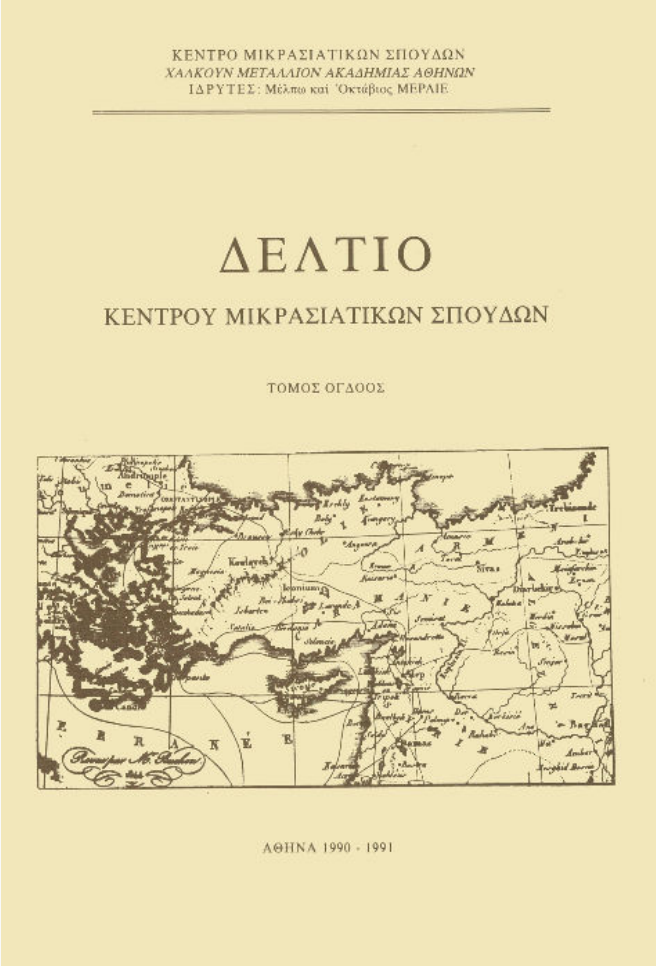
Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies

Vol 8 (1990)



The neomartyr's message

Elizabeth A. Zachariadou

doi: 10.12681/deltiokms.231

To cite this article:

Zachariadou E. A. (1990). The neomartyr's message. *Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies*, *8*, 51–63. https://doi.org/10.12681/deltiokms.231

ELIZABETH A. ZACHARIADOU

THE NEOMARTYR'S MESSAGE

Eastern and Western Christianity officially split in 1054. However this very important event, the schism, received hardly any attention from Byzantine contemporaries. Its full significance was realized a hundred and fifty years later, in April 1204, when the Byzantine capital fell to the army of the Fourth Crusade. For three days pillage, massacre and vandalism reigned in the city. A highly educated Byzantine writer belonging to the palace circles of Constantinople, Niketas Choniates, who was an eyewitness of the brutality of the victorious Latin troops, compared them to the Muslims and concluded: «The Saracens are merciful and kind compared to these creatures who bear the cross of Christ upon their shoulders»[1]. Even graves were opened by the Latin soldiers and the corpse of the glorious emperor Basil II Boulgaroktonos was later found with a flute in the hole that had been his mouth, a fact which inspired the modern Greek poet Kostes Palamas († 1943) to compose the «King's Flute»[2].

The capture of the Byzantine capital was followed by the establishment of a Latin emperor, Count Baldwin of Flanders; a Venetian, Thomas Morosini, became the first Latin Patriarch of Constantinople and the territories or the Byzantine empire were distributed among the crusaders as fiefs. A new political system, the Western feudal one, was imposed which involved higher taxation and more frequent corvées[3]. The Latins were only able to remain in Constantinople until 1261 when the imperial city was retaken by the Byzantines, but the position of the emperor was weak and he was obliged to grant extensive commercial privileges to various states, especially Venice and Genoa. These privileges were repeatedly renewed and they included tax and customfee reductions or exemptions throughout Byzantium as well as commercial quarters and other facilities in the main ports and in the Byzantine capital. Byzan-

1. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, Oxford 1956, p. 370.

2. Kostes Palamas, *The King's Flute*, translated by F. Will, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1967.

3. See, e.g., G. L. F. Tafel - G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handelund Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, vol. II, Vienna 1856, p. 209.

tine merchants deeply resented this situation because foreigners were able to make all kinds of speculations at their expense thus harming Byzantine trade[4].

The Byzantines also resented the slave trade. From the early fourteenth century onwards the slave trade was established mainly between the Anatolian coast and Crete but slaves were also taken to other Latin domains in the Aegean and from there to Western Europe. The Turks raided the Byzantine territories and carried off the Greek inhabitants who were then sold as slaves to Latins. In both the Christian and the Muslim world there were prohibitions over the slave trade. Slaves were not supposed to be sold by their coreligionaries but loopholes existed one of which was that Greek Orthodox slaves could be sold by Latins. The problem of trading in Greek Orthodox slaves was already crucial in the first half of the fourteenth century when the Basilian monk Barlaam was sent as ambassador to the Pope by the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III. The ambassador explained to the Pope that the Byzantines' hatred and suspicion made a Union of the Churches impossible and that one essential condition of union was the liberation of all Greek slaves belonging to the Latins and the ending of this trade[5].

However, much more important for relations between the Eastern Christian and the Western Christian world was the fate of the Orthodox Church after the Fourth Crusade because the Church, a prestigious and well organized institution for many centuries, had a profound influence upon the Byzantine people. The Latins abolished the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople; metropolitans and bishops were not allowed to reside in territories occupied by the Latins; the lower clergy, the papades or priests, were accepted but only to say mass. Nevertheless these priests could not be ordained in Latin territories; they had to travel to areas under Greek rule, be ordained there and then return to their church[6]. Monastic properties were, with a few exceptions, confiscated. For all these reasons the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities and the monks, the Byzantine urban population and the peasants, though inspired by somewhat different motives, adopted a strong anti-Latin stance.

The position of the Greek Orthodox Church under the Latins contrasted sharply with its position under Muslim domination. The three Eastern Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, although established in cities conquered by the Arabs as early as the seventh century, continued their life under Muslim rule according to the principles of the Koran which recognizes

---

4. N. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires Grecs et Latins à Constantinople (XIIIe-XVe siècles)*, Montreal 1979.

5. E. A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade, Venetian Crete and the emirates of Menteshe and Aydin*, Venice 1983, p. 160.

6. N. B. Tomadakes, «Οἱ ὀρθόδοξοι παπάδες ἐπὶ Ἐνετοκρατίας καὶ ἡ χειροτονία αὐτῶν», *Κρητικὰ Χρονικά*, vol. 13 (1959), p. 46.

the Peoples of the Book, that is the Jews and the Christians. In Eastern Anatolia, lost by the Byzantines after the battle of Mantzikert in 1071, the Greek Orthodox Church was impoverished but survived under the Seljuk Sultans. During the bitter aftermath of Mantzikert this region was invaded by superficially islamized Oghuz nomads who were not controlled by the state, but it was soon transformed into a Muslim domain under the shadow of Baghdad and after that the Greek Orthodox Church was gradually re-organized there; metropolitans and bishops returned to their sees to guide their flocks and some monasteries even survived. This same pattern continued in Asia Minor in the fourteenth century under the Turkish emirs and during the rise of the Ottoman empire[7]. To sum up, the position of the Greek Orthodox Church was much better in territories conquered by the Turks than in territories conquered by the Latins. This is clearly shown in a letter written by the Patriarch of Constantinople to the Pope in 1384: «We do suffer from the Turks but we have our freedom and we can administer our Church in the way we want»[8]. Even better known is the statement made by the mesazon and grand duke Loukas Notaras in the besieged Byzantine capital in 1453: «Better to see the Turkish turban than the Roman Catholic tiara within this city». Apparently these words were not Notaras' improvisation but a slogan invented at that time. A similar slogan circulating amongst the Greeks of Corfu has been recorded by Marino Sanudo the Younger: «The zarkula (i.e. the Turkish hat) is preferable to the baretta (i.e. the Venetian hat)»[9]. These sayings reflect the sentiments of the Byzantine people very clearly.

Nevertheless, despite the feelings of the people, the last Byzantine emperors were compelled to seek help from the Roman Catholics to limit Turkish expansion. The Pope put forward the Union of the Churches as a condition of his help; this would have meant the recognition of his supremacy and the acceptance of Roman Catholic dogma by the Greek Orthodox people. Two Byzantine emperors, each under different circumstances, accepted this condition and signed a document unifying the Churches first in 1274 and later in 1439. On both occasions civil strife resulted between two factions, the Unionists and the anti-Unionists[10]. The secular authorities, that is the emperor and his govern-

---

7. S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Los Angeles-London 1971, pp. 194-223, 288-350.

8. F. Miklosich - J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca medii aevi*, vol. II, p. 87.

9. Ducas, ed. V. Grecu, Bucarest 1957, p. 329; *I Diarii di Marino Sanudo*, ed. S. Stefani - G. Berchet - N. Barozzi, vol. II, Venice 1879, p. 233; cf. M. Balivet, «Le personnage du "turcophile" dans les sources byzantines antérieures au Concile de Florence (1370-1430)», *Collection Turcica* IV: *Travaux et Recherches en Turquie*, vol. II (1984), pp. 111-129.

10. Ostrogorsky, *History...*, pp. 409-413, 499-501.

ment, wanted to ally with the Latins; they had the support of a small urban party including some intellectuals who were attracted by the dawn of the Renaissance. On the other hand the Byzantine ecclesiastical and religious authorities, supported by the majority of the people, abhorred any aid coming from the Latins because they were afraid of the consequences.

In the second half of the fourteenth century, when the Turkish danger became more evident, the Patriarchate of Constantinople made some efforts to unite the Greek Orthodox Slavonic peoples of the Balkans in a common front against the infidel, but the Slavs of the Balkans were defeated and subjugated by the Turks, first in 1371, at the battle of Maritza, and then in 1389, at the battle of Kossovo[11]. Thus the plans of the Patriarch evaporated and a choice had to be made between the Turks or the Latins. The Church preferred the Turks because it knew that Greek Orthodox Christianity, though it would be degraded, could survive under the Sultan, and a bitter conflict began between state and church. At the end of the fourteenth century there are several instances of metropolitans collaborating with the Turks contrary to the wishes of the imperial government at Constantinople. In 1381 the metropolitan of Peritheorion was established in his see with the help of the Turks despite the opposition of the Byzantine emperor; in 1387 the metropolitan of Myra was helped to acquire some property by the Turkish lord of that region in defiance of decisions taken in Constantinople and in 1393 the metropolitan of Athens was accused of collaborating with the Turks against the Latin lords of the city[12]. During the siege of Constantinople by Bayezid I, which began in 1394, the Patriarch himself was accused of sending an embassy to the Sultan to negotiate his own position if the city were captured; he was obliged to apologize and denied the accusation[13], but, whether it was true or false, this episode is, in itself, meaningful.

From the other point of view the Ottoman Sultans, while adhering to the principles of their own religion, increased their prestige in the Greek Orthodox world by recognizing the Greek Orthodox Church, by offering protection to monasteries and by granting tax exemption to monastic property[14]. As early as 1354, when the Ottoman state was still a ghazi emirate, Sultan Orkhan organ-

---

11. Ostrogorsky, *History...*, pp. 477-486.

12. Miklosich-Müller, *Acta et Diplomata*, vol. II, p. 37-39, 92, 125, 166; on Athens, see, [R. Predelli], *I libri commemoriali della Republica di Venezia*, vol. III, pp. 238.

13. Miklosich-Müller, *Acta et Diplomata*, vol. II, p. 465; cf. V. Laurent, *Le trisépiscopat du Patriarche Matthieu Ier (1397-1410)*, Paris 1972, p. 37, gives a misleading paraphrasis.

14. E. A. Zachariadou, «Early Ottoman Documents from the Prodromos Monastery (Serres)», *Südost-Forschungen*, vol. 28 (1969), pp. 1-12; eadem, «Ottoman Documents from the Archives of Dionysiou (Mount Athos)», *Südost-Forschungen*, vol. 30 (1971), pp. 1-35; cf. N. Oikonomides, «Monastères et moines lors de la conquête ottomane», *Südost-Forschungen*, vol. 35 (1976), pp. 1-10.

ized a public debate on theology with the Metropolitan of Thessalonica Gregorios Palamas as a protagonist; the metropolitan, though captured and humiliated as a prisoner, was honoured and respected by the Turks during this performance[15]. Shortly after the fall of Constantinople Sultan Mehemmed II re-established the Patriarchate by appointing Gennadios Scholarios the first Patriarch of the Tourkokratia.

The attitude of the Greek Orthodox Church towards the Ottoman conquest can be seen through the lives of some contemporary saints. The Church recognizes major saints, martyrs, men and women who underwent torture and death for persistence in their faith. However, a person killed by the infidel while fighting in a war is not accepted as a martyr. The idea of the Roman Catholic crusader who went straight to Paradise, or of the Muslim warrior of the faith, the ghazi, who became a shahid, was rejected by the Greek Orthodox Church[16]. There is also another category of saints, the hosioi or holy men and women, distinguished for their pious way of life and serving as models for other Christians. The cult of a saint began locally, usually in the place where he lived or was buried, then it spread until the saint was finally recognized as such by the Patriarch and the Holy Synod[17]. It is clear therefore that a saint of the Greek Orthodox Church was a person whose acts and behaviour were in accordance with the principles and the ideals of his Church and a saint's Vita, usually composed by a monk or a clergyman, reflected the ideology of the Greek Orthodox Church, it included a message to Christians and, to put it very simply, was a text of theological ecclesiastical propaganda[18]. A Vita is an

15. Anna Philippidis-Bratt, «La captivité de Palamas chez les Turcs: Dossier et commentaire», *Travaux et Mémoires*, vol. 7 (1979), pp. 109-221, especially pp. 147, 183; cf. M. Balivet, «Des "Kühhân" (Kâhin) aux "Χιόναι" (Χιόνιος)», *Byzantion*, vol. 52 (1982), pp. 24-59.

16. V. Laurent, «L'idée de la guerre sainte et la tradition byzantine», *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, vol. 23 (1946), pp. 71-98; N. Oikonomides, «Cinq actes inédits du Patriarche Michel Autôreianos», *Revue des Études Byzantines*, vol. 25 (1967), pp. 132-135. An exception to this principle are the soldiers of Philadelpheia killed in March 1348 while fighting against Aydin-oglu's troops; according to a Synaxarion these soldiers went «crowned» to Paradise. Nevertheless Philadelpheia constituted a particular case as a Christian principality surrounded by Turkish emirates for several years; moreover at that time it maintained good relations with the Pope. One can perhaps attribute the conception to Latin or Muslim influence. For the text, see, Matoula Couroupou, «Le siège de Philadélphie par Umur Pacha» and E. A. Zachariadou, «Note sur l'article de M. Couroupou», *Geographica Byzantina*, Paris 1981, pp. 73, 78-80.

17. Ruth Macrides, «Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period», *The Byzantine Saint*, University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, London 1981, pp. 83-87.

18. On these matters, see, *Faire Croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages réligieux du XIIe au XVe siècle.* Table ronde organisée par l'École Française de Rome en collaboration avec l'Institut d'Histoire Médievale de l'Université de Padoue, Rome 22-23 juin 1979, Rome 1981.

expression of the attitude of the Greek Orthodox Church; it matters little whether the stories are true or false. To understand this message one must compare saints who lived at the time of the Turkish expansion with those who faced Islam earlier, when the Byzantine empire was at its prime, fighting against the Arabs.

Perhaps the best example of the earlier period are the forty-two martyrs of Amorion, that is the forty-two prominent defenders of that city, its military commander included, who were captured and taken to Samarra after the large-scale operations launched by Caliph Mutasim against Anatolia in 838. The author of their Vita vividly narrates their painful captivity, the horrible conditions of their imprisonment in Samarra, which lasted for six or seven years, the pressure exerted upon them to convert to Islam, the terrible tortures which they suffered when they refused to abandon Christianity and finally their execution. However, the author concludes, «The forty-two martyrs being now near to God they will pray to him and he will grant victory and trophies to the Byzantine emperor, who will conquer the Muslim territories; the final submission of the infidel under the foot of the most pious Byzantine emperor will come»[19].

Around 1098, when the Byzantine empire was defeated by the Seljuks but not yet brought to a state of collapse, there was a Trapezuntine martyr, the nobleman and strategos Theodore Gabras, who, according to his biographer, fought against emir Danishmend and was finally captured by him; he was pressed to become a Muslim and when he refused he was savagely tortured and finally put to death; the barbarous emir made a golden goblet out of the martyr's skull. Later the martyr's nephew defeated and killed the emir, expelled the Turks from the Pontic regions, and the goblet, which performed many miracles, was placed in a church in Trebizond[20].

In both stories the pattern clearly consists of the following elements; war between Christians and infidels; the faithful are captured and forced to convert; despite the cruelty of the infidel the Christian persists in the true faith; the final martyrdom; the struggle continues for the glory of Christianity.

The cruelty of the infidel is described in detail, although the element of war is missing from it, in a text composed around 800. This is the Vita of the twenty monks of the Sabbas monastery in Palestine who were killed by the Saracens in 797. The author of their Vita narrates the ruthless attack of the Muslims

---

19. B. Vasilievskij - P. Nikitin, *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint Pétersbourg*, s. VIII, vol. VII/2 (1905), pp. 38-56.

20. L. K. Kalaïtzides, *Ὁ μεγαλομάρτυς ἅγιος Θεόδωρος Γαβρᾶς*, Thessalonica 1972; cf. N. Oikonomides, «Les Danishmendites entre Byzance, Bagdad et le Sultanat d'Iconium», *Revue Numismatique*, vol. 25 (1983), p. 200, note 32; on the skull goblet, see, J. P. Roux, «Quelques objets numineux des Turcs et des Mongols», *Turcica*, vol. 12 (1980), pp. 41-65.

against their monastery, the pillage, the destruction, the horrible torture and the final martyrdom of the monks for whom, however, vengeance soon came; the Black Death struck down the Saracens who died in thousands[21]. In all three Vitae the Muslims are described as ferocious warriors attacking, ravaging, plundering and killing so that war against them is both justified and encouraged.

The stories of saints who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Latins are different in character. There is a striking case of the thirteen monks burnt in Cyprus in 1231, when the island was under the rule of the Lusignan. According to the author of their Vita these thirteen monks lived peacefully in their monastery praying day and night; they were exceedingly pious and their reputation spread throughout the island until it reached two Roman Catholic clergymen who then visited the monastery. The clergymen were kindly received by the monks but unfortunately the conversation turned to liturgical and dogmatic matters. The Roman Catholics were soundly defeated by the arguments of the Greek Orthodox monks who were subsequently ordered to appear before the Catholic Archbishop of Nicosia. After a debate, the thirteen monks were imprisoned in chains for a year; after a further debate they were imprisoned for another three years and, finally, were burnt by the Roman Catholics[22]. A similar case is that of the metropolitan of Athens, Anthimos, who visited Crete in the fourteenth century when the island was under Venetian rule and was arrested there by the Latins because he advised the Greek Orthodox congregation not to take Holy Communion from Roman Catholic priests. He was imprisoned and pressed to abandon the Greek Orthodox faith but he produced strong arguments in support of it, was imprisoned, tortured and finally killed at the command of the Latin Archbishop of Crete[23]. In these two Vitae the pattern is the same. First there is a dialogue, then the Greek Orthodox are punished for their religious beliefs and, finally, are martyred by the Latins who are supposed to have a deep grudge against the Greek Orthodox people; in both cases the crux of the story is the religious intolerance of Roman Catholics.

The authors who composed the lives of saints from the fourteenth century onwards were inspired by completely different motives. They knew that some regions devastated by continual raids surrendered to the Turks and that some cities, blockaded for a time, opened their gates to the Turks; they also knew

---

21. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Συλλογὴ Παλαιστινῆς καὶ Συριακῆς Ἁγιολογίας*, Petersburg 1907, pp. 1-41; cf. H. G. Beck, *Kirche und Theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Münich 1959, pp. 507-508.

22. K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. II, pp. 20-39; cf. G. Mercati, «Macaire Caloritès et Constantin Anagnostès», *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, vol. 2 (1920-21), pp. 162-193.

23. K. I. Dyobouniotes, «Ὁ Ἀθηνῶν Ἄνθιμος καὶ Πρόεδρος Κρήτης ὁ Ὁμολογητής», *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, vol. 9 (1932), pp. 56-79.

that several regions or cities resisted fiercely up to the last moment. Nevertheless pillage, captivity and massacre are described in detail by Turkish and Byzantine chroniclers and historians but only in general terms by Byzantine hagiographers and very often only *en passant*. The Greek Orthodox Holy Man of that period fled in front of the Turkish advance and he found peace of mind in a monastery. Gregory Palamas, after a Turkish attack against Mount Athos, first planned to flee to Jerusalem which was a Muslim city, but he actually settled in the well-fortified Thessalonica. Saint Athanasios who was also harassed by Turkish raids left Athos for good and founded the monasteries of the Meteora. Saint Romylos could not continue the quiet life of a monk in Paroria because this region suffered from Turkish attacks and he first went deeper into Bulgarian territory and later travelled in many parts of the former Byzantine empire. Saint Philotheos, recruited by the Turks to become a janissary, miraculously escaped and took refuge in a monastery where he became a monk[24]. In fact the idea of resisting the Turks does not appear in the lives of the saints of this period. Gabras from Trebizond seems to be the last Byzantine saint who fought against the infidel at the end of the eleventh century, when the final victory of the Turks was not yet evident, and Constantinople had not yet been captured by the Latins. On the other hand, another saint, Leontios the Younger, openly discouraged resistance to the Turks. Leontios' Vita was written by someone connected with the Malaxoi family who had close contacts with the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the end of the sixteenth century. According to this Vita, Leontios was born in Nauplia in 1520, when it was Venetian. From his early childhood he was very pious and he became a monk but, when the Turkish army besieged Nauplia in 1537, Leontios abandoned the contemplative life and began «to run here and there» advising and warning the Greeks not to fight against the Turks because the Turkish conquest was God's will[25]. His argument was not a new one; at the end of the fourteenth century Demetrios Kydones indignantly attacked those who claimed that trying to free the fatherland from the Turks was the same as fighting against God[26]. Three years later, in 1540, the Turks expelled the Venetians from Nauplia; Leontios had had enough of the violence which prevailed in the city and he retired to Mount Athos to end his days there. His Vita does not record that immediately after the Turkish conquest the Greek Orthodox Church was re-organized in Nauplia and a strongly anti-Latin metropolitan was established in the see

24. Angeliki E. Laïou-Thomadakis, «Saints and Society in the Late Byzantine Empire», *Charanis Studies. Essays in Honor of Peter Charanis*, New Brunswick 1980, pp. 92-96.

25. E. A. Zachariadou, «Ὅσιος Λεόντιος ὁ νέος ὁ Διονυσιάτης», *Χάρις Κ. Ι. Βουρβέρη*, Athens 1964, pp. 359-372, especially pp. 364-365.

26. Démétrius Cydonès, *Correspondance*, ed. R. J. Loenertz, Vatican City 1960, p. 254.

which the Roman Catholics had kept vacant for some centuries[27]; this explains Leontios' attitude during the Venetian-Turkish war.

More specific still is the message of the saint, the neomartyr, who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Turks[28]. An early example is Saint Michael the Younger who was martyred in Egypt during the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328); his Vita was written by the Byzantine statesman and scholar Theodore Metochites. Michael, born in Smyrna, was captured as a young boy and was taken to Egypt where he was sold as a slave; eventually he was converted, joined the Mamluk army, became a very successful soldier and was honoured for his services. Despite all this Michael felt increasingly guilty about his conversion and, when an embassy of the Byzantine emperor came to the Mamluk Sultan, he disguised himself as a monk and tried to leave the country with the imperial envoys. Unfortunately he was recognized and arrested by the Muslim authorities. The Muslims first tried to win him back by promises, admonition and, finally, threats. Michael stood firm and was therefore thrown into prison in chains, was later tortured and was finally decapitated, dying as a martyr[29].

The story of the saint who first became a Muslim and later returned to Christianity is a fairly common theme during the early Ottoman period. Another example is Saint Theodore the Younger whose Vita was most probably composed in the second half of the fourteenth century and definitely before the fall of Constantinople. Theodore was born in Adrianople when it was under Byzantine rule and while he was still a child he was captured by the Turks in one of their habitual raids. He was taken to Melagina, in the sandjak of Sultanönü, which was an important place at this time because it was one of the residences of the Ottoman Sultan[30]. There Theodore, too young to distinguish right from wrong, became a Muslim but when he grew up he realized that he had abandoned the true religion of Christ and had been misled. These

---

27. On the anti-Latin attitude of Dorotheos, the Metropolitan of Nauplia, see E. A. Zachariadou, «Ἡ πατριαρχεία τοῦ Διονυσίου Β' σὲ μία παραλλαγὴ τοῦ Ψευδο-Δωροθέου», *Θησαυρίσματα*, vol. I (1962), pp. 146-147, 159-160.

28. Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, *Οἱ Νεομάρτυρες*, Athens [3]1970.; I. M. Perantones, *Λεξικὸν τῶν Νεομαρτύρων*, vol. I-III, Athens 1972; S. G. Papadopoulos, *Οἱ Νεομάρτυρες καὶ τὸ δοῦλον γένος*, Athens 1974; G. D. Kottarides, *Νεομάρτυρες καὶ ἐθνικὴ συνείδηση*, Kalamata 1985; I. Theocharides - D. Loules, «The Neomartyrs in Greek History, 1453-1821», *Études Balkaniques*, vol. 25/3 (1989), pp. 78-86.

29. H. Delahaye - P. Peters, «Oratio de S. Michaele Martyre a Theodoro Metochita», *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, vol. IV, Brussels 1925, pp. 670-678; on the religious situation of Egypt, see D. P. Little, «Religion under the Mamluks», *The Muslim World*, vol. 73 (1983), pp. 165-181.

30. On Melagina, see V. Laurent, «La Vita Retractata et les miracles posthumes de Saint Pierre d'Atroa», *Subsidia Hagiographica* 31, Brussels 1958, pp. 10, 66-74; cf. E. A. Zachariadou, «Lauro Quirini and the Turkish Sandjaks (ca. 1430)», *Journal of Turkish Studies*, Raiyyet Rüsûmu, Essays presented to Halil Inalcık, vol. 11 (1987), pp. 243-244.

worries continually tortured him until he met a priest, apparently a dhimmi, to whom he confessed his problems. The priest praised Theodore for his remorse and proposed two solutions: either Theodore should publicly declare his return to Christianity or he should go to Constantinople to see the Patriarch and discuss these matters with him. Theodore decided to go to Constantinople where he spoke with the Patriarch who advised him to return to Melagina, the place where he had changed his faith. In Melagina Theodore made no public declarations and became a shepherd, but he confessed his story to a man whom he considered his friend; this man denounced him to the Turks and Theodore was led before the judge, the kadi, who began an investigation. The Turks tried to win Theodore back by offering him money, land and property, luxurious clothes and beautiful women but Theodore resisted all these temptations and he was burnt[31].

There is a parallel life, that of Saint Marc the Younger who lived three centuries later and whose Vita was written by his contemporary, the well-known theologian Meletios Syrigos. This saint was born on Crete, then a Venetian possession, but his family moved to Smyrna to live as dhimmis under Turkish rule. In Smyrna a rich and influential Turk offered Marc his protection, educated him and persuaded him to become a Muslim. When Marc grew up, he regretted his conversion and wanted to return to Christianity. So he ran away from his patron, left Smyrna secretly, and went first to the island of Zante which was Venetian, and later to Crete, also under Venetian rule. Tortured by remorse he, like Saint Theodore, went to Constantinople and met people belonging to the Patriarchal circle. He confessed what had happened and received the same advice, that he should go back to the place where he had changed his religion. Back in Smyrna he reaffirmed his decision to return to Christianity; the Turks tried vainly to dissuade him with arguments and presents, but finally he was burnt as a martyr in May 1643[32].

There are more variations on this theme of the islamized young boy who, when an adult, realized his grave mistake[33]. There is also a less common variation, that of the innocent Christian, who, although remaining faithful, was accused by wicked Muslims of having first embraced Islam and then abandoned it. One example is the rich and influential Michael Mauroeides who was martyred in Adrianople in about 1490[34]. This became a favourite theme in

---

31. N. Oikonomides, «Ἀκολουθία τοῦ Ἁγίου Θεοδώρου τοῦ νέου», *Νέον Ἀθήναιον*, vol. I (1955), pp. 205-221.

32. Th. Detorakes, «Ὁ Κρητικὸς Νεομάρτυρας Μᾶρκος Κυριακόπουλος καὶ ἡ ἀνέκδοτη ἀκολουθία του», Proceedings of the Fourth International Cretological Congress (29 August - 3 September 1976), Athens 1981, vol. II, pp. 67-87.

33. Theophanes, Demetrios of Philadelpheia, Nicolas of Metsovon etc.: Nikodemos Hagioreites, *Νέον Μαρτυρολόγιον*, Athens [3]1961, pp. 58, 67, 78-79.

34. D. M. Sophianos, Ὁ Νεομάρτυρας Μιχαὴλ Μαυροειδὴς ὁ Ἀδριανουπολίτης, Athens

hagiography because the Church was anxious to prevent islamization. From at least the second half of the thirteenth century onwards the Christian population of Asia Minor and the Balkans decreased while the Muslim population increased. This was due not just to war and its consequences, that is fight, massacre or captivity, but also because of conversion, a conversion made willingly rather than under compulsion. The reasons which made Christians become Muslims are well known; they wanted to avoid the special taxes paid by non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan, to have better opportunities of achieving higher social rank, to be liberated from the humiliating position of a dhimmi and to enter the ranks of the ruling class. One of the ways by which the Church tried to convince people that they should remain Christian was to state publicly that the islamic penalty for apostasy was capital punishment. By recognizing Michael, Theodore and Marc as martyrs the Church was warning believers that if conversion to Islam later led to feelings of remorse, one would have to die in order to save one's soul in heaven. Mark, a Cretan, was martyred in 1643 and a couple of years later the Ottomans launched a campaign which ended with the expulsion of the Venetians and the conquest of the island of Crete. Another Cretan, Syrigos, wrote Marc's Vita as a clear warning to his compatriots that when one lives under Turkish rule one should think twice before changing one's faith. Furthermore the Church refused to help Theodore and Marc who were both advised to return to the place where they had been converted instead of being encouraged to remain in a Christian area. Christians should be aware of the inherent danger of conversion, in both the present and the future world, and should accept its tragic consequences. Above all, of course, was the obligation to preserve the faith.

Another significant case is that of Saint George the Younger who was burnt in Adrianople, the capital of the Ottoman state, in 1437; his Vita was written by an eyewitness to his martyrdom. George was a handsome thirty-year old man from Sofya who was born as a dhimmi in about 1407, at least twenty years after the Ottoman conquest of the city. George visited Adrianople where he went to a bow-maker's shop to have his bow fixed. He was a soldier as could be seen from his uniform, his girdle, his helmet and his arms. The author does not mention which army George belonged to but a dhimmi from Sofya wanting to have his bow fixed in the capital of the Ottoman state could only have belonged to the Ottoman army which at this time included Christians, both horsemen and footsoldiers[35]. George went to a Turkish bowman who declared that

---

1984 (offprint from *Θεολογία*, vol. 54, 55, 1983, 1984): the author misinterpreted the phrase «ὡς εἶποι οὗτος πολλάκις ὃ λέγουσιν αὐτοὶ τὸν ἑαυτῶν ὁμολογοῦντες Θεὸν βαρβάρῳ φωνῇ»: the meaning is that Mauroeides was supposed to have repeatedly pronounced the Islamic confession of faith, the Shahada; according to Islam, once one pronounces the Shahada, one becomes a Muslim.

35. H. Inalcık, *Fatih devri üzerinde tetkikler ve vesikalar*, vol. I, Ankara 1954, pp. 137-184.

Christ was only an ordinary man. George lost his temper and blasphemed against the prophet Muhammed. The crowd in the bazaar heard this, jumped upon him, hit him and finally arrested him. An investigation began but George refused to retract his words and he was finally taken to jail after being hit and insulted by the crowd. On the following day some Muslim theologians visited the vizir and demanded that George should be put to death. The vizir ordered some soldiers to bring George before him taking great care to protect him so that no one could even touch him; he spoke to George for a long time but without any positive result. Despite this, the vizir declared that, according to the law, George deserved a good whipping rather than capital punishment. Nevertheless the fanatic theologians and the dervishes, supported by the crowd, persisted in their views and George was led to the fire where the Turks tried in vain to convert him by promising him presents if he would agree to change his faith[36].

The moral of this Vita is clear. George was a soldier in the Ottoman army but there is no hint that this was anything untoward nor was George himself regretful about it. No blame was attached to a Christian offering his services to the Ottomans. This conclusion is corroborated by the description of the Ottoman secular administration whose representative, the vizir, is depicted as a calm, patient and reasonable man who offered his protection to George, discussed things with him and, despite the negative attitude with which he was faced, he chose the whip rather than fire as punishment. According to the Vita the evil spirits were the ulemas and the dervishes, that is the representatives of the other religion. Moreover George was a faithful Christian who refused to tolerate blasphemous words about Jesus; he proclaimed the truth of Christianity and he died for it. This proves that one could live under Ottoman rule and still be a good Christian; Christians who lived under Turkish rule were by no means less faithful than those who lived under Byzantine or Latin rule[37]. The Church wanted to prove this because it was a point of controversy between Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox. During the discussions between the papal legate Paul and John VI Kantakouzenos in 1367 the legate spoke with disdain about Christians living under Turkish rule who daily tolerate blasphemies against Jesus. Kantakouzenos replied that these Christians were more

---

36. Chr. Patrinelles, «Μία ἀνέκδοτη διήγηση γιὰ τὸν ἅγνωστο νεομάρτυρα Γεώργιο († 1437)», *Ὀρθόδοξος Παρουσία*, vol. 1 (1964), pp. 65-73; cf. P. Karlin-Hayter, «La politique religieuse des conquérants Ottomans dans un texte hagiographique (a. 1437)», *Byzantion*, vol. 35 (1965), pp. 353-358.

37. Another case of dhimmi who became a martyr is that of Saint Niketas, put to death in Nyssa around 1300; Niketas, a Christian, ate and drank in the open air during the fast of Ramazan and his act was considered by the Turks as a provocation and insult against Islam; he could avoid death if he converted but he insisted on his faith: H. Delehaye, «Le martyre de Saint Nicétas le Jeune», *Mélanges offerts à G. Schlumberger*, Paris 1924, pp. 208-211.

honourable and better than those living under Christian rule because, although subjugated by the infidel, they persisted in their faith[38]. After all, adherence to the faith was the only possible resistance which the Church could profess and preach.

38. J. Meyendorf, «Projets de concile œcuménique en 1367, Un dialogue inédit entre Jean Cantacuzène et le légat Paul», *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 14 (1960), pp. 176.