Being a Byzantine after Byzantium: Hellenic identity in Renaissance Italy*

Jonathan Harris

The debate on the continuity or discontinuity of Greek cultural identity has now been waged for so long that it seems most unlikely that there will ever be any meeting of minds between those who see modern Greek national identity as the product of an unbroken tradition reaching back to Homer and those who regard it as the invention of a small group of nineteenth-century intellectuals.[1] Yet whatever continuity or lack of it there was over the centuries, there is one factor which perhaps deserves more attention than it has received to date: the tendency of people who described themselves as "Greeks" or "Hellenes", long before the formation of the kingdom of Greece in 1830, to draw

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[1] For some discussions of this issue, see Anthony D. Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations* (Oxford 1986), pp. 114-15; idem, *National identity* (Harmondsworth 1991), pp. 28-30; Paul Magdalino, "Hellenism and nationalism in Byzantium", in: J. Burke and S. Gauntlett (edd.), *Neohellenism* (Canberra 1992), pp. 1-29; Costa Carras, *3,000 Years of Greek identity. Myth or reality?* (Athens 1983); Robert Browning, "The continuity of Hellenism in the Byzantine world", in: T. Winnifrith and P. Murray (edd.), *Greece old and new* (London 1983), pp. 11-27; Cyril Mango, "Discontinuity with the classical past in Byzantium", in: Margaret Mullett and Roger Scott (edd.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham 1981), pp. 48-57; Speros Vryonis, "Recent scholarship on continuity and discontinuity of culture: classical Greeks, Byzantines, modern Greeks", in: Speros Vryonis (ed.), *The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture* (Malibu 1978), pp. 237-56.

elements of their identity from a long, but historical past, and to cling to those elements even in conditions that would appear to favour their complete abandonment. One such group was the members of the Byzantine ruling classes who took up residence in Italy during the fifteenth century, in the wake of the conquest of the Byzantine empire by the Ottoman Turks.

The exodus began in the final years of the fourteenth century, when the Turks began a protracted siege of Constantinople. Fearing the worst, some members of the Byzantine royal family saw refuge in western Europe as the only option left. John VII Palaeologus, acting as regent in the absence of the emperor Manuel II (1391-1425), offered to sell the city to the King of France in return for asylum in the West. His uncle, Theodore, made arrangements to flee to the safety of Venice. When Constantinople finally did fall in 1453 and the Turks conquered the last Byzantine territories in the Peloponnese, Thomas Palaeologus, the brother of the last emperor, took his entire family to Rome to live on the charity of the pope.[2]

The example set by the royal family was followed by many their 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.[3] A generation later, John Argyropoulos, who had been sent as an ambassador to Italy, France and England in 1456, simply omitted to return after he had completed his mission, using his knowledge of classical Greek literature to secure himself a teaching post at the *Studium* in Florence. Nor

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[2] 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), pp. 411, 417-18; Jonathan Harris, *Greek Emigres in the West* (Camberley 1995), pp. 110-13.

[3] R.-J. Loenertz, "Démétrius Cydones, citôyen de Venise", *Échos d'Orient* 37 (1938) 125-6; Kenneth M. Setton, "The Byzantine background to the Italian Renaissance", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 100 (1956) 1-76, at 56-7.

was it only laymen who sought to escape from their homeland. 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.[4]

Not surprisingly, many of their contemporaries took a very dim view of their desertion. In 1396 the friend and pupil of Demetrius Cydones, the emperor Manuel II, 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.[5]

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".[6] 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 émigrés 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. 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

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[4] Giuseppe Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'umanesimo. II: Giovanni Argiropulo* (Florence 1941), pp. 65-84; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 47, 56, 99-102.

[5] Manuel II Palaeologus, *Letters*, ed. and trans. George T. Dennis [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 8] (Washington D.C. 1977), pp. 172-3.

[6] *The Nikonian Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Serge A. Zenkovsky and Betty J. Zenkovsky, 5 vols. (Princeton 1984-9), 1: 62-7.

closing phase. Other Byzantine émigrés made similar unfavourable comparisons between their culture and that of the West.[7]

It would be very easy to condemn such words and behaviour as unpatriotic, although, 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 élite 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, 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 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 émigrés in Italy. The letter requested Bessarion's financial assistance in raising the ransom of Amiroutzes' 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 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

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[7] Demetrius Cydones, *Correspondance*, ed. and trans. Giuseppe Cammelli (Paris 1930), p. 131; Basil Laourdas, "Μιχαὴλ Ἀποστόλη περὶ Ἑλλάδος καὶ Εὐρώπης", *Ἑτετηρὶς 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, at 160-1; A.G. Keller, "A Byzantine admirer of 'western' progress: Cardinal Bessarion", *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11 (1953-5) 343-8; Ihor Ševčenko, "The decline of Byzantium as seen by its intellectuals", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961) 169-86, at 176.

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 émigré, Bessarion, would have been able to identify with Amiroutzes, was in the accident of shared birth place. 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 émigrés.[8]

This would, I believe, be too pessimistic a view. In what follows it will be argued that, on the contrary, émigrés 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 élite? 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.[9] 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

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[8] George Amiroutzes, *Epistola ad Bessarionem*, *Patrologia Graeca* 161: 723-8; Anthony Bryer, "The Pontic Greeks before the diaspora", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4 (1991) 315-25, at 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.

[9] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London and New York 1985), p. 12; Dion C. Smythe, "Byzantine identity and labelling theory", 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. 26-36.

most narrow and exclusive of them, Family and Place, as the most significant.[10]

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 the émigrés did not abandon their traditional identity. For if that identity was something wider than just the ways in which an élite 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 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.[11] 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.[12] In Byzantium this common good was that of all Christians, for with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine (324-37) to Christianity,

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[10] Bryer, "Late Byzantine identity", p. 50.

[11] See, for example, Donald M. Nicol, "The Byzantine view of Western Europe", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8 (1967) 315-39, at 315-16; Romilly J.H. Jenkins, "Social life in the Byzantine empire", in *Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. J.M. Hussey, vol. 4, part 2 (Cambridge 1967), pp. 78-103, at pp. 80-1.

[12] 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, at pp. 588-9; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1978), 1: 44.

the Roman empire had become the Christian empire, covering the whole civilised Christian world or *Oecumene*. Even though it no longer incorporated all Christians, it remained an institution uniquely favoured by God, the mirror of his kingdom on earth, and the state to which all Christians ought properly to owe allegiance.[13]

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".[14] The wisdom and piety of the emperor was perceived as being vital for the well-being of Christians on earth.[15]

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 decrees hold throughout the world, who alone, with none other, is revered by all Christians".[16]

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[13] Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought* 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth 1970), pp. 32-8; Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge 1977), p. 22; Donald M. Nicol, "Byzantine political thought", in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350-c.1450*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge 1988), pp. 51-79.

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

[15] See, for example, Procopius, *The Buildings*, trans. H.B. Dewing and Glanville Downey [Loeb Classical Library 343] (London 1971), pp. 52-5.

[16] Full text in *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi Sacra et Profana*, ed. F. Miklosich and W. Müller, 6 vols. (Vienna 1860-90), 2: 190-2; translations in Ernest Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium from Justinian I to the last Palaeologus* (Oxford 1957), pp. 194-6; George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J.M. Hussey, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1968), pp. 553-4.

One can hardly imagine a conception of identity which contrasts more strongly with the narrow claims of shared birth place: 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.[17]

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 which it recognised, 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.[18] 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.[19]

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

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[17] *The Chronicle of Adam of Usk 1377-1421*, ed. and trans. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford 1997), pp. 198-9.

[18] L. Ouspensky, *La théologie de l'icône dans l'église orthodoxe* (Paris 1960), pp. 179-200; J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 1986), pp. 67-8; Robin Cormack *Writing in Gold. Byzantine society and its icons* (London 1985), pp. 151-4.

[19] Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (New York 1972), pp. 253-4.

orthodoxy or "right belief" which 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, which like the other two, 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 which members of the ruling classes learned to read in a traditional course of higher education.[20] If anything, possession of such education led members of the Byzantine élite 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.[21] However, this 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

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[20] Constantine 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: Warren Treadgold (ed.), *Renaissances before the Renaissance. Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Stanford, CA 1984), pp. 75-98, at pp. 79-81; Nigel G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, 2nd ed. (London 1996), pp. 18-27.

[21] 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; Steven Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance* (Cambridge 1970), pp. 15-23.

Peloponnese.[22] Language had, therefore, ceased to be merely a marker of élite 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 élite 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 which 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 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 émigrés, 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, patronised the copying of Greek books. Bessarion employed numerous scribes to copy manuscripts, and built up a vast collection which he ultimately donated to the Marciana Library in Venice. Anna

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[22] Athanasius D. Angelou, "'Who am I?' Scholarios' answers and the Hellenic identity", in: C.N. Constantinides, N.M. Panagiotakes, E. Jeffreys and A.D. Angelou (edd.), *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ. Studies in Honour of Robert Browning* (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".

Notaras paid for the printing of the massive Greek lexicon, the *Etymologicum Magnum*, in Venice in 1499.[23]

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.[24]

However, this perception of a common identity through language was not restricted to the preservation of ancient texts, comprehensible only to a narrow élite, and serving to distinguish them from foreigners and uneducated Greeks. Common language was widely used by other émigrés, whether drawn from the Byzantine élite 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

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[23] L. Labowsky, *Bessarion's Library and the Biblioteca Marciana* (Rome 1979); Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique, ou Description raisonée des ouvrages publiés en grec par des Grecs aux XVe et XVIe siècles*, 4 vols. (Paris 1885-1906), 1: 55-62; Donald M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten portraits 1250-1500* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 96-109, at pp. 106-7; Klaus-Peter Matschke, "The Notaras family and its Italian connections", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995) 59-72, at 71.

[24] Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Staatsmann und Humanist*, 3 vols. (Paderborn 1923-42), 3: 478-9; Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice* (Cambridge MA 1962), pp. 81-2; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 126-7.

dwellers withyn the seid citee".[25] 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 élite who resided in Italy, seems to have seen himself in a similar light, describing himself a "Graecus de natione".[26] Cardinal Bessarion used a similar Greek expression to describe himself as a "Hellene by race" on the flyleaf of one of his books. He was not averse to writing letters in demotic Greek, rather than the classical language, when the occasion demanded, implying that he regarded not only those who shared his education as his fellow Hellenes.[27]

Such common "Greekness" was often appealed to by the émigrés when seeking favours 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 Chamber-

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[25] 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.

[26] 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 Geanakoplos, *Constantinople and the West. Essays on the Late Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches* (Madison, Wisconsin 1989), pp. 68-90, at p. 73.

[27] Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, Gr. 460, fol. 1 in Elpidio Mioni, *Introduzione alla Paleografia Greca* (Padua 1973), plate XX; S.P. Lambros, "Τρεῖς ἐπιστολαὶ τοῦ Καρδιναλίου Βησσαρίωνος ἐν τῇ δημώδει γλώσσῃ", *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 5 (1908) 19-39; Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion*, 3: 531-6; Emanuele Kriaras, "Giovanni Meursio, Giacomo Pontano, Leone Allacci e una lettera del card. Bessarione in greco volgare", *Miscellanea Marciana di Studi Bessarionei* (Padua 1976), pp. 187-99.

lain and Commander of the King's ship.[28] 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.[29]

However, it was not always on such narrow grounds that Dishypatos was appealed to. In 1476 Andronicus Callistos, a Byzantine scholar then residing in London, wrote to ask him to assist George Hermonymos, who had been imprisoned in England and saddled with a large fine which he could not pay. Like Amiroutzes and Hussain Bey, Callistos 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.[30] At the same time, however, he stressed that by helping Hermonymos, Dishypatos would be bringing honour not only to himself but also to "the unfortunate Greek race".[31]

Callistos' appeal clearly demonstrates that the Greek émigrés 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 émigrés discussed so far, he was not drawn from the Byzantine political and literary élite. He was not even origin-

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[28] On Dishypatos see Jonathan Harris, "Bessarion on shipbuilding: a reinterpretation", *Byzantinoslavica* 55 (1994) 291-303, at 299-301; idem, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 175-80.

[29] Nicolas Vatin, "La traduction ottomane d'une lettre de Charles VIII de France (1486)", *Turcica* 15 (1983) 219-30, at 220-2.

[30] Andronicus Callistos, *Epistola ad Georgium Palaeologum*, *Patrologia Graeca* 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", University of London PhD thesis (1997); idem, "Are the two Greek scribes, George Hermonymos and Charitonymos Hermonymos, one and the same person?", *Θησαυρίσματα* 26 (1996) 105-18; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 142-6.

[31] Callistos, *Epistola*, 1020: "... καὶ τὸ δυστυχὲς τῶν Ἑλλήνων γένος".

ally from Constantinople but from Corone, a Venetian-ruled town in the southern Peloponnese. He held both English and French denizenship, and his Latinised 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.[32]

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.[33] 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' wisdom and learning, but also his Greek origin.[34]

The idea that a member of the educated Byzantine ruling élite and a Latinised Greek from a Venetian colony could have had a common identity on the basis of language would not have been unusual in the medieval world. The Council of Constance had decided much the same thing when it decreed in 1415 that a nation was "a people marked off from others by blood relationship and habit of unity or by peculiarities of language".[35] Filelfo's application of that formula to Greeks could be dismissed as the ignorance of a western outsider, but such an argument would be unconvincing. He was in a good position to know how the Byzantines perceived themselves, having lived

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[32] On Thomas Frank, see Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 35, 90-3, 135-6, 167-8.

[33] Francesco Filelfo, *Epistolarum Familiarum Libri XXXVII* (Venice 1502), fols. 89v, 94r-94v; Émile Legrand, *Cent dix lettres grecques de François Filelfe* (Paris 1892), pp. 73-7.

[34] Filelfo, *Epistolarum*, fol. 94v: "Nam hoc uno nemo est in universo genere graecorum neque doctior, nec sapientior."

[35] James F. Lydon, "Nation and Race in Medieval Ireland", in: Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson and Alan V. Murray (edd.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds 1995), pp. 103-24, at p. 115; Louise R. Loomis, "Nationality at the Council of Constance. An Anglo-French dispute", in: Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed.), *Change in Medieval Society. Europe North of the Alps 1060-1500* (Eaglewood Cliffs NJ 1964), pp. 279-96.

for some time in Constantinople, and being married to a Byzantine, the niece of Manuel Chrysoloras.[36] There can only be one conclusion: the émigrés regarded themselves as linked to their fellow Greeks elsewhere in the world by their language. The conception of a common identity, which cast its net much wider than merely shared *patris*, had not been jettisoned in the flight to Italy.

Nevertheless, one would expect to find one particularly strong divide between the émigrés 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, the most powerful marker of identity in the medieval period.[37] Almost all of the émigrés, 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 recognise the orthodoxy of the *filioque*.[38] The only exception appears to have been Anna Notaras, who continued to have the Orthodox liturgy celebrated secretly at her house in Venice.[39]

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 émigrés to have retained aspects of their traditional faith even if they had accepted some elements of western Christianity. This appears to

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

[37] It was to remain so among peasant societies in the Balkans well into the twentieth century. See: Dimitris Livanios, "'Conquering the souls': nationalism and Greek guerrilla warfare in Ottoman Macedonia, 1904-1908", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999) 195-221, at 196-9.

[38] Joseph Gill, "The sincerity of Bessarion the unionist", *Miscellanea Marciana di Studi Bessarionei* (Padua 1976), pp. 119-36; Frances Kianka, "The Apology of Demetrius Cydones: a fourteenth century autobiographical source", *Byzantine Studies* 7 (1980) 57-71, at 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. 42-3, 54-5, 99.

[39] Nicol, *Byzantine Lady*, pp. 101-3; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 58-9.

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.[40] 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.[41]

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 enquired 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.[42]

Thus, the émigrés had not abandoned all links with their past, and these links often impelled them to help their fellow countrymen. 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

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[40] Henri Vast, *Le Cardinal Bessarion* (Paris 1878), p. 185; Paolo Guerini, "Il Bessarione a Grottaferrata: un'ipotesi sulla donazione dell'icona", *Studi Medievali* 32.2 (1991) 807-14; Fabrizio Lollini, "Bessarione e le arti figurative", in: G. Fiaccadori, A. Cuna, A. Gatti and S. Ricci (edd.), *Bessarione e l'umanesimo* (Naples 1994), pp. 149-68, at p. 166. On the significance of icons in general, see: Thalia Gouma-Peterson, "The icon as a cultural presence after 1453", in: John J. Yiannias (ed.), *The Byzantine Tradition after the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville and London 1991), pp. 151-80.

[41] Pius II, *Commentaries*, trans. F.A. Gragg and L.C. Gabel (Northampton, MA, 1936-57), pp. 75-6; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia 1976-84), 2: 162, n.6.

[42] Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 101-2. Among the recipients of Bessarion's generosity was a grandson of his tutor, George Gemistos Plethon: Henri Noiret, *Lettres inédites de Michel Apostolis* (Paris 1889), p. 94, lines 3-4.

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 appear to have completely lost touch with their Roman heritage. The 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 which his imperial forebears had never used.[43] The émigrés 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 émigrés 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 did he use the word "Hellenes" to describe the Byzantines, but he employed "Roman" as an adjective for all things papal.[44] The writings of the émigrés 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. Demetrius Cydones believed 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]

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[43] Johannes Burchard, *Diarium*, ed. L. 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, at 552.

[44] Vryonis, "Byzantine cultural self-consciousness", pp. 8-9.

[45] Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistola ad Joannem Imperatorem, Patrologia Graeca* 156: 23-54; H. Homeyer, "Zur 'Synkrisis' des Manuel Chrysoloras, einem Vergleich zwischen Rom und Konstantinopel", *Klio* 62 (1980) 525-34; Demetrius Cydones, *Apologia della propria fede*, in: G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota* [Studi

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 organise a counter-attack to recover Constantinople after 1453. In the propaganda war waged to sell the proposed crusade to European monarchs, Byzantine émigrés 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 favourably. Once again Bessarion played an important role, serving as papal legate to Venice and Germany.[46] Dispossessed Byzantines toured European courts and parish churches, giving warning of the advance of the Turks, and wrote florid orations addressed to Christian rulers, urging them to free their suffering co-religionists in the East.[47]

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 which 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

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e Testi 56] (Vatican City 1931), p. 373; Nicol, "Byzantine view", pp. 333-7; Kianka, "Apology", p. 67.

[46] R. Manselli, "Il Cardinale Bessarione contro il pericolo turco e l'Italia", *Miscellanea Francescana* 73 (1973) 314-26; E. Meuthen, "Zum Itinerar der deutschen Legation Bessarions (1460-1)", *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 37 (1957) 328-33; P.K. Enepekides, "Die Wiener Legation des Kardinals Bessarion in den Jahren, 1460-1", *Miscellanea Marciana di Studi Bessarionei* (Padua 1976), pp. 69-82; Günther Schuhmann, "Kardinal Bessarion in Nürnberg", *Jahrbuch für Fränkische Landesforschung* 34-5 (1975) 447-65; Antonio Coccia, "Bessarione e I discorsi ai principi", *Bessarione* 7 (1989) 213-39.

[47] *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, ed. John Monfasani (Binghampton, N.Y. 1984), pp. 422-33; Michael J. McGann, "A call to arms: Michael Marullus and Charles VIII", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 16 (1991) 341-59; J. Whittaker, "Janus Lascaris at the Court of Charles V", *Θησαυρίσματα* 14 (1977) 76-109; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, p. 106; Jonathan Harris, "Publicising the Crusade: English bishops and the Jubilee Indulgence of 1455", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999) 23-37, at 31-6.

princes and city states to sink 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...".[48]

Another good example is the address of Franculios Servopoulos, a Byzantine émigré 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...".[49]

The sad truth was, of course, that, in appealing to the unity of Christendom, Bessarion, Servopoulos and others were invoking a concept which was rapidly declining in Western Europe, as national interests came to take precedence.[50] Any participation by England, France and Burgundy in an anti-Turkish crusade was rendered impossible by their mutual antagonism.[51] Yet in its appeal to a wider common identity, their activity is in stark contrast to the narrower basis of George Amiroutzes' letter.

This article 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

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[48] Full text in Vast, *Cardinal Bessarion*, Appendix III, pp. 454-6, at p. 455: " ... de communi salute, de christianâ religione, de Christi gloria agatur...". Translation in James B. Ross and Mary M. McLaughlin (edd.), *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (New York 1953), pp. 70-73, at p. 72. Summary in N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, 6 vols. (Paris and Bucharest 1899-1916), 2: 518.

[49] *Letters and Papers illustrative of the wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry VI*, ed. J. Stevenson, Rolls Series: Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 22, 2 vols. (London 1861-64), 1: 368; Harris, *Greek Emigres*, pp. 106-8.

[50] See Dennis Hay, *Europe. The emergence of an idea*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh 1968), pp. 61-4; Bernard Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, trans. Juliet Vale (Oxford 1985), pp. 6-11.

[51] M.-R. Thielemans, *Bourgogne et Angleterre* (Brussels 1986), pp. 465-9.

define themselves in quite the same way, so that 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 favour 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, even when it probably would have been to their advantage to abandon them.

Royal Holloway
University of London