# Crossing Boundaries

Issues of Cultural and Individual Identity
in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

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Sally McKee

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# Common Language and the Common Good: Aspects of Identity among Byzantine Emigres in Renaissance Italy

JONATHAN HARRIS

In George Eliot's historical novel *Romola,* one of the most memorable characters is the villain, a Greek called Tito Melema. He arrives in the Florence of Lorenzo de'Medici, utterly destitute, having escaped from the Turkish pirates who had captured him and his adoptive father, Baldassare Calvo. When he hears that Baldassare is a prisoner in Turkey, Melema at first intends to raise his ransom, but in the end he does nothing and callously leaves him to his fate, being much more interested in enhancing his career prospects and wooing the lovely Romola. When Baldassare does turn up in Florence as a ragged beggar, Melema disowns him. Justice, however, is ultimately done, and the treacherous Greek meets a well-deserved and suitably horrible end in the waters of the Arno.[1]

This is, of course, all fiction, yet it has a historical parallel. Eliot's character seems to reflect something of the conduct of those members of the Byzantine royal family and their courtiers who escaped to Italy during the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, in the face of the threat posed to the dwindling Byzantine empire by the Ottoman Turks.[2] While the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI (1449–53), died heroically in a last stand on the walls of Constantinople in 1453, few other members of his family showed the same zeal to lay down their lives. Faced with a similar situation

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[1] See Phyllis Hartnoll, *Who's Who in George Eliot* (London, 1977), pp. 104–5.

[2] It should be noted, however, that emigration from Byzantium was not restricted to those groups, nor was Italy always their final destination. See Jonathan Harris, *Greek Emigres in the West* (Camberley, 1995), pp. 24–38.

in 1399 his cousin, John VII Palaeologus, had simply offered to sell Constantinople to the highest bidder, while his uncle, Theodore, had made arrangements to flee to the safety of Venetian territory.[3]

The example set by the royal family was followed by many prominent courtiers. Demetrius Cydones, who had loyally served the Byzantine emperors in the 1360s and 1370s, took up residence in Northern Italy in his later years and adopted Venetian citizenship.[4] A generation later, John Argyropoulos, a high official in the service of the Despot Thomas Palaeologus, who was sent as an ambassador to Italy, France, and England in 1456, simply omitted to return after he had completed his mission. Instead he used his knowledge of classical Greek literature as his ticket out, taking up residence, like Tito Melema, in Florence to teach at the *Studium*. Nor was it only laymen who joined the exodus. Bessarion and Isidore, Metropolitans of Nicaea and Kiev respectively, went to live in Rome in the 1440s where they both became cardinals and amassed considerable personal wealth. They were joined there in 1450 by the Patriarch of Constantinople himself, Gregory Melissenos, who had grown tired of countering anti-unionist agitation.[5]

Predictably, many of their contemporaries took a very dim view of their desertion. In 1396 the friend and pupil of Demetrius Cydones, the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425), wrote to rebuke him for his absence:

> This proves very clearly that you do not love as you should the land that bore you. Do not imagine that you are fulfilling your obligations toward it by loudly lamenting its fate while you stay out of range of the arrows. In its time of crisis you must come and share the dangers and, as much as you can, aid it by deeds if you have any interest in proving yourself a soldier clear of indictment for desertion.[6]

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[3] See Manuel II Palaeologus, *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage,* ed. and trans. Athanasius D. Angelou (Vienna, 1991), pp. 43, 98–101; John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), pp. 215–17; *Monumenta Peloponnesiaca: Documents for the History of the Peloponnese in the 14th and 15th Centuries,* ed. Julian Chrysostomides (Camberley, 1995), no. 211, p. 411 and no. 214, pp. 417–18.

[4] Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, "Démétrius Cydonès, citôyen de Venise," *Échos d'Orient* 37 (1938), 125–26; Kenneth M. Setton, "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 100 (1956), 1–76, especially 56–57.

[5] See, for example, Giuseppe Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'umanesimo,* vol. 2, *Giovanni Argiropulo* (Florence, 1941), pp. 65–84; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 47, 56, 99–102.

[6] Manuel II Palaeologus, *Letters,* ed. and trans. George T. Dennis, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 8 (Washington, D.C., 1977), no. 62, pp. 172–73.

In the same way, Bessarion and Isidore were roundly condemned by those who had remained faithful to Orthodoxy for having "sold the faith for gold."[7] They were clearly regarded as a group of selfish escapees, only too ready to abandon both their country and their fellow-countrymen, taking no further interest in them once they were safely in Italy.

The utterances of the emigres themselves seem to reinforce this impression. Demetrius Cydones, the object of Manuel II's criticism, wrote that he would much rather hear his country's bad news from abroad.[8] Michael Apostolis, who lived in exile on the Venetian-ruled island of Crete, extolled the vibrant civilisation of Italy, while decrying that of Byzantium as being in its closing phase. Several other Byzantine emigres made similar unfavorable comparisons between their culture and that of the West.[9]

It would, of course, be very easy to condemn such words and behavior as unpatriotic. In the context of the desperate situation of the Byzantine empire of the early fifteenth century, they are hardly surprising. Nevertheless, the conduct of members of the Byzantine elite like Cydones, Bessarion, Argyropoulos, and Apostolis raises an important question. Did their flight constitute not only a deliberate abandonment of their country and of their fellow countrymen, like that of Tito Melema, but also something more: a relinquishment of their own identity as Byzantines, of all aspects of their political and cultural heritage, of all ties of common political loyalty, and religion, in return for a new life and safety in Italy?

Recent work by Anthony Bryer seems to suggest that this is exactly what had happened. In his discussion of late Byzantine identity, Bryer makes a detailed examination of a letter written in 1461 by George Amiroutzes, a noble Byzantine living in Trebizond after its capture by the Turks, to Cardinal Bessarion, by then one of the most wealthy and prominent of the Byzantine emigres in Italy. The letter drew Bessarion's attention to the very problem that confronted the fictional Tito Melema: Amiroutzes wrote to request financial assistance in raising the ransom of his son, who was a prisoner of the Turks.

Amiroutzes clearly faced a considerable difficulty in framing the letter, for on what common ground could he appeal to Bessarion? The two no longer shared the same political allegiance, as Bessarion now lived in Italy, and Amiroutzes was a subject of

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[7] *The Nikonian Chronicle,* ed. and trans. Serge Zenkovsky and Betty Zenkovsky (Princeton, 1984–89), 1:62–67.

[8] Demetrius Cydones, *Correspondance,* ed. and trans. Giuseppe Cammelli (Paris, 1930), no. 50, p. 131.

[9] See Basil Laourdas, "Μιχαὴλ Ἀποστόλη περὶ Ἑλλάδος καὶ Εὐρώπης," *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 19 (1949), 235–44; Deno J. Geanakoplos, "A Byzantine Looks at the Renaissance," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies,* 1 (1958), 157–62, especially 160–61; A. G. Keller, "A Byzantine Admirer of 'Western' Progress: Cardinal Bessarion," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11 (1953–5), 343–48; Ihor Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium as Seen by Its Intellectuals," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961), 169–86, especially 176.

the Ottoman Sultan. Nor did they have a religious faith in common, Bessarion being a convert to Catholicism. For Bryer, it is deeply significant that Amiroutzes decided to appeal to Bessarion on the highly selective grounds of shared place of origin, or *patris* in Greek, and to remind him that they both came from the same small area of Asia Minor bordering the Black Sea.

The message appears to be clear. The only grounds upon which the Byzantine emigre, Bessarion, would have been able to identify with Amiroutzes, was in the accident of shared birthplace. Any wider conceptions of identity, Bryer implies, linked as they were to the defunct Byzantine empire, would have meant nothing to Bessarion and his fellow emigres.[10]

This would, I believe, be too pessimistic a view. In what follows it will be argued that, on the contrary, emigres like Bessarion preserved a great deal of their traditional Byzantine identity, in spite of their removal to Italy and their conversion to Catholicism, and that this retention of their roots motivated them to pursue objectives much wider than merely their own personal advancement.

So what were the elements of identity subscribed to by the members of the late Byzantine elite? Recent scholarship on this question has tended to focus on their exclusive nature, taking its lead from the theory that identity develops not only in terms of what members of a group have in common but also to distinguish them from those outside it.[11] This trend is followed by Anthony Bryer, for although he singles out Religion, Ruler, Culture, Family and Place of origin or *patris,* as the five most realistic marks of late Byzantine identity, he regards the last two, the most narrow and exclusive of them, Family and Place, as the most significant.[12]

There is, however, a completely opposite feature of late Byzantine identity, its inclusiveness, rather than its exclusivity. This inclusiveness is of vital importance in understanding why Bessarion and the other emigres did not abandon their traditional identity. For if that identity was something wider than just the ways in which an elite group kept outsiders at bay, then it would be much more likely that it could, with minor adjustments, be transferred to a new environment. This inclusive identity can be approached under the first three of Bryer's headings, Ruler, Religion and Culture: under Ruler comes the Roman, Christian, imperial political tradition. Under Religion, which

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[10] George Amiroutzes, *Epistola ad Bessarionem,* in *Patrologia Graeca* (hereafter cited as PG) 161:723–28; Anthony Bryer, "The Pontic Greeks before the Diaspora," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4 (1991), 315–25, especially 323; idem, "The Late Byzantine Identity," in *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence (Major Papers from the XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies, University of Copenhagen, 18–24 August 1996),* ed. Karsten Fledelius and Peter Schreiner (Copenhagen, 1996), pp. 49–50.

[11] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1985), p. 12; Dion C. Smythe, "Byzantine Identity and Labelling Theory," in *Byzantium: Identity, Image, Influence,* pp. 26–36.

[12] Bryer, "Late Byzantine Identity," p. 50.

was inextricably intertwined with Ruler, comes Orthodox Christianity. Under Culture comes the Hellenic inheritance of Greek language and classical literature.

Turning to the first of these, the Roman political tradition is often seen in terms of exclusivity. Great stress has been laid on the fury and resentment with which the Byzantines greeted any attempt to belittle their Roman heritage, and on their feelings of arrogant superiority over foreigners and outsiders.[13] Yet to see it solely in this light would be to ignore an important aspect of the question.

The basis of Byzantine political theory, like that of every other political system in pre-liberal Europe, was the idea of a universal common good, which rose above the interests and needs of any particular individual or group of individuals.[14] In Byzantium this common good was that of all Christians, for with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine (324–37) to Christianity, the Roman empire had become the Christian empire, covering the whole civilized Christian world or *Oecumene.* Even though it no longer incorporated all Christians, it remained an institution uniquely favored by God, the mirror of his kingdom on earth, and the state to which all Christians ought properly to owe allegiance.[15]

Just as all Christians ought to owe obedience to the Christian emperor, so it was uniquely the role of the emperor to protect the common interests of all Christians. As the tenth-century emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59) had admonished his son, the future Romanus II (959–63), it was for the emperor to "take thought for the safety of all, and to steer and guide the laden ship of the world."[16] The wisdom and piety of the emperor was perceived as being vital for the well-being of Christians on earth.[17]

This conception of the emperor and his universal role endured as long as an emperor reigned in Constantinople, even when the empire had shrunk almost to nothing, and the city was surrounded, under siege, and in imminent danger of falling to the Turks. In around 1396, the Patriarch Anthony IV described the Byzantine emperor in a letter to the grand duke of Moscow as the "single emperor whose laws, ordinances and

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[13] See, for example, Donald Nicol, "The Byzantine View of Western Europe," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8 (1967), 315–39, especially 315–16.

[14] See Antony Black, "The Individual and Society," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350–c. 1450,* ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 588–606, especially pp. 588–89; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* 2 vols. (Cambridge, Eng., 1978), 1:44.

[15] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought,* 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 32–38; Stephen Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge, Eng., 1977), p. 22; Donald Nicol, "Byzantine Political Thought," in *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought,* pp. 51–79.

[16] Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio,* ed. Gyula Moravcsik and Romilly J. H. Jenkins, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 1 (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 49.

[17] Procopius, *The Buildings,* 1.4., trans. H. B. Dewing and Glanville Downey, Loeb Classical Library 343 (London, 1971), pp. 52–55.

decrees hold throughout the world, who alone, with none other, is revered by all Christians."[18]

One can hardly imagine a conception of identity that contrasts more strongly with the narrow claims of shared birthplace: it required the subject to identify with the general interest of all Christians, under the leadership of the Christian emperor. It did not necessarily mean that the late Byzantines regarded the rest of the world with scorn, as lesser beings excluded from the true empire. On the contrary, it enabled the members of a Byzantine delegation in Rome in about 1400 to assert that they had something in common with an English priest whom they met there, telling him how Constantine I had been proclaimed emperor in Britain, at a time when the island had still been part of the universal empire.[19]

Turning now to the second of the three wider sources of late Byzantine identity, Religion, it would be very easy to see the Byzantine Church in terms of exclusivity. Based on the teaching of the seven Ecumenical Councils that it recognized, it rejected what were seen as western innovations, particularly papal supremacy and the addition of the *filioque* to the Creed. Moreover, since the defeat of iconoclasm in the mid-ninth century the Byzantine Church had developed a particular approach to religious imagery, which made the veneration of holy icons an essential part of orthodoxy and which led to the evolution of a distinctive visual culture.[20] Byzantine Christians defined themselves almost as much in terms of this visual culture as of the tenets of their theology, distinguishing themselves from western Christians on the grounds that Latin religious imagery failed to portray the saints correctly.[21]

Yet to focus solely on what the Byzantines felt distinguished their religious beliefs and practices from those of the Latins would be to miss an important point. For the Byzantine Church, like the empire, claimed to be universal, representing the orthodoxy or "right belief" that all Christians ought to espouse. Just as not all Christians were in obedience to the Christian emperor, so not all subscribed to Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, they were still Christians.

Finally Culture, a shared language and literary tradition that, like the other two,

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[18] The full text can be found in Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller, eds., *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi Sacra et Profana,* 6 vols. (Vienna, 1860–90), 2:190–92; translations in Ernest Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium from Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 194–96; George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State,* trans. J. M. Hussey, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1968), pp. 553–54.

[19] *The Chronicle of Adam of Usk 1377–1421,* ed. and trans. Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford, 1997), pp. 198–99.

[20] Leonide Ouspensky, *La theologie de l'icône dans l'eglise orthodoxe* (Paris, 1960), pp. 179–200; J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 67–68; Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London, 1985), pp. 151–54; and idem, *Painting the Soul: Icons, Deathmasks, and Shrouds* (London, 1997).

[21] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (New York, 1972), pp. 253–54.

could be seen in terms of exclusivity. Even though Latin had been replaced by Greek as the official language of the Byzantine empire in the seventh century, for most of the empire's history the Byzantines did not define themselves in terms of this common language. This was partly because not all inhabitants of the empire were Greek speakers and partly because of the wide gulf between the Greek of everyday speech and that of the classical literature that members of the ruling classes learned to read in a traditional course of higher education.[22] If anything, possession of such education led members of the Byzantine elite to distinguish themselves from their less privileged fellow-countrymen rather than to identify with them.

In the last two centuries of the empire, however, this linguistic aspect of Byzantine identity became rather wider in its focus. The Greek word "Hellene," which had traditionally been employed to denote the pagan ancient Greeks, became a way of referring to all Byzantines, perhaps because the empire had been reduced solely to its Greek-speaking provinces.[23] However, the Hellenic identity included more than just the inhabitants of the shrunken empire: it also extended to those of Greek speech living under Venetian and Latin rule on Crete, Cyprus and in the Peloponnese.[24] Language had, therefore, ceased to be merely a marker of elite identity and had come to provide a common identity for a wide variety of people.

To conclude this survey of the sources of the wider aspects of late Byzantine identity, then, the political elite among the subjects of the Byzantine emperor seem to have seen themselves in two ways. As Romans and Orthodox Christians, they were inhabitants of the one true Christian empire, and so Christians of the best sort, owing allegiance to the emperor whom God had appointed for the benefit of all Christians. As Hellenes, they were coming increasingly to acknowledge that they were also defined by a common language and literary tradition, not merely by the possession of an education that set them apart from their fellow Byzantines.

So what about those who quit Constantinople when the danger from the Turks became too pressing? In their own way they maintained not only the common Hellenic

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[22] C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries 1204–c.1310* (Nicosia, 1982), pp. 1–2; Warren Treadgold, "The Macedonian Renaissance," in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,* ed. Warren Treadgold (Stanford, 1984), pp. 75–98, especially pp. 79–81; Nigel G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium,* 2nd ed. (London, 1996), pp. 18–27.

[23] Speros Vryonis, "Byzantine Cultural Self-Consciousness in the Fifteenth Century," in *The Twilight of Byzantium: Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire,* ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Doula Mouriki (Princeton, 1991), pp. 5–14; Stephen Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance* (Cambridge, Eng., 1970), pp. 15–23.

[24] Athanasius D. Angelou, "'Who am I?' Scholarios's Answers and the Hellenic Identity," in *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning,* ed. C. N. Constantinides et al. (Venice, 1996), pp. 1–19 argues against the theory that the word "Hellene" represented a narrower vision in accordance with reality, seeing it as meaning "Greek Orthodox."

and Orthodox religious identities, but also one akin to the old Roman universalism, albeit in a rather different form.

The maintenance of the Hellenic aspect of their identity operated on two levels. It was only to be expected that the emigres, drawn as so many of them were from Byzantium's educated circles, would be concerned to maintain the literary tradition in which they had been raised. Those who were fortunate enough to be possessed of wealth and power, like Bessarion and Anna Notaras, a Byzantine noblewoman who lived in Italy from the 1450s until her death in 1507, patronized the copying of Greek books. Bessarion employed numerous scribes to copy manuscripts and built up a vast collection that he ultimately donated to the Marciana Library in Venice. Notaras paid for the printing of the massive Greek lexicon, the *Etymologicum Magnum,* in Venice in 1499.[25]

This activity was not motivated purely by scholarly interests. It had a much more important end in view: to ensure that Greeks in exile retained their identity. In a revealing letter written in 1455, Bessarion stressed the vital nature of the task of copying Greek books on the grounds that later generations of Greeks:

> may be able to find intact and preserved in a safe place all the records of their language which remain up to now and, finding these, may be able to multiply them, without being left completely mute. Otherwise they would lose even these few vestiges of these excellent and divine men—which have been saved from what we have lost in the past—and they would differ in no way from barbarians and slaves.[26]

However, this perception of a common identity through language was not restricted to preservation of ancient texts, comprehensible only to a narrow elite, and serving to distinguish them from foreigners and uneducated Greeks. Common language was widely used by other emigres, whether drawn from the Byzantine elite or not, to define themselves in the face of the resident majority population. In about 1471, for example, Alexius Effomatos, a craftsman from Constantinople who had taken up residence in London, complained to the Lord Chancellor that he was at a disadvantage in legal suits because he was "a Grieke and of an estraunge nation." He went on to qualify that by explaining that he had "noone of his cuntree and tonge beyng dwellers withyn the seid

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[25] Lotte Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana* (Rome, 1979); Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie héllenique des XVe et XVIe siècles,* 4 vols. (1885; repr. Paris, 1962), 1:55–62; Donald Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits 1250–1500* (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), pp. 96–109, especially pp. 106–7.

[26] Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Staatsmann und Humanist,* 3 vols. (Paderborn, 1923–42), 3:478–79; Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 81–82; Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 126–27.

citee."[27] For Effomatos, fellow Greeks were distinguished partly by their origin or *patris,* but also by their speaking the common language.

Effomatos was not alone in regarding himself as being linked to other Greeks in this way. The scholar Theodore Gaza, a member of the educated Byzantine elite who resided in Italy, seems to have seen himself in a similar light, describing himself "Graecus de natione."[28]

Such common "Greekness" was often appealed to by the emigres when seeking favors from their fellow exiles in positions of power. One recipient of such appeals was George Palaeologus Dishypatos. Originally from Constantinople, Dishypatos was a naval commander in the service of the kings of France during the last three decades of the fifteenth century and was an influential figure, holding the offices of King's Chamberlain and Commander of the King's Ship.[29] Thus when Hussain Bey, a Greek convert to Islam, was sent to France on an embassy for the Ottoman Sultan in 1486, he was quick to point out that he was a kinsman of Dishypatos, no doubt taking advantage of the common bond of family to enhance his prospects of success.[30]

However, it was not always on such narrow grounds that Dishypatos was appealed to. In 1476 Andronicus Callistus, a Byzantine scholar then residing in London, wrote to ask him to assist a Greek scribe, George Hermonymos, who had been imprisoned in England and saddled with a large fine that he could not pay. Like Amiroutzes and Hussain Bey, Callistus made use of some of the narrower aspects of common identity, family and place, reminding Dishypatos that he had once known his parents and that they shared the same *patris,* Constantinople.[31] At the same time, however, he stressed

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[27] Harris, *Greek Emigres,* p. 195. On Effomatos, see Jonathan Harris, "Two Byzantine Craftsmen in Fifteenth-Century London," *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995), 387–403.

[28] Johannes Irmscher, "Theodoros Gazes als griechischer Patriot," *Parola del Passato* 16 (1961), 161–73; Deno J. Geanakoplos, "Theodore Gaza, a Byzantine Scholar of the Palaeologan 'Renaissance' in the Early Italian Renaissance (c. 1400–1475)," in *Constantinople and the West: Essays on the Late Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches* (Madison, Wisc., 1989), pp. 68–90, especially p. 73.

[29] On Dishypatos see Jonathan Harris, "Bessarion on Shipbuilding: A Re-Interpretation," *Byzantinoslavica* 55 (1994), 291–303, especially 299–301; idem, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 175–80.

[30] Nicolas Vatin, "La traduction ottomane d'une lettre de Charles VIII de France (1486)," *Turcica* 15 (1983), 219–30, especially 220–22. I am indebted to Christine Isom-Verhaaren for this reference.

[31] Andronicus Callistus, *Epistola ad Georgium Palaeologum,* in PG 161:1017–20. On George Hermonymos, see now Maria Kalatzi, "Georgios Hermonymos: A 15th-Century Scribe and Scholar: An Examination of His Life, Activities, and Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1998); idem "Are the Two Greek Scribes, George Hermonymos and Charitonymos Hermonymos, One and the Same Person?" *Thesaurismata* 26 (1996), 105–18; Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 142–46.

that by helping Hermonymos, Dishypatos would be bringing honor not only to himself but also to "the unfortunate Greek race."[32]

Callistus's appeal clearly demonstrates that the Greek emigres had much more in common than the occasional accident of shared place of origin and family connections, and the lesson is reinforced by another case, that of Thomas Frank or Le Franc. Like Dishypatos, Thomas was a Greek in French service, in this case the personal physician of King Charles VII (1422–61) from 1451 until 1456. However, unlike Dishypatos and most of the other emigres discussed so far, he was not drawn from the Byzantine political and literary elite. He was not even originally from Constantinople but from Corone, a Venetian-ruled town in the southern Peloponnese. He held both English and French denizenship, and his Latinized name, although no doubt derived from Frankos, suggests that he was very thoroughly integrated into western society. Most of the surviving documentation concerning him shows him to have associated with Italians rather than Greeks. If ever there were a Greek who had completely abandoned his identity, it would have been Thomas Le Franc.[33]

Yet like Dishypatos, Thomas received several appeals asking him to help his fellow Greeks. They were written by the Italian humanist Francesco Filelfo, who requested his help for a number of Constantinopolitan refugees, including John Argyropoulos.[34] In this case there was no question of shared *patris,* but that did not prevent Filelfo from appealing to a common Greek identity by stressing not only Argyropoulos's wisdom and learning, but also his Greek origin.[35] Nor can Filelfo's perception of a common Greek identity between a Byzantine scholar and a Latinized Greek from a Venetian colony be dismissed as the ignorance of an outsider. He was in a good position to know how the Byzantines perceived themselves, having lived for some time in Constantinople and being married to a Byzantine, the niece of Manuel Chrysoloras.[36]

Thus a conception of a common identity as Greeks, which cast its net much wider than merely shared *patris,* did exist among the emigres. One would expect, however, to find one particularly strong divide between them and their fellow Greeks who lived in what remained of Byzantium and under Ottoman rule, and that rift would be on the grounds of religion. Almost all of the emigres, including John Argyropoulos, Demetrius Cydones, and Bessarion, had either converted to Catholicism or, after 1439, accepted the Union of the churches proclaimed at the Council of Florence, when the representatives of the Byzantine Church had agreed to accept papal supremacy and to recognize

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[32] "καὶ τιμῶντι δι'ἀρετὴν οὐ σαυτὸν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ δυστυχὲς Ἑλλήνων γένος" (Callistus, *Epistola,* col. 1020).

[33] On Thomas Le Franc, see Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 35, 90–93, 135–36, 167–68.

[34] See Francesco Filelfo, *Epistolarum Familiarum Libri XXXVII* (Venice, 1502), fols. 89v, 94r–94v; Émile Legrand, *Cent dix lettres grecques de François Filelfe* (Paris, 1892), pp. 73–77.

[35] "Nam hoc uno nemo est in universo genere graecorum neque doctior, nec sapientor" (Filelfo, *Epistolarum,* fol. 94v).

[36] Setton, "Byzantine Background," p. 72.

the orthodoxy of the *filioque*.[37] The only exception appears to have been Anna Notaras, who continued to have the Orthodox liturgy celebrated secretly at her house in Venice.[38]

However, acceptance of union with Rome did not necessarily mean a complete abandonment of all aspects of traditional religious identity. If, as has been argued, Byzantine religion was not an exclusive creed, one would expect the emigres to have retained aspects of their traditional faith even if they had accepted some elements of western Christianity. This appears to have been the case even for Bessarion who, although he had become a Cardinal and was considered for the papacy on two occasions, retained a veneration for icons in the Byzantine style. He is thought to have presented a thirteenth-century icon of the Virgin and Child to the church of Santa Maria in Grottaferrata, and he restored a chapel near Bologna which contained an icon of the Virgin, said to have been brought from Constantinople in 1160.[39] He also retained the appearance of an Orthodox priest and monk by keeping his long beard, even though on one occasion it was to ruin his chances of election to the papacy.[40]

Bessarion's loyalty to his origins helps to explain his generous assistance to numerous refugees from Constantinople after 1453—there is no evidence whatever that he inquired into their exact opinions on papal supremacy or the *filioque*. The same applies to the ex-patriarch Gregory Melissenos who was entrusted with funds from the papal treasury to distribute among the refugees.[41]

Thus the emigres had not abandoned all links with their past, and these links often impelled them to help their fellow countrymen rather than to act like the fictional Tito Melema. But what of an even wider loyalty beyond that of shared language and religious identity? In the past, as we have seen, the Romano-Byzantine tradition had transcended matters of race and language, requiring only orthodoxy in religion and political submission to the one true Christian emperor. The utter annihilation of the Byzantine political tradition in 1453 might be thought to have put an end to any such universalism. It is noticeable that in the second half of the fifteenth century, the younger generation of exiles appears to have completely lost touch with its Roman heritage. The

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[37] Frances Kianka, "The Apology of Demetrius Cydones: A Fourteenth Century Autobiographical Source," *Byzantine Studies* 7 (1980), 57–71, especially 60, n. 19; Tia M. Kolbaba, "Conversion from Greek Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism in the Fourteenth Century," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 19 (1995), 120–34; Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 42–43, 54–55, 99.

[38] Nicol, *Byzantine Lady,* pp. 101–3; Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 58–59.

[39] Henri Vast, *Le Cardinal Bessarion* (Paris, 1878), p. 185; Paolo Guerini, "Il Bessarione a Grottaferrata: Un'ipotesi sulla donazione dell'icona," *Studi Medievali* 32, no. 2 (1991), 807–14; Fabrizio Lollini, "Bessarione e le arti figurative," in *Bessarione e l'umanesimo,* ed. Gianfranco Fiaccadori et al. (Naples, 1994), pp. 149–68, especially p. 166.

[40] Pius II, *Commentaries,* trans. Florence Gragg and Leona Gabel, Smith College Studies in History (Northampton, Mass., 1936–57), pp. 75–76; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant: 1204–1571* (Philadelphia, 1976–84), 2:162, n. 6.

[41] Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 101–2.

nephew of the last Byzantine emperor, Andreas Palaeologus, living in Rome but eager to claim his inheritance, took to styling himself *Imperator Constantinopolitanus,* a parochial title that his imperial forebears had never used.[42] The emigres always described themselves as Greeks, never as Romans.

Yet abandonment of the traditional claims of the Byzantine emperor did not necessarily entail the loss of any wider conception of the common good. What the emigres seem to have done is to have substituted for the role of the emperor, the universal claims of the papacy. A striking illustration of this transfer appears in the works of the historian Laonicos Chalcocondyles, who wrote in Latin-ruled Greece in the 1460s. Not only does he use the word "Hellenes" to describe the Byzantines, but he employs "Roman" as an adjective for all things papal.[43] The writings of the emigres in Italy, most of whom had adopted Latin Christianity, were loud in their praises for the universal power of the papacy over all Christians. Manuel Chrysoloras wrote admiringly of how the rule of the pope stretched as far as England.[44] Demetrius Cydones claimed that what he called the "subjects" of the pope were devoted to the higher good, prosperous, virtuous and law-abiding Christians. The Church of Rome, he claimed, was "a storehouse of all wisdom, bringing forth companies of philosophers, surrounded by groups of theologians, adorned by monks of manifold virtue. . . ."[45]

This belief in the role of the pope as the leader of Christendom found practical expression in active involvement with the efforts of successive popes, particularly Pius II (1458–64), to organize a counter-attack to recover Constantinople after 1453. In the propaganda war waged to sell the proposed crusade to European monarchs, Byzantine emigres were often used as envoys to foreign courts, perhaps because it was thought that their first-hand accounts of mistreatment of Christians would incline their audiences favorably. Once again Bessarion played an important role, serving as papal legate toVenice and Germany.[46] Many other dispossessed Byzantines toured European courts

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[42] See Johannes Burchard, *Diarium,* ed. Louis Thuasne, 3 vols. (Paris, 1883–5), 1:174, 281, 2:425; Jonathan Harris, "A Worthless Prince? Andreas Palaeologus in Rome—1464–1502," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 61 (1995), 537–54, especially 552.

[43] Vryonis, "Byzantine Cultural Self-Consciousness," pp. 8–9.

[44] See Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistola ad Joannem Imperatorem,* in PG 156:23–54; Helene Homeyer, "Zur 'Synkrisis' des Manuel Chrysoloras, einem Vergleich zwischen Rom und Konstantinopel," *Klio* 62 (1980), 525–34; Nicol, "Byzantine View," pp. 333–37.

[45] Demetrius Cydones, *Apologia della propria fede,* in Giovanni Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota,* Studi e Testi 56 (Vatican City, 1931), p. 373; Kianka, "Apology," p. 67.

[46] Raoul Manselli, "Il Cardinale Bessarione contro il periculo turco e l'Italia," *Miscellanea Francescana* 73 (1973), 314–26; Erich Meuthen, "Zum Itinerar der Deutschen Legation Bessarions (1460–1)," *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 37 (1957), 328–33; Polychrones K. Enepekides, "Die Wiener Legation des Kardinals Bessarion in

and parish churches, giving warning of the advance of the Turks.[47] Others used their pens in the cause, writing florid orations addressed to Christian rulers, urging them to free their suffering co-religionists in the East.[48]

The decision of the exiles to back the crusade says a great deal about their conviction that Christendom was essentially one, even if its leader was now the pope and not the Byzantine emperor. One only has to look at the major theme that runs through all their appeals to the conscience of their fellow Christians: the theme of the threat posed by a common enemy to all Christians, who should unite in defence of their faith. In Italy and Germany, Bessarion worked hard to persuade the princes and city states to bury their differences and unite. In July 1453 he urged the doge of Venice to set an example so that other rulers "would act for the common good, for the Christian religion, and for the glory of Christ. . . ."[49]

Another good example is the address of Franculios Servopoulos, a Byzantine emigre in the service of Pope Pius II, to the English court at Westminster in March 1459. We have no exact record of what was said at the meeting, but a French herald who was present recorded that Servopoulos had spoken on three points: "the one for the faith, the second for peace among Christians, the third that all by one common assent should succour the faith and drive back the infidels. . . ."[50]

The sad truth was, of course, that in appealing to the unity of Christendom, Bessarion, Servopoulos, and others were invoking a concept that was rapidly declining in Western Europe, as national interests came to take precedence.[51] Any participation by England, France, and Burgundy in an anti-Turkish crusade was rendered impossible

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den Jahren 1460–1," in *Miscellanea Marciana di studi Bessarionei* (Padua, 1976), pp. 69–82; Günther Schuhmann, "Kardinal Bessarion in Nürnberg," *Jahrbuch für Fränkische Landesforschung* 34–35 (1975), 447–65.

[47] Harris, *Greek Emigres,* p. 106; Jonathan Harris, "Publicising the Crusade: English Bishops and the Jubilee Indulgence of 1455," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (forthcoming).

[48] John Monfasani, ed., *Collectanea Trapezuntiana* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1984), pp. 422–33; Michael J. McGann, "A Call to Arms: Michael Marullus and Charles VIII," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 16 (1991), 341–59; John Whittaker, "Janus Lascaris at the Court of Charles V," *Thesaurismata* 14 (1977), 76–109.

[49] de communi salute, de christianâ religione, de Christi gloria agatur . . . (translation in *The Portable Renaissance Reader,* ed. James B. Ross and Mary M. McLaughlin [New York, 1953], pp. 70–73, especially p. 72; summary in Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle,* 6 vols. [Paris, 1899–1916], 2:518; full text in Vast, *Cardinal Bessarion,* appendix 3, pp. 454–56, especially p. 455).

[50] Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France During the Reign of Henry VI,* ed. Rolls Series: Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 22, 2 vols. (London, 1861–64), 1:368; Harris, *Greek Emigres,* pp. 106–8.

[51] Dennis Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1968), pp. 61–64; Bernard Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe,* trans. Juliet Vale (Oxford, 1985), pp. 6–11.

by their mutual antagonism.[52] Yet in its appeal to a wider common identity, their activity is in stark contrast to the narrower basis of George Amiroutzes's letter.

This paper began by asking whether the members of the Byzantine ruling classes who abandoned Constantinople in the first half of the fifteenth century were also turning their backs on their political and cultural identity. As Anthony Bryer has shown, as the old order crumbled, it became difficult for them to define themselves in quite the same way, so local marks of identity became more important. Yet what is more open to question is the idea that they abandoned all wider conceptions of their identity in favor of narrow ones. In their cultural and political perceptions, with a few minor adjustments, they preserved all three inclusive elements of their traditional identity, Bryer's Ruler, Religion, and Culture. They remained both Greeks and Christians, committed both to their rich Hellenic inheritance, and to the idea of maintaining a common good against a common enemy.

[52] Marie-Rose Thielemans, *Bourgogne et Angleterre* (Brussels, 1986), pp. 465–69.