

The Byzantine View of Western Europe

Donald M. Nicol

ONE THING that astonishes the reader of the Byzantine historians particularly of the later period is their evident ignorance of the history and geography of western Europe; another thing is their boundless pride in their city, their Empire and their traditions. Their ignorance of the West is to some extent excusable. Part of it stems from the Byzantine propensity for archaizing. The nations beyond the boundaries of Byzantium had to be disguised or dignified with Herodotean names. The Serbs become Triballians, the Bulgars Mysians, the Hungarians Paeonians and the Mongols Scythians (though here confusion arises because some historians apply the name of Scythians to the Bulgars as well). The confusion becomes worse confounded when the Italians are called Franks, the Franks Celts and the Catalans Italians. George Pachymeres calls Charles of Anjou an Italian and entitles him "king of Apulia" and "brother of the *rex Frantziskon*," which sounds like king of the Franciscans. Nikephoros Gregoras can dismiss the Battle of Crécy with the illuminating sentence: "The Britons crossed over to the mainland of the Celts with their fleet and there was a great battle."¹ There are, of course, notable exceptions. One need only mention Constantine Porphyrogenitus. And in any event Byzantine ignorance of western affairs was no greater than western ignorance of the Byzantine Empire. The difference is that whereas western historians became better informed about the East as time went on, Byzantine ignorance of the West seems rather to have increased with the passage of the centuries. One is tempted to feel that, as the wind of change blew stronger in the West, the Byzantines simply closed their eyes and ears. Ignorance gave way to calculated indifference.

It is easier to forgive their ignorance than to stomach their pride. For it was a pride bordering on conceit. It was born partly of their

¹ George Pachymeres, *De Michaele Palaeologo*, ed. I. Bekker, I (Bonn 1835) 185 lines 15–16, 358 line 5. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, II (Bonn 1829) 689 lines 2–4.

ineradicable sense of exclusiveness as the inhabitants of the Christian Roman Empire, partly of their exalted idea of the unique and supreme position of their emperor. But it coloured their attitude to the rest of the world, both East and West. Its rhetorical expressions in Byzantine writers make strange reading. It must have infuriated western Europeans, especially after they had become conscious of their own military and commercial superiority to the *Graeculi* of the East. For even when it was manifestly no more than a myth the concept of the exclusiveness of the emperor and his empire survived in Constantinople. In a famous letter to the Grand Prince of Russia, Vasili I, written in the dark days of 1395 when the Turks were almost at the gates, the Patriarch Antony of Constantinople could still write: “. . . if the nations (*i.e.* the Turks) (now) encircle the residence of the Emperor, it does not follow that Christians should despise him. . . . (For) when the prince of the Apostles, Peter, said . . . ‘Fear God, honour the king’ . . . he did not say ‘kings’, lest any man should think that he had in mind those who are called kings promiscuously among the nations: he said ‘the king’, showing thereby that the universal king is *one*. . . . For if there are also others in the world of Christian men who assume for themselves the name of Emperor, all such action is unnatural and illegal, the result rather of tyranny and force (than of nature).”²

The Emperor was the elect of God, crowned by God and guarded by God. His person was sacred and he ruled from the Sacred Palace in the Queen of Cities as God’s regent on earth: he was the terrestrial image of the Logos of God reigning over the earthly reflexion of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Byzantine Empire was not, like the kingdoms or principalities of antiquity, a temporary phenomenon which would one day come to an end. It was “a realm foreseen in the plan of the Creator, anchored in Christian eschatology, organically involved in the age-old history of mankind and destined to endure until the Second Coming.” Its βασιλεύς and αὐτοκράτωρ was the representative of Christ who, as παμβασιλεύς and παντοκράτωρ, could only be one. He held the reins of all human affairs, temporal and spiritual, in his hand.³

² F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* II (Vienna 1862) 190–2; transl. E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford 1957) 194–6.

³ F. Dölger, “Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der fränkisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9. Jahrhunderts,” *Der Vertrag von Verdun*, ed. Th. Mayer (Leipzig 1943)

All this was basic political theory to the Byzantines. It is seldom spelled out in so many words for the simple reason that it was taken for granted. Those who affected to challenge or ignore this divinely ordained scheme of things were guilty of a form of heresy. They were either to be pitied or condemned. The Arabs, for example, and the Turks might be pitied as the victims of invincible ignorance; the Slavs might be thought to have the baptism of desire; but the peoples of western Europe, at least after the ninth century, were condemned as wilful and unrepentant deviationists.

The Greek word commonly used by Byzantine writers to describe those outside the charmed circle of right believers was *ἔθνη*, the 'nations'. It is the term applied in the *New Testament* to the Gentiles, to those outside the flock of God's chosen people. The word *βάρβαροι* is also employed, as it had been in antiquity, to describe 'outsiders', but it is applied rather to pagans, infidels or backward races than to Christians, however misguided. *Ἔθνος* was perhaps slightly more polite than *βάρβαρος*, but neither word was necessarily abusive. A 'barbarian' was no more contemptible to a Byzantine than to an ancient Greek or Roman. The Emperor John VI Cantacuzene, who gave his daughter in marriage to the Turkish Sultan Orchan in 1346 and who relied heavily on Turkish military support, could happily refer to his quite civilised son-in-law as 'the barbarian'.⁴

The exclusiveness and the pride of the Byzantines were reflected in the word that they used to describe themselves. They and they alone were the *Ῥωμαῖοι*, the true Romans; and every Byzantine citizen of whatever race, Greek, Armenian or Slav, was aware of his right to call himself a *Ῥωμαῖος*. The heterogeneous mixture of races that made up the Byzantine Empire has sometimes been compared with that which constitutes the United States of America, and with some justice. But the analogy should not be pressed too far. American citizens of whatever racial origin are conscious of a common nationality; but they are also conscious of the existence and of the rights of other nations on more or less equal terms. This was a concept foreign to the Byzantine mind, at least until the decline of the Empire after the thirteenth century. To be a *Romaῖος* was not to belong to any one

210 (repr. in Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* [Ettal 1953] 291). P. J. Alexander, "The Strength of Empire and Capital as Seen through Byzantine Eyes," *Speculum* 37 (1962) 355.

⁴ e.g. John Cantacuzenus, *Historiarum Libri IV*, ed. L. Schopen, II (Bonn 1831) 588 lines 17-18.

nation. It was rather to belong to the *οἰκουμένη*, to the world—to accept the fact that the world of right belief and right order, in the political and in the religious sense, was one and unchanging, that its Emperor was one, and that to live outside it was a great misfortune which Providence would one day rectify. It is true that a feeling of aggressive nationalism began to affect the Byzantines after the Fourth Crusade. It is expressed by an increasing use of the word ‘Hellene’ by Byzantine writers of the thirteenth century and later to make even clearer their distinction from the loathsome ‘Latins’. But this was a late development and came, significantly enough, at a time when the Empire had been reduced by its eastern and western enemies almost exclusively to its purely Hellenic provinces.⁵ In an earlier age popes and emperors in western Europe were guilty of a calculated breach of etiquette when they addressed the Emperor in Constantinople as *imperator Graecorum*, Emperor of the Greeks instead of Emperor of the Romans. The Emperor Nikephoros Phokas in 968 made an angry complaint on this score to Bishop Liutprand of Cremona when Otto the Great of Germany tried to exalt his own dignity by belittling that of the one true Emperor. Nikephoros pointed out to Otto’s ambassador that his master was a mere barbarian king who had no conceivable right to call himself either a Roman or an emperor.⁶ Liutprand himself was well aware that the Byzantines would be shocked by the “sinful audacity” of the Pope in addressing Nikephoros as *imperator Graecorum*.⁷ As time went on, however, the western rulers became even more rude and confident about addressing the Byzantine emperor as ‘Emperor of the Greeks’ or simply ‘Emperor of Constantinople’, which was even more wounding to Byzantine pride. The Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos in the thirteenth century tactfully made no protest when addressed as ‘Emperor of the Greeks’ by the

⁵ Nikephoros Gregoras in the fourteenth century distinguishes between ‘Romaioi and Hellenes’ on the one hand and ‘the diverse nations (*ἔθνη*) and barbarians’ on the other. Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia* II, 590 lines 3–5. Cf. F. Dölger, “Rom in der Gedankenwelt der Byzantiner,” *Zeitschr. für Kirchengeschichte* 56 (1937) 7f (=Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, 77f); and, in general, K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner* (Diss. Munich 1954).

⁶ *Liudprandi Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. J. Becker, *Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona (Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum, Hanover-Leipzig 1915)* 188–9, § XXV: *Vis maius scandalum, quam quod se imperatorem vocat, imperii nostra themata sibi usurpat? Utraque non sunt ferenda; et si utraque importabilia, istud est non ferendum, immo nec audiendum, quod se imperatorem nominat.*

⁷ *ibid.* 200, § XLVII: *Quae vox, quae inscriptio (sc. imperatorem Graecorum), secundum Graecos peccatrix et temeraria . . .*

Pope. He knew that he was in no position to stand on his dignity. But the *theory* of his unique dignity remained unaffected.

Until the eighth century that theory, in so far as it was based upon the Roman tradition of a universal *imperium*, was common to eastern and western Europe. The refinements of the Byzantine *Kaisergedanke* may not have been fully appreciated in the West; but the general idea that the world was made up of one Empire and one Church governed by one Emperor survived the storms of the barbarian invasions and the collapse of the western provinces. Justinian's expensive campaign to retrieve those provinces was the last great attempt to put the theory back into practice. But the restoration of the *imperium romanum* as it had existed in the days of Augustus and Constantine was always on the agenda of successive Byzantine emperors. "All the countries that had once belonged to the Roman *orbis*, and later joined the Christian Church, were considered by the Byzantine emperors as their everlasting and incontestable possession."⁸ The facts indeed belied this proud claim, and the emperors in Constantinople were generally obliged to keep their eyes turned and their guns trained on the East and the North rather than the West. But the claim was none the less universally acknowledged. The Gothic and Frankish kings of the fifth and sixth centuries were prepared to accept it in principle, since to participate in the *imperium* by admitting a relationship to the Emperor of the Romans enhanced their own status and gave them a place in the divine order of things. They had no wish to set up world empires of their own.⁹ The Byzantines were thus encouraged to think of western Europe simply as the *pars occidentalis* of their empire which, owing to unfortunate circumstances brought about by the sins of mankind, had temporarily fallen into barbarian hands. Until it could be recovered, the Christian West was kept in the family of the Byzantine Empire by the institution of a complicated system of honorary degrees of affinity graciously conferred on its various rulers by the Emperor, pending the day when he would re-assert his legitimate rights as *paterfamilias*. This concept of the mediaeval 'family of kings' has been thoroughly investigated by Dölger

⁸ G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Empire and the Hierarchical World Order," *Slavonic and East European Review* 35 no. 84 (1956) 5.

⁹ F. Dölger, "Byzanz und das Abendland vor den Kreuzzügen," *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* 2 (Florence 1956) 71-3 (reprinted in Dölger, *ΠΑΡΑΣΤΑΣΕΙΣ* (Ettal 1961) 76-7.

and Ostrogorsky.¹⁰ It illustrates the truth of Ostrogorsky's statement that "no one could show more contempt for facts when they contradicted theory than the Byzantines. When facts and beliefs contradicted each other beliefs prevailed." But the belief in a hierarchical world-order or family of kings effectively ruled out any abstract idea of 'the West' as something distinct from the rest of Europe or from Asia. So far as the Byzantines employed the term *Δύσις* (to mean western Europe) at all, it was in a purely administrative sense, as a geographical term to describe collectively the temporarily detached western provinces of the Roman Empire.

Byzantine cosmic theory received its first serious shock in 800 when Charles the Great was crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III. The historical significance of this event for the West is evident. It marked the inauguration of Europe as a political concept, what Dölger has called the *Europabegriff*. But for the Byzantines such a concept was a plain defiance of the truth. For another emperor to set himself up, even in a part of the world temporarily separated from the Roman *imperium*, was nothing but an act of usurpation. For it denied the principle that there could only be one Emperor in the world. Charles, though crowned as 'Emperor of the Romans', seems to have had a more modest view than the Pope of his imperial status. He is said to have sought the hand in marriage of the Empress Eirene in Constantinople as a means of solving the problem and uniting the western and the eastern empires. But Eirene was deposed in a palace revolution while the western ambassadors were still negotiating with her; and her successor Nikephoros chose to bury his head in Byzantine sand by refusing to consider the possibility of any compromise. It was left to Michael I, who came to the throne in another revolution in 811, to find a way out of the dilemma. In 812 Byzantine ambassadors to Aachen agreed, on return to their emperor of some of the territory which Charles had recently conquered, to recognise him as 'emperor' in an abstract sense—as *imperator*, but not of the Romans. To make quite sure that the message was understood it was delivered in Greek as well as Latin. Charles was to be recognised as βασιλεύς, but not as βασιλεύς Ῥωμαίων. Further he was promoted to the status of 'spiritual

¹⁰ F. Dölger, "Die Familie der Könige im Mittelalter," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 60 (1940) 397–420 (=Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* 34–69); Ostrogorsky, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 1–14, and "Die byzantinische Staatenhierarchie," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 8 (1936) 41–61; A. Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes' presided over by the Byzantine Emperor," *HarvSlavSt* 2 (1954) 117–23.

brother' of the world-emperor in Constantinople in the Byzantine family of kings.¹¹

This was the best that could be done. The western emperor had been acknowledged to have a limited *imperium*, limited to the territory of the Franks and to the lifetime of Charles. No suggestion was made that Charles was emperor of the *pars occidentalis*; and his successors were demoted to the status of mere 'kings' in the Byzantine hierarchy.¹² But the Byzantines had to admit that there were now two claimants to the *imperium* and that the emperor in the West, prompted and supported by the papacy, was becoming more and more the exponent of a distinct and rival theory of the way the world was run. The West as an abstract concept—the *Europabegriff*—was born and grew to plague the Byzantine mind thereafter. It is significant that the Byzantine emperors who had hitherto tended to describe themselves with the simple title of βασιλεύς seldom missed an occasion after 812 to employ their full title of βασιλεύς τῶν Ῥωμαίων.

Charles the Great may, with some reservations, have had a proper and deferential awareness of his relationship to the emperor in Constantinople. But his followers were more outspoken in their claims. The coronation of Otto the Great and the institution of the Holy Roman Empire in 962 proved an even more serious blow to the Byzantine idea of world-empire. For Otto and his successors "insisted most emphatically on the *Roman* origin of their imperial status"; and the more they insisted the less the Byzantines liked it.¹³ The Byzantine view of the West from the tenth century onwards was increasingly jaundiced. Liutprand of Cremona, who went to Constantinople as the envoy of Otto the Great in 968, had been commissioned to negotiate for the hand of a Byzantine *porphyrogenita*, a princess born in the purple, as a bride for Otto's son. The proposal was received with ridicule and contempt by the Emperor Nikephoros Phokas. The idea of a princess of the blood imperial being humiliated by marriage to a barbarian king was not to be entertained. Only a few years before,

¹¹ Dölger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 295, 305; *idem*, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) 73. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. J. J. Reiske, I (Bonn 1829) 689 lines 11–12. See now R. J. H. Jenkins, *Byzantium. The Imperial Centuries* (London 1966) 105–16.

¹² Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins, I (Budapest 1949) 109; II (ed. Jenkins, London 1962) 83. W. Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter. Die Bedeutung des byzantinischen Reiches für die Entwicklung der Staatsidee in Europa* (Hildesheim 1947) 28–47.

¹³ Ostrogorsky, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 7.

the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in a well-known passage of his *De administrando imperio*, had counselled his son most strongly against revealing the secrets of empire to barbarians or gentiles and no less forcibly against contracting marriages with them or their heirs. His words are eloquent of the Byzantine attitude to the West in the tenth century: "Never shall an Emperor of the Romans ally himself in marriage with a nation of customs differing from and alien to those of the Roman order, especially with one that is infidel and unbaptised, unless it be with the Franks alone; for they alone were excepted by that great man, the holy Constantine, because he himself drew his origin from those parts; for there is much relationship and converse between Franks and Romans. . . . But with any other nation whatsoever it was not to be in their power to do this, and he who dared to do it was to be condemned as an alien from the ranks of the Christians and subject to the anathema, as a transgressor of ancestral laws and imperial ordinances."¹⁴ The exception made of the Franks had, of course, nothing to do with Constantine the Great. It could be excused by the special relationship of spiritual brotherhood granted to Charlemagne in the Byzantine imperial hierarchy in 812, which had never been officially revoked for his successors. It had to be defended because marriages between Franks and Byzantines had already occurred. But in a more general sense it may be taken to indicate a stage in the development of the Byzantine consciousness of western Europe as a separate entity, a social and political world distinct from the otherwise undifferentiated mass of barbarians and gentiles.¹⁵ Clearly this was a development in their thought which the Byzantines did not care to admit was being forced upon them by

¹⁴ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* I, 71–72. D. A. Zakythenos, "Τὸ Βυζάντιον μεταξύ Ἀνατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως," *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 28 (1958) 367–400, chastises the school of modern historians who believe that "Byzantium was closer to Islam than to the Franks, to the East than to the West," and that it was an eastern rather than a western state, deriving its inspiration and taking its cue from the Orient, from Persia and the Arab world. He contrasts the refusal of the Emperor Theophilos to be bribed by the Caliph Al-Mamun (812–833) into sending Leo the Mathematician to his court (on the ground that the Romaioi could not share with the nations the wisdom for which they were renowned) with the present of the works of the Pseudo-Dionysios courteously sent by the Emperor Michael II to his cousin in the West, Louis the Pious, in 827. These two instances are cited to prove that the Byzantines regarded the people and rulers of the Christian West "in a special way," realising that they were bound to them by the closest political and spiritual ties. Zakythenos, *op.cit.* 374–5. Theophanes Continuatus, *De Michaele Theophili F.*, ed. I. Bekker, II (Bonn 1838) 185–91; F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches* I (Munich-Berlin 1924) no. 408.

¹⁵ Dölger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 286.

circumstances. The sanction of Constantine the Great for converse with the Franks was therefore comforting.

It should be observed, however, that Constantine Porphyrogenitus was writing some ten years before the coronation of Otto the Great, and further that when Otto sent Liutprand to Constantinople in 968 the emperor on the Byzantine throne was not a scholar and a pedant but a brilliant soldier who was busily engaged in recovering the lost provinces and the lost prestige of his empire in the East. Nikephoros Phokas was not the sort of man to make nice academic distinctions between the Franks and the rest of the gentiles. So far as he was concerned Otto was just a jumped-up barbarian chieftain. John Tzimiskes who succeeded Nikephoros in 969, handled the matter more discreetly by sending to the German court his relative Theophano, who married Otto II in Rome in 972. She may or may not have been the princess born in the purple for whom Otto's father had asked; but she was a Byzantine princess related to the reigning emperor, and therefore honour was satisfied and the crisis between the Eastern and the Western empires was averted.¹⁶ But the fact that matters had come to a crisis between East and West demonstrated again what the Byzantines were loath to admit, that the Western empire had come to stay, that political developments in western Europe had outrun the point at which it would ever be possible to put the clock back to the time of the universal empire of Augustus, Constantine or even Justinian.

Indeed the ever more confident claims of the Holy Roman emperors to be themselves the heirs to that universal *imperium* began to make it necessary for the Byzantines to justify their own claim, to reassure themselves and to point out to the West just why and how their empire was the only one. To the theory that Constantinople was not, as Constantine himself had described it, the 'Second Rome' but the 'New Rome' (in contrast to the Old Rome in Italy) was added a new fiction; it was the tale of the *translatio imperii* from the old to the new capital, supposedly effected by Constantine. This story, that the first Christian emperor had deliberately abandoned his capital in Italy and transferred the whole works of his empire from Rome to

¹⁶ For the literature on this vexed topic see, e.g. W. Ohnsorge, *Abendland und Byzanz. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte der byzantinisch-abendländischen Beziehungen und des Kaisertums* (Darmstadt 1958) 41 and n.150, 299 n.; G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford 1956) 263, and *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*³, (Munich 1963) 246; Jenkins, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 293.

Constantinople, was already tentatively put forward in the sixth century. But it was elaborated to its full expression, as a water-tight argument with which to baffle the claims of the Western emperors, in the tenth century and after. It is retailed with some vigour by Anna Comnena, the daughter of the Emperor Alexios I, at the time of the first crusades. The twelfth-century historian John Kinnamos confessed himself reduced to tears by reflecting on the absurd pretensions of the popes and self-styled 'emperors' of the west who presumptuously inferred that the Empire of Byzantium was something other than that of Rome.¹⁷

The *translatio imperii* was still an article of Byzantine faith in the fourteenth century. The Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, in his account of the capture of Herakleia by the Genoese in 1352, traces the waywardness and wickedness of these "Italians, barbarians in mind and body" to their failure to realise that they were lapsed members of the Roman Empire. "The great and wonderful Empire of the Romans," writes Philotheos, "was transferred from Italy to the East when Constantine the Great, by divine command, was converted from Hellenism to faith in Christ and transformed the city of Byzantium into the present great city which he called by his own name. It was he who built here a palace and moved the council and the senate over from Old Rome to make this, the New Rome, leader in authority over all other cities. So matters stood, with the Empire of the Old Rome united under the rule of this city until the time of the reign of Leo of Armenia. Thanks to his evil and misguided war against the icons the Church of Old Rome split off from that of Constantinople; and when the Church was divided so also was the Empire of this world, and those of Old Rome elected for themselves as their emperor a barbarian king from Germany. (This severed portion of the Empire then inevitably split into various sections and factions fighting against each other.) And the situation now is such that those of the New Rome, that is to say all of us who belong to the universal Church and are subjects of the Roman Empire and therefore continue to call ourselves Romaioi, differ so greatly from those of the Old Rome and all the various principalities of that now divided nation that very few

¹⁷ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 1.13, ed. A. Reifferscheid, I (Leipzig 1884) 45-6. John Cinnamus, *Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, ed. A. Meineke (Bonn 1836) 218-20. Cf. Dölger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 98f.; P. J. Alexander, "The Donation of Constantine at Byzantium and its Earliest Use against the Western Empire," *Zbornik Radova Vizantologičkog Instituta* 8 (1963) (= *Mélanges G. Ostrogorsky* I) 12-25.

of them recognise the fact that they too were once Romans and of the same nation and Empire and that the cause of their present detachment from the Church as from the Empire is their own shortsightedness and folly."¹⁸ It is a sign of weakness rather than strength when fictions have to be invented to support alleged realities. But in defence of the Byzantines it may be said that the fables that they conjured to boost their morale and prestige were no more monstrous than those invented by the popes and emperors in the West.

That the conflict between the Eastern and Western emperors was confined to words and never came to open war was due most probably to geographical factors, to the great distance separating the two empires. Only in the south of Italy was there anything like a common boundary, and there in the eleventh century the Normans arrived to complicate the issue. But where a rival claimant to the universal *imperium* appeared as it were on the doorstep of the Byzantines they were obliged to take more direct action and to make greater concessions. Symeon of Bulgaria, unlike the rulers of western Europe, was in a position to state his claim sword in hand at the walls of Constantinople, as he did in 913; and that claim was not simply for the national independence of a Bulgarian kingdom. It was for the creation of a new universal empire to absorb and replace that of Byzantium. The Patriarch of Constantinople seems to have decided that the only way to satisfy Symeon's pride was to provide him with an imperial crown, though not of course the crown of Emperor of the Romans. As a diplomatic gesture this was feeble if not dishonest;

¹⁸ Philotheos (Kokkinos), "*Λόγος ιστορικός* on the siege and capture by the Latins of Herakleia in the reign of the pious Emperors Kantakouzenos and Palaiologos," ed. C. Triantafyllis and A. Grapputo, *Anecdota Graeca e codicibus manu scriptis Bibliothecae S. Marci* I (Venice 1874) 10–11. Somewhat similar sentiments were expressed, if the curious account of the fifteenth-century English chronicler Adam of Usk is to be believed, by some ambassadors sent by the Emperor Manuel II to Rome in 1404. They protested to Pope Boniface IX that, as the rightful heirs of Constantine the Great, they had been unjustly deprived of the Roman Empire by "the tyrant of Germany," and went so far as to beg the Pope to restore it to them together with "the kingdom of Naples and all Lombardy." Alternatively the Pope should appoint a day on which the claim could be contested in open battle before the city of Rome. The Pope is said to have replied that they had forfeited their right to the Empire by reason of their heresies and schisms, especially in the matter of the Procession of the Holy Spirit, and their deviations from Roman practice in the sacrament of Confession and the liturgical use of leavened bread. *Chronicon Adae de Usk, A.D. 1377–1421*, ed. and transl. by E. M. Thompson (London 1904) 96, 272. This passage from Adam of Usk seems to reflect a recognisable if garbled version of the Byzantine view of the West. It has been but little noticed; though cf. A. A. Vasiliev, "The Opening Stages of the Anglo-Saxon Immigration to Byzantium in the Eleventh Century," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 9 (1937) 69–70.

and the Byzantines were discouraged to learn soon afterwards that Symeon had taken to calling himself Emperor of the Bulgars *and* the Romans. But the problem was solved by his death in 927. His son and successor meekly submitted to taking the simple title of βασιλεύς, and he accepted in marriage a Byzantine princess not born in the purple.¹⁹ But Symeon's claim was to be revived in the thirteenth century by Kalojan and John Asen of Bulgaria, and in the fourteenth century by the other next-door neighbour of Byzantium in Europe, Stephen Dušan of Serbia, who had himself crowned in 1346 as Emperor of the Serbs and Romans.

What happened in the Balkans was of immediate concern to Byzantium and frequently shaped or dictated imperial policy. But what happened in France, Germany and the West was of much less compelling interest, apart from the constitutional principles involved. During the glorious era of the Macedonian emperors in the tenth and early eleventh centuries it did not much matter. No ruler in the distant West seemed likely to offer a direct challenge to the might of an emperor like Basil II. Indeed Basil was actively preparing a campaign for the recovery of the western provinces, beginning with the reconquest of Sicily from the Arabs, when he died in 1025. It was the last time that there ever seemed the remotest chance that the theory of a universal empire might be put into practice.

The decline of Byzantine power and prosperity that set in after Basil's death was particularly unfortunate as regards Byzantine relationships with the West; for it coincided with the resurgence of western Europe characterised by the Gregorian reform of the papacy and then by the Crusades. However one may interpret the schism between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople in 1054, it is highly significant that it occurred when it did. The clash of wills between Cardinal Humbert and the Patriarch Michael Cerularius was a symptom of the ideological collision between East and West in the middle of the eleventh century; for it was at this point of time that the centre of gravity of the Christian world began to move from Constantinople and the Greek East back to Rome and the Latin West. The claims of the Hildebrandine papacy seemed to the Byzantines to be every bit as extravagant and perverse as those of the German emperors. Some of the Byzantine clergy, among them

¹⁹ S. Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign* (Cambridge 1929) 80f. Ostrogorsky, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.16) 231-7; Jenkins, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 231-2.

Cerularius himself, were rather taken with the way in which the popes insisted on setting the affairs of the Church above and beyond the reach of the emperors. But this did not excuse the pope for behaving like an emperor himself.²⁰

Much has been made of the flattering words addressed by the Emperor Michael VII Doukas to the Norman leader Robert Guiscard in 1074, only twenty years after the schism, as indicative of the underlying feeling of unity between Byzantines and westerners as members of a Christian and European community.²¹ Is it not absurd, the emperor writes, that we, who are united in the Christian faith and joined by ties of common racial ancestry, should be divided and at war with one another? "For this is nothing but the cutting up of one body, the rending and separation of its very limbs." This sounds very fine and noble. But it should be noted that the agreement, of which these words are the preface, was Michael VII's third desperate attempt to come to terms with Robert Guiscard and his Norman knights who had just successfully appropriated all that remained of Byzantine Italy. The emperor had been driven to recognising the Norman conquest as a *fait accompli*; he now gave his own son Constantine in marriage to Guiscard's daughter and pandered to Norman vanity by an unusually generous gift of imperial titles and pensions.²² The language of this document is more diplomatically phrased than deeply felt. What may be described as the more honest Byzantine sentiment about the Normans and about Michael VII's concessions to them is expressed by Anna Comnena in the next generation. Far from congratulating him for his understanding of the basic unity of all European peoples, Anna angrily rebukes the emperor for his want of propriety in promoting what she calls "an alien, barbarous and wholly unsuitable marriage" between his own son and "the daughter of this barbarian" Robert.²³

In the twelfth century the Western emperor Frederick Barbarossa set his lawyers at Bologna to study the laws of Justinian and discovered

²⁰ Cf. Alexander, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.17) 25-6.

²¹ Letter of Michael VII to Robert Guiscard, ed. K. N. Sathas, *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi* (Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη) V (Venice-Paris 1876) 388-92, esp. 389. Zakythenos, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 375-6.

²² See P. Charanis, "Byzantium, the West and the Origins of the First Crusade," *Byzantion* 19 (1949) 17-24; *idem*, "The Byzantine Empire in the Eleventh Century," *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K. M. Setton, I: *The First Hundred Years*, ed. M. W. Baldwin (Philadelphia 1955) 187-8.

²³ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* 1.10, ed. Reifferscheid I.35.

to his delight that Justinian had been supreme lord not only of the State but also of the Church. Armed with this knowledge of what was after all the genuine Roman tradition, Frederick could confidently oppose the claims of the papacy. But his researches into Justinian's law also strengthened his belief that imperial sovereignty meant universal sovereignty; and this was an excellent stick with which to beat the emperor in Constantinople, whom Frederick rudely regarded as nothing more than a Greek king.²⁴ The tables were being turned on the Byzantines by the temporal as well as the spiritual rulers of the West; and by the twelfth century they were obliged either as realists to accept the unpalatable truth that they had lost the initiative in world affairs, or once again, to bury their heads in the familiar sand of the Byzantine myth.

The Emperor Manuel Komnenos, to whom Frederick Barbarossa was so uncivil, could in some sense be honoured as the first of the Byzantine realists, to the extent that he was prepared to learn from the West. Manuel had the wit to see the attractions and the possible benefits of the western way of life. He was fully conscious of his position as the one true Emperor and a firm believer in the tradition of the universal Empire, which, for a glorious moment, he recalled by launching a campaign against the Normans in south Italy.²⁵ But he seems to have felt that active co-existence with the western powers was more likely to bring them round to the Byzantine view than a policy of obstinate isolationism. He married twice, and both of his wives were westerners and not Greeks. Under his influence foreigners from the West were encouraged to come and do business or reside in Constantinople and even given responsible appointments as state officials, while the romps and antics of western chivalry became fashionable among the Byzantine aristocracy. Manuel himself unhorsed two of the most accomplished French knights in a famous tournament in Constantinople. But the Byzantine people, backed by their clergy, were not impressed by the emperor's prowess, and simply accused him of being a "Latinophile." They bitterly resented his favouritism towards the hated foreigners. Maybe they had some cause for bitterness, for they had endured many indignities and suffered many losses from the crusaders who poured through Constantinople and its territories on their way to Syria. Such experi-

²⁴ Alexander, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.17) 22-5.

²⁵ Ostrogorsky, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.16) 341-2.

ences served to reinforce their unshakeable belief in their own superiority to all the 'nations' of the West as the chosen people.

The superiority complex of the Byzantines was in fact aggravated rather than cured by physical contact with the representatives of the West who arrived in the East in increasing numbers in the twelfth century, either as crusaders or as hard-headed businessmen from Venice and Genoa. In the summing-up at the end of Volume III of his *History of the Crusades* Sir Steven Runciman writes: "Throughout the ages there have always been hopeful politicians who believe that if only the peoples of the world could come together they would love and understand each other. It is a tragic delusion."²⁶ The pent-up hatred of Byzantines for foreigners broke out in a bloody massacre of the Latins resident in Constantinople in 1182. The Crusades had magnified the misunderstandings, underlined the points of difference and confirmed the ideological separation between East and West. The leaders of the Crusades seemed to the sophisticated gentry of Constantinople a rough and uncouth lot. The rabble of ordinary crusaders spoke no known language, were grasping and bad-mannered and yet had an intolerable conceit of themselves. Anna Comnena was deeply shocked by the martial and murderous bearing of crusading bishops and priests. "The Latins," she writes, "do not have at all the same notion of a priest as we have." Indeed the whole western conception of the Crusade as a religious ideal was essentially foreign to the Byzantine mind. In itself it presupposed a completely different theory of the order of things. For the Crusades were inspired by the papacy in its supposed capacity as head of all Christendom; and this to the Byzantines was foolishness. For the war against the infidel, whether Persian, Arab or Turk, had been, since the beginning of the Christian Empire, the care of the Roman Emperor who was in fact and not merely in his own vain imagining the regent of God on earth and father of all Christians.²⁷

The damage done to the Byzantine view of the West by the early Crusades can hardly be assessed in concrete terms. A deepening of mistrust and suspicion, a strengthening of prejudices, an increasing awareness of racial differences, an obstinate withdrawal by the Byzantines into the protective shell of their tradition—these were some

²⁶ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* III (Cambridge 1954) 475.

²⁷ Cf. D. M. Nicol, "Byzantium and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century," *JEcclHist* 13 (1962) 19 and references.

of the consequences. The Byzantines began to stiffen their ranks and to become conscious of their national solidarity as Greeks. It was the Crusades that first prompted them to regard the West as one hostile block collectively known as 'the Latins', a race of people utterly distinct from the true Greek-speaking Romans. "Between us and the Latins," writes Niketas Choniates at the end of the twelfth century, "is set the widest gulf. We are poles apart. We have not a single thought in common. They are stiff-necked, with a proud affection of an upright carriage, and love to sneer at the smoothness and modesty of our manners. But we look on their arrogance and boasting and pride as a flux of the snivel which keeps their noses in the air; and we tread them down by the might of Christ, who giveth unto us the power to trample upon the adder and upon the scorpion."²⁸

The damage done to Byzantium by the Fourth Crusade could, of course, be assessed in concrete terms. The westerners themselves, with what the Byzantines would have called their customary materialism, made some rough calculations. Geoffrey of Villehardouin estimated that the amount of loot taken at the sack of Constantinople in 1204 was greater than that taken in any city since the creation of the world and might have realised 400,000 silver marks, not to speak of at least 10,000 horses that changed hands. The enthronement of an alien emperor in their capital, the appointment of a foreign and heretical patriarch, the deliberate conquest and dismemberment of their provinces by the Latins—these experiences inevitably confirmed all the Byzantines' fears and suspicions of the westerners. They were not concerned to argue and debate, as modern historians do, whether the blame for the diversion of the Fourth Crusade lay with the Pope or the Venetians or the Franks or the Lombards. For them the collective guilt of the crime was fastened on the Latins, the "Latin dogs," the adulterers of the faith, the forerunners of antichrist. It was barely possible after this disaster for the Byzantines ever to think dispassionately or in rational terms about the West. What is remarkable is that some of them made the effort to do so, and a few succeeded.

It is commonly said that the Byzantine Empire never rallied after the mortal blow of the Fourth Crusade. Territorial, economic and population statistics may show this to be so; the restored empire of

²⁸ Niketas Choniates, *Historia. De Andronico Comneno*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1835) 391 line 24—392 line 12; transl. by R. J. H. Jenkins, *The Cambridge Medieval History IV.2* (Cambridge 1967) 81.

the Palaiologi after 1261 was soon to be reduced to the little measure of Constantinople, Thessalonica, a part of Greece and the fringes of the Aegean Sea. But the cultural and intellectual life of the empire seemed to thrive and grow in proportion to its material decline. Hatred of the West was now more firmly rooted than ever among the conservative majority of Byzantines. It was sometimes to be inflamed beyond endurance by the latinophile policy of emperors desperate for help against their enemies. But among the intelligentsia and the ruling aristocracy in the last two centuries of the Byzantine Empire there were, one might say, two views of the West, one realistic, the other romantic. They were minority views, both contrary to the ostrich-like attitude of the conservatives.

The realistic view was that the emperor must come to terms with the West, even if it meant making certain concessions. Its greatest exponent was the first emperor of the restoration, Michael VIII Palaiologos. Michael was firmly persuaded that Constantinople had been liberated from the Latins and restored to him in 1261 by a miracle of divine favour. But he was determined not to tempt Providence too far; for he was fully aware that the Latins, having tasted the fruits of Byzantium, now appreciated the value of the prize that they had lost and would return in force to recapture it. Faced with the prospect of a large-scale invasion of his empire by Charles of Anjou, Michael VIII courted the favour of the only western power that could exercise a restraining influence on him, namely the papacy. Michael's negotiations with the papacy, which ultimately brought about the so-called Union of Lyons in 1274, were the product of a cool, almost cynically realistic appraisal of the political situation. The thing above all others which the popes had hoped to gain out of the miserable experiment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople was the acknowledgement by what they chose to call the Greek church of the universal supremacy of Rome. This Michael was prepared to give them in return for their assurance that they would not preach or sanction a repetition of the Fourth Crusade. But to sell this policy to his own subjects proved even more difficult than he had imagined. It was useless to impress on them that the pope lived far away across the sea and would never be likely to come to Constantinople to enforce his jurisdiction; or to assure them that not one jot or one tittle would be altered in the Orthodox creed and doctrine. For most of those whom he was trying to persuade, and notably the clergy, clung

fast to the irrational faith of their ancestors, which their emperor seemed to have lost, that their empire was ordained by God and its capital guarded by God. The fact that it had succumbed to its enemies in 1204 was due entirely to the sins of its inhabitants and to God's anger with them; the fact that it had been restored was clear evidence of God's renewed favour. But God's favour would quickly be withdrawn again if his people sacrificed their spiritual integrity on the altar of political necessity by making compromises with the wicked and heretical Latins. Michael VIII saved his empire from its western enemies, but he got little thanks from his subjects. They accused him of selling his soul and their Church to Rome, nicknamed him the *Λατινόφρων*, 'Latin-minded', and denied him the right of Christian burial when he died.

His successor Andronikos II cravenly retreated from the naked light shed on the Byzantine myth by the harsh realities of western Europe. The Latins and the popes of the fourteenth century periodically considered an invasion or a crusade for the incorporation of Constantinople in a temporal or spiritual empire of the West. But with Charles of Anjou gone their chances of success were never very great. It was left to the commercial republics of Italy to bleed the dying body of the Byzantine Empire while its heart was steadily eaten away by the Turks. The idea of enlisting military help from the West to defend Byzantium against the Turks constantly recurred to the minds of the succeeding emperors; and the more realistic of them were prepared, as Michael VIII had been, to come to terms with the papacy so that they might be put on the crusading list. The Emperor John V, predisposed to a liking for the West by the upbringing of his Catholic mother Anne of Savoy, proposed an extravagantly naïve bargain to Pope Innocent VI in 1355, offering, in return for a fleet and an army, to convert the whole Byzantine people to Catholicism within six months. Seventeen years later, an older and a wiser man, he went alone to Rome and made his personal submission to the pope. But neither his Church nor his people supported him, and he was arrested at Venice as an insolvent debtor on his way home. In 1399 his son Manuel II set out cap in hand to beg from the western powers the funds or the troops to save his empire from extinction. He visited Venice, Paris and London. On his way from Dover to London he was royally entertained by the Austin friars at Canterbury. King Henry IV, who had plenty of other things to do, having just succeeded in

getting Richard II off the throne of England, nevertheless escorted the eastern emperor from Blackheath to the city of London in solemn procession and spent part of the Christmas holiday with him at Eltham. Manuel was touched and gratified by the hospitality and presents showered upon him. He made a great impression too, but more by his pathetic plight than by his grandeur. Adam of Usk, who seems to have met him in London, writes: "I thought within myself, what a grievous thing it was that this great Christian prince from the farther east should perforce be driven by unbelievers to visit the distant islands of the west, to seek aid against them. My God! What dost thou, ancient glory of Rome?"²⁹ Manuel's visit to the cities of western Europe did much to stimulate cultural exchanges between Greeks and Latins; but otherwise, from all his wanderings he got nothing but presents and promises. The kings and princes of the West were too busy putting their own houses in order at the turn of the fourteenth century to have much to offer except sympathy to the emperor in Constantinople.

So it came about that, on the eve of the empire's fall, the Emperor John VIII and his patriarch with a great cloud of Orthodox witnesses went to Italy and signed away the orthodoxy of their Church at the Council of Florence in 1439. Desperate situations demand desperate measures. But to most of the citizens of Constantinople, who were daily expecting the Turks to break into their city and not enjoying expense-account luncheons in Florence, it seemed that their emperor had signed their death warrant. By betraying their faith and their Church he had also betrayed the whole Byzantine myth. The die-hards of the Byzantine imperial tradition in Constantinople positively rejoiced that the promised crusade from the West, the reward of their Emperor's betrayal, came to grief at the hands of the Turks at Varna in 1444. For they believed, as their ancestors had believed in the thirteenth century, that if the Empire survived it would only be through the loyalty of its inhabitants to the faith of their fathers; if it fell, as fall it did fourteen years after the Council of Florence, it would be because that faith had been contaminated by the errors of the Latins.

It could be argued that the greatest realists of all at the hour of the

²⁹ Ostrogorsky, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.16) 493-4 and references. *Chronicon Adae de Usk* (*supra* n.18) 57, 220.

empire's death were those few Greeks who squarely faced the fact that the management of their world, as opposed to the alien world of the West, was now committed to the care of an emperor who was not a Christian. The Byzantine historians Laonikos Chalkokondyles and Kritoboulos of Imbros, writing just after 1453, accepted the fact that the Christian Empire had given place to the Ottoman Empire, and indeed wrote their histories to show how this had come about and why it should be regarded as part of the divine dispensation. But it was still the one empire, its capital was still the Queen of Cities and the hub of their world; and its new ruler, the Sultan Muhammad II, was its *βασιλεύς*, its Emperor, appointed by God. The continuation of the Empire in another form was clear and logical. But in the nature of things there could still only be one Emperor. Kritoboulos addresses his history to the Sultan in these words: "To the supreme *αὐτοκράτωρ* Emperor of Emperors, Muhammad . . . by the will of God invincible lord of land and sea."³⁰ The sultan was the direct inheritor of the last Christian *βασιλεύς* of the Romans, and so of Constantine himself. Even as late as the eighteenth century we find this explanation of the Turkish conquest being openly expressed by the hierarchy of the Greek Church. The conquest is explained as God's way of preserving the Orthodox faith from the corruption of western heresies; the rule of the Sultan-Basileus is part of the divine economy for the chosen people. In the *Paternal Exhortation* of the Patriarch of Jerusalem published in Constantinople in 1798 we read: "Behold how our merciful and omniscient Lord has managed to preserve the integrity of our holy Orthodox faith and to save (us) all; he brought forth out of nothing the powerful Empire of the Ottomans, which he set up in the place of our Empire of the Romaioi, which had begun in some ways to deviate from the path of the Orthodox faith; and he raised this Empire of the Ottomans above every other in order to prove beyond doubt that it came into being by the will of God. . . . For there is no authority except that deriving from God."³¹

The romantic view of the West was held by a minority of highly-educated Byzantines in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One can understand why the conservatives in Byzantium, even in their

³⁰ Critoboul din Imbros (Kritoboulos), *Din Domnia lui Mahomed al II-lea anii 1451-1467*, ed. V. Grecu (*Scriptores Byzantini IV*, Bucharest 1963) 25 lines 4-6.

³¹ Th. H. Papadopoulos, *Studies and Documents relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination* (Brussels 1952) 143.

city's darkest hour, regarded the West with suspicion; why, as one of them expressed it in a well-known outburst, he would rather see the sultan's turban in his city than the Roman mitre. What is perhaps more difficult to understand is why so many of the Byzantines did in fact contrive to sink their prejudices, even to the extent of becoming themselves westernised. What made so many of the Greeks accept the Union of Florence in 1439, knowing full well that on Rome's terms it implied abandoning their whole conception of empire, recognising not only the supremacy of the pope but also the superiority of the Latin West over the Greek East?

This was a thought that had occurred to a few Byzantine intellectuals even as early as the fourteenth century, though they might not state it in quite such embarrassingly definite terms. The ominous advance of the Turks and the evident impoverishment and decline of the empire had led several of the intelligentsia to question the inherited article of faith that their Empire and Church were God's last word on the order of the world. In the fourteenth century men like Theodore Metochites, Grand Logothete of Andronikos II, or Demetrios Kydones, prime minister of John Cantacuzene and John V, were already casting about for a substitute theory that might bear closer relation to the facts. Metochites derived comfort from the reflexion that other empires had come and gone; he even went so far as to say that the Roman Empire at the height of its glory had never been truly oecumenical or universal, which implied that, if the pessimists were correct in thinking that the end of the universal empire was at hand, it did not mean the end of the universe. For a Byzantine this was a revolutionary idea, since most of the prophets had foretold that Constantinople would endure until the Second Coming.³²

But the new ideas did not stop short at the re-evaluation of the Byzantine myth. Now that western Europe had something more profound and rewarding to offer than the arts of jousting and chivalry, some Byzantines were quick to see what they were missing. Demetrios Kydones had the freshness of mind to realise that culturally as well as politically the moment had come at which the Byzantines were being outstripped by the westerners. For Kydones the discovery

³² I. Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of its Intellectuals," *DOPapers* 15 (1961) 183.

that the Latins had much to offer on the intellectual plane was exhilarating rather than humiliating. His position at court made it necessary for him to learn Latin in order to cope with the emperor's correspondence and western ambassadors. The Dominican friar who gave him lessons set him to translate the *Summa contra Gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas for his homework; and "the world of Latin theology was suddenly opened up to him." Kydones had, in his own words, "tasted the lotus" of Latin thought and culture. He could no longer subscribe to the ancient illusion that the world was divided into "Hellenes and barbarians." "Before this," he writes, "there was no one to persuade our people that there is any intelligence in the Latins, and that they are able to discuss anything besides these paltry and 'banausic' arts (of war, commerce and huckstering), because the long separation of the two peoples has resulted in much ignorance of each other."³³

Kydones had accompanied the Emperor John V on his journey to Rome in 1369. It seemed inevitable that he himself should go over to the Roman Church and finally take up residence in Italy and the West. But it was not entirely a case of the rats leaving the sinking ship. Kydones and others like him were lured away by the greater security and more exciting intellectual life of the West; but always they had in their minds the prospect of saving the wreck of Constantinople from total submersion by interesting the powers of western Europe in its fate. Kydones never ceased to hope that one day the popes would preach the crusade that would rescue his homeland from the Turks.

By the fifteenth century, when the situation in the East was still more critical, even churchmen like Bessarion of Nicaea and Isidore of Kiev chose to desert the darkening Orthodox world in favour of the bright lights of Italy. Both were created cardinals for their devoted labours at the Council of Florence; for both saw in union with the Roman Church and acknowledgement of papal sovereignty not only

³³ Demetrios Kydones, *Apologia della propria fede I: Ai Greci Ortodossi*, ed. G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti* (Studi e Testi 56, Vatican 1931) 363–6, esp. 363 line 30f, 365 line 84f; transl. by K. M. Setton, "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance," *ProcAmPhilosSoc* 100, 1 (1956) 53–4. The 'Gentiles' of Thomas Aquinas become the 'Hellenes' of Demetrios Kydones, who entitled his rendering: τὸ τοῦ Θωμᾶ καθ' Ἑλλήνων βιβλίον. See Kydones, *Apologia* 363 line 28; cf. A. Turyn, *Codices Graeci Vaticani saeculis XIII et XIV scripti annorumque notis instructi* (Vatican 1964) 150–4.

a promising alternative to the now doomed concept of a world-empire ruled from Constantinople, but also a means of bringing the East into contact with the new and vigorous life of western Europe. Bessarion knew his countrymen, however, and tactfully pointed out to them that they would lose nothing of their dignity by taking lessons from the Latins, since they would only be reaping the harvest of the seeds sown in the West by their own ancestors. He sugared the pill by arguing that the cultural superiority which the westerners were then enjoying was built upon the foundations of Byzantine culture which they had acquired long ago. As an interpreter of ideas between the Greek East and Latin West Bessarion takes the prize. He was, as Lorenzo Valla describes him, *Latinorum graecissimus, Graecorum latinissimus*.³⁴

But his view of the West was not characteristically Byzantine. It was that of a romantic rather than a realist; that of one who sought the comfort of a new myth rather than live with the depressing consequences of the tradition into which he had been born. A romantic or an escapist of another kind was his contemporary George Gemistos Plethon who, though equally interested in bridging the intellectual gap between East and West, despaired of Christianity altogether and tried to evolve a completely new philosophy of life based on Plato and a renaissance of Hellenism.

The Byzantine ignorance of the Latins of which Demetrios Kydones complains was not due to lack of contact, social or political. The Byzantines of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were all too well aware of why they disliked the Latins. Some of the intellectuals were able to rise above their prejudices. But for the ordinary people Greek translations of Thomas Aquinas brought little comfort. Such a one was Alexios Makrembolites in the middle of the fourteenth century. Makrembolites was no great scholar. But his surviving works are eloquent of the feelings and reactions of what may be called the middle class of Constantinople a hundred years before its fall. When speculating on the reasons for the evident collapse of his world, Makrembolites blames the social injustices sanctioned by the rich of Constantinople at the expense of the poor; he blames his own fellow-citizens for their failure to adhere to the precepts of the Gospels; and he explains the alarming success of the godless Turks by their

³⁴ Ševčenko, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.32) 177; Setton, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.33) 73.

“innate moral superiority to the Byzantines. . . . For in spite of their abominable faith, many Turks were like true Christians in their deeds and lacked only the name of Christian.” But above all he blames the Italians, the westerners, who were such an obnoxious feature of the life of the capital in his day. By the generosity of previous emperors they had been granted commercial quarters and settlements across the Golden Horn, and now they had turned and bitten the hand that fed them. But what could one expect of Latins, of Italians from Genoa, or rather from “the fire of Gehenna,” whose corruption and savagery surpassed even that of the Scythians and the Arabs. They were like the snake that killed the farmer who put it in his bosom; and it seemed appropriate that those who professed to worship the Cross and then took up arms against it should have the snake as their emblem.³⁵

Since the tragedy of the Fourth Crusade the western attitude towards the Greeks, compounded of blatant hostility and barefaced exploitation, had in fact sharpened the Byzantine sense of pride and exclusiveness into a much more cutting weapon than it had been even in the great days of Basil II. From being a passive, complacent state of mind it had become an active obsession. The greatest insult to a Greek in the thirteenth century and after was to be told that he had acquired the habits of a Latin or a Frank. One of the imperial legates returning from the Council of Lyons in 1274 was taunted with the words *Φράγγος καθέστηκας*, ‘You have become a Frank’.³⁶ Michael Apostolis, one of the refugees in Crete after the Turkish conquest of Constantinople, complains in a letter to Cardinal Bessarion: “From the time I expressed my opinion of the Latins and supported the adherents of the Roman Church with words—from that time they (the Greeks) call out to me (in the streets): ‘Look, the devil got him too. Look at the accursed one, behold the wretch!’” In Greece today the term of abuse considered appropriate to a con-

³⁵ Alexios Makrembolites, “*Λόγος ιστορικὸς* treating of the weakness of the Genoese when they arrived in the country of the Greeks and of the benefactions of the Emperors towards them, and of their consequent prosperity and expansion and their subsequent wickedness and intrigue against their benefactors,” ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμητικῆς Σταχυολογίας* I (1891) 144–5, 147, 148. Cf. I. Ševčenko, “Alexios Makrembolites and his ‘Dialogue between the Rich and the Poor,’” *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 6 (1960) 194–9.

³⁶ Cited by D. J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1959) 271, from Metochites in M. H. Laurent, *Le bienheureux Innocent V (Pierre de Tarentaise) et son temps* (Studi e Testi 129, Vatican 1947) 424 n.23.

vert to Roman Catholicism is still ἐφράγκειες—‘you have become a Frank’.³⁷ The Byzantine view of the West dies hard.

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³⁷ Cited by D. J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice. Studies in the dissemination of Greek learning from Byzantium to western Europe* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1962) 95.