 159-167.

of Turkish policies at its expense and deprived of effective international support.

The prevailing feeling in the Patriarchate as a consequence of all these sad, indeed tragic developments was a sense of martyrdom and an understanding of the condition of the Church of Constantinople as a crucified Church.

### III

Yet the feeling of crucifixion that marked the life of the Church of Constantinople in the wake of the Asia Minor Catastrophe did not lead to resignation and fatalism. It is obvious in the sources and in the actions of the Church that Christian faith had not abandoned the hierarchy, clergy and laity of the Great Church of Christ. A remarkable, if silent, effort of reconstruction got underway as a catharsis of the tragedy. Catharsis did not come about merely through pity and fear (*δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου*) as provided by Aristotle's definition. Although these sentiments were certainly intensely felt and lived through, catharsis came mainly through a clear redefinition of the mission of the Great Church of Christ in the Orthodox communion and of its witness to the world at large as not simply the Church of the Orthodox community that surrounded it at its see, but as a church shouldering a spiritual responsibility for world Orthodoxy. Although this subject is slightly beyond the scope of this paper it would be appropriate to conclude by a brief reference to it. The Church of Constantinople emerged from the trials and tribulations of the Asia Minor Catastrophe as a Church totally distanced from the temptations of nationalism that were gripping all other Orthodox churches through their close association with their respective nation-states. The Church of Constantinople had experienced the temptations of nationalism during the patriarchate of Meletios IV in 1919-1923 and had paid dearly for it. From 1923 onward it embarked upon a new spiritual course. It shed all ties to nationalism and cultivated consistently a Christian conscience based on the canons of the Church. On this basis it developed an active sense of being the guardian of the canonical conscience of the Church and it has acted unwaveringly in this capacity ever since.<sup>17</sup> In this spirit

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17. The best statement of this is Metropolitan of Sardis, Maximos, *The Ecumenical*

the Ecumenical Patriarchate has handled the administrative questions brought about by developments after 1923: in 1928 it handed over to the Church of Greece the administration, but it retained the spiritual supervision of its dioceses in Northern Greece and the Aegean islands; it retained under its jurisdiction the monastic republic of Mount Athos with its twenty sovereign monasteries, the semi-autonomous Church of Crete and the four dioceses of the Dodecanese islands, under Italian occupation at the time; responding to appeals by the governments and Orthodox faithful it established autonomous churches in Finland, Czechoslovakia, Estonia and Latvia; finally it brought under its jurisdiction the Orthodox diaspora in Western Europe, the Americas and Oceania. In retrospect it appears that despite the crucifixion immanent in the consequences of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, in its humility and poverty, the Church of Constantinople became truly ecumenical as a result of this tragedy. Faithful to the requirements of canonicity the Ecumenical Patriarchate established an autocephalous Orthodox Church in the newly independent state of Albania in 1937, it contributed to the solution of canonical problems in the Church of Cyprus and, finally, in 1946, it brought the Bulgarian schism to an end, restoring unity to the Orthodox communion.

From the point of view of the substantive history of the Christian Church the most significant development in the life of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the period following the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the expulsion of the largest number of its Orthodox flock from Turkey was the development of a model of a non-national Church in its jurisdiction: the communities dependent on it in Turkey and the diaspora were held together by a common faith and by the shared consciousness of belonging to the Orthodox tradition, not by national loyalties as it has been as a rule the case in the national Orthodox Churches, whose attitudes and behaviour have contributed to the unfortunate and spiritually indefensible identification of Orthodoxy with nationalism.<sup>18</sup> It has been the tragedy of

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*Patriarchate in the Orthodox Church*, Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1976.

18. On how this came about may I refer to P. M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, Study No XI, p. 177-185, and on the incompatibility between Orthodoxy and nationalism to idem, 'Orthodoxy,

the Church of Constantinople that the erosion of its flock in Turkey on account of new pressures by the Turkish state in the early 1940s with the capital tax,<sup>19</sup> in 1955 with the violent and extremely destructive pogrom in Istanbul,<sup>20</sup> in 1964-1965 and since 1974 through repeated pressures and threats against the Orthodox community, has had as a consequence the destruction of a very important prototype of a non-national Orthodox Church, held together by its faith and cultural heritage, which could have been a precedent and model for the rest of the Orthodox world, as a reminder of Christian authenticity.<sup>21</sup>

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nationalism and ethnic conflict', in Emmanuel Clapsis (ed.), *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World. An Ecumenical Conversation*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2004, p. 183-188.

19. See Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul*, p. 211-225.

20. On this tragic incident and its broader political background see Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Mechanism of Catastrophe. The Turkish Pogrom of September 6-7, 1955 and the Destruction of the Greek Community of Istanbul*, New York: Greekworks.com, 2005.

21. Cf. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth*, Study No XIII.