

## Byzantine Attitudes toward Islam during the Late Middle Ages

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THE PRIMARY SOURCE for tracing Byzantine views of Islam is, of course, the body of mediaeval Greek literature, some of which is specifically devoted to Islam, while other writings reflect these attitudes only indirectly. But this literature comes from the hands of a restricted number of *literati*, and though some of its contents undoubtedly filtered down to the masses in one form or another, its most immediate audience were the literate upper classes, the carriers of Byzantine formal culture.

The utterances and articulated attitudes of the illiterate masses toward Islam have largely gone unrecorded. Traces have survived in the works of the *literati*, as when they record certain popular beliefs and prophecies. Beyond these a certain element in the folklore of the masses has survived, on a limited scale. Thus both the upper and lower classes were aware of respective attitudes toward Islam, and undoubtedly these writings and beliefs formed a common framework of attitudes toward Islam within which the popular or learned ingredients predominated, according to the social and intellectual outlook of each individual. But, where contemporary literature and surviving records of popular belief fail, we are forced back on induction from actions and deeds.

Finally, one must take into account the bearers of Islam with whom the Byzantines came into contact during this late period. Though to modern historians Islam as a religion and the Turks as conquerors of the Byzantines are two distinct and discernible historical entities, they were often indistinguishable to contemporary Greek observers. Thus the frequent confusion of Turk and Muslim, of ethnic and religious qualities, further and erroneously colored the Byzantine attitudes toward Islam. As the Turk was also a Muslim, the mediaeval Greek often attributed characteristics which were Turkish to the Islamic

religion. In this case we would be concerned not so much with Islam as with what the Greeks considered Islam to be.

## I

The early Byzantine attitudes toward Islam emerge primarily from the genre of religious polemic of the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The remainder of Byzantine literature from this earlier period, as well as recorded historical events, tells us considerably less. Though there were very extensive religious conversions in the former Byzantine provinces of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, these largely affected the heretical Monophysite populations; the Byzantine authors do not concern themselves with the fate of these populations under Arab rule, and their actions reflect Monophysite rather than Orthodox views of Islam. The religious polemic between Islam and Byzantine Christianity arose in the lands of the Caliphate, where such Orthodox clergy as John of Damascus and Theodore Abu Qurra felt the need to defend the Christian religion against the attacks of Muslims who now held political mastery. As defence also implies attack, these theologians defended Christianity by attacking the Islamic religion. It was through these Orthodox Christians in Islamic lands that a detailed, and hostile, knowledge of Islam came into Byzantium during the ninth century in the writings of Nicetas of Byzantium. There were, from the beginning, four principal categories in this religious disputation: (1) the reasons for the historico-political situation, explained in terms of God's will, (2) dogma, (3) ethics, and (4) cult practice. Since they remained constant in Byzantine religious polemic and carried over into the late period, I shall defer discussing them.

The classical Byzantine view of the Byzantine Empire was founded on the Graeco-Romano-Christian theories of a world state ruled by a saviour emperor who was the vicar of Christ. He ruled over an *oecumene* in which the religion was Christian and the formal culture Greek. The ancient antithesis between Greek and barbarian was

<sup>1</sup> W. Eichner, "Die Nachrichten über den Islam bei den Byzantinern," *Der Islam* 23 (1936) 133-62, 197-244. C. Guterbock, *Der Islam im Lichte der byzantinischen Polemik* (Berlin 1912). A. Abel, "La polémique damascénienne et son influence sur les origines de la théologie musulmane," *L'Élaboration de l'Islam* (Paris 1961) 61-85. J. Meyendorff, "Byzantine Views of Islam," *DOPapers* 18 (1964) 113-32. A.-T. Houry, *Der theologische Streit der Byzantinern mit dem Islam* (Paderborn 1969).

essentially retained and metathesized into the antithesis between New Rome and the barbarian world. In this traditional Byzantine view *imperium*, divine providence, Greek culture, and therefore superiority, were the monopoly of Byzantium.<sup>2</sup> This *Weltanschauung*, which was characteristic of the upper social classes, determined in large measure the Byzantine attitudes toward Islam. During the period of the Macedonian expansion from the ninth to the eleventh century, the pretensions of such a theory were more easily fitted to reality than they were during the later period. After the appearance of the Turks the disparity between theoretical claims to superiority and the daily demonstrations of political inferiority increased greatly with the progress of time. Psychologically the Byzantine attitudes toward Islam were based upon the formal Byzantine self-image, but Islamic victory began to erode and then to cause a rearrangement of this self-image.

The broadly oscillating fortunes of war had a direct effect on certain Byzantine attitudes toward Islam. At the onset of Arab expansion Byzantium suffered the loss of her fairest provinces. Later, under the direction of the Macedonian dynasty the Byzantines took the offensive and effected substantial reconquests. But the internal decline of the state and the conquests of the Turks in the late period led to the destruction of the empire. The traditional values and attitudes which the Byzantines entertained about Islam and themselves were called into question by an unparalleled succession of catastrophes stretching over the four centuries from Manzikert to the fall of Constantinople.

The first and most important impact of Islam on Byzantine society during this later period was military conquest and political subjugation. Together they forced Byzantine *literati* to offer explanations for the shocking decline of Byzantium and the success of Islam. There were, fundamentally, two categories of responses, secular and religious.<sup>3</sup> Of the two, the secular interpretation deviated further from the classical Byzantine *Weltanschauung* which the upper class had

<sup>2</sup> O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell* (Darmstadt 1956). N. H. Baynes "The Hellenistic Civilization and East Rome," *Byzantine Studies and other Essays* (London 1955) 116-43. K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner. Die alten Bezeichnungen als Ausdruck eines neuen Kulturbewusstseins* (Munich 1954).

<sup>3</sup> C. J. G. Turner, "Pages from the Byzantine Philosophy of History," *BZ* 57 (1964) 346-73. H.-G. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner* (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 114, Rome 1937). I. Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of its Intellectuals," *DOPapers* 15 (1961) 167-86.

entertained of their empire and culture. For at the outset such authors removed divine providence from their aetiological schemes, an act which implied that from its very beginning the fortunes of the empire had not been ordained by God.

The writings of the Byzantine statesman and humanist Theodore Metochites (1269/70–1332) present a clear formulation of the attempt to explain the Turkish victories and Byzantine decline in a secularist manner, or at least in terms not traditional to Christian and Muslim concepts.<sup>4</sup> Metochites had witnessed the political humiliation of Byzantium in the critical decades of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. By that time the Turks had conquered the empire's richest provinces in western Asia Minor, and the Byzantines were retreating before the Serbs in the Balkans. The commercial stranglehold of the Italian cities was consuming the economic strength of the empire from within, and all these factors heightened the evils which dynastic and social strife threatened. Obviously the old Byzantine *Weltanschauung* did not correspond to the realities of his day.

Though Metochites sees certain immediate causes for the fall from greatness—dissension, envy, stupidity, luxury, abuse of religious life—his writings are permeated by the concept of Tyche. It is Tyche, rather than the Christian God, which guides the affairs of men, and Tyche is blind and arbitrary. The lives of men, nations and lands are governed by inconstancy, uncertainty, oscillations, and the only certainty in life is this very uncertainty. He soliloquizes upon the inconstancy of the history of states in chapter 110 of the *Miscellanea*, which appropriately deals with the 'Scythians'. The theme is that nations which formerly ruled over others were then enslaved in their turn. "This was formerly the case with the Assyrians who, having failed, passed under the Persians, the Persians and all their subjects passed under the Macedonians, and the Macedonians under the Romans," he wrote.<sup>5</sup> "And these events constantly occur in an alternating fashion according to chance of both time and Tyche. Nor is there anything constant in human affairs nor unchangingly eternal. Just as there is in an individual man, or in whatever animal, birth, progress toward the prime, the prime, afterward decay, and finally destruction and death, thus is it also in human affairs, politics and despotisms. These are to

<sup>4</sup> Fundamental is H.-G. Beck, *Theodoros Metochites, Die Krise des byzantinischen Weltbildes im 14. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1952).

<sup>5</sup> Theodore Metochites, *Miscellanea*, ed. T. Kiessling (Leipzig 1821) 725–26.

be seen in constant flux and change, in no way remaining constant, but coming into being, advancing, little by little decaying and changing into the opposite state, coming to an end and dying.”

In substituting the old pagan Tyche for divine providence Metochites had broken directly with the canonized interpretation of the Byzantine phenomenon. In the *Miscellanea* one looks in vain for Christianity's rival, but Islam is virtually ignored. He views the Turks as though they had remained pagan tribesmen, untouched by Islam. Thus his 'secular' view of Byzantine history seems to be further reflected in his treatment of the Turks, whom he apparently divests of their Islam.

Other writers too, both thinkers and politicians, presented Byzantine history in untraditional ways. George Gemistus Pletho represents an extreme in which the Roman component of the Byzantine *Weltanschauung* is replaced by a pagan Hellenism, and in the realm of causation it is pagan fate, *είμαρμένη*, which determines men's fortunes. The Emperor Manuel Palaeologus and the historian Chalcocondyles record the victories of Islam as more the consequence of ordinary than divine factors.<sup>6</sup>

Though *τύχη* and *είμαρμένη* enjoyed a certain vogue in the explanations which some prominent late Byzantine intellectuals gave for the Islamic victories and Byzantine defeats, their view was not the dominant one. The majority of authors retained the old Byzantine view of imperial, providential and cultural monopoly, and proceeded to view the alterations in Byzantine prosperity against the background of this complex of ideas. Consequently their attitudes toward Islam were conditioned by the old ideology which had asserted a divinely ordained Byzantine Empire. So long as the rulers and people had remained pious and moral, the empire had prospered. But when the Byzantines fell into sinful ways, divine displeasure sent the Turkish Muslims as an instrument of chastisement. The rôle of Islam and its victories over the Christian Empire are thus made an integral part of the older theological concept of the Byzantine Empire. The eleventh-century historian Attaliates remarks that when the Turks first invaded the provinces inhabited by the Armenians and Syrians, the Greeks reasoned that the invasions were a punishment sent by God for the heresy of these peoples. When, however, the Turks entered the

<sup>6</sup> Turner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) *passim*. Theod. Metoch. *Misc.* 792. E. Trapp, *Manuel II Palaiologos. Dialoge mit einem "Perser"* (Vienna 1966) 56–57.

Greek portion of Anatolia, the Greeks changed their minds and decided it was their own sins which had caused the invasions. In a differing version Michael the Syrian declared that God had sent the Turks to punish the Greeks for their religious persecution of the Monophysite Christians of eastern Anatolia. Even many Turks seem to have considered their victories over the Greeks as having been due to the wickedness of the latter and God's desire to punish them. The synodal documents of the late thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which refer to the sad condition of the Christian communities within the Turkish Anatolian emirates explain these conditions in a similar fashion. There were also ideas among some that the coming of the Turks foretold the days of Anti-Christ and the end of the world.<sup>7</sup>

One of the more interesting texts of religious causation is chapter 47 from the work *Seven Times Seven Chapters* of the Byzantine preacher Joseph Bryennius, entitled "Some causes of the pains which afflict us." Bryennius, like so many moralizing preachers throughout history, bemoaned the fact that the morals of his own time were far below those of the "olden days," and so God had punished the Christians through the Turks. "If one who views the chastisements inflicted upon us by God is astonished and perplexed, let him consider not only these but our wickedness as well, and then he will be amazed that we have not been struck by thunderbolts. For there is no form of evil which we do not anxiously pursue through all of life."<sup>8</sup>

Bryennius complains of virulent irregularities in religious life. For example, some are baptized by single immersion, others by triple. Many Christians do not know how, or simply refuse, to make the sign of the cross. Priests perform ordinations, administer communion and remit sins all for cash payment. They live with their wives before marriage, and the monks cohabit with the nuns. There is no blasphemy which Christians do not employ. "We grumble at God whenever it rains and whenever it does not rain; because he creates summer heat or cold weather; because he gives wealth to some and allows

<sup>7</sup> Michael Attaliates, ed. I. Bekker (*CSHistByz*, Bonn 1853) 140–41. Joannes Scylitzes, ed. I. Bekker, II (*CSHistByz*, Bonn 1839) 686–87. Joh. Schiltberger, *Reisen . . . in Europa, Asia und Afrika von 1394 bis 1427*, ed. K. F. Neumann (Munich 1859) 133–34. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, ed. and tr. J. B. Chabot (Paris 1899) III.154. F. Miklosich et J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (Vienna 1890) VI.61–62.

<sup>8</sup> L. Oeconomus, "L'état intellectuel et moral des Byzantins vers le milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après une page de Joseph Bryennios," *Mélanges Charles Diehl* I (Paris 1930) 227.

others to be poor; because the south wind rises; because a great north wind blows, and we simply appoint ourselves irreconcilable judges of God.”<sup>9</sup> The morality of the laity is not superior to that of the clergy. “Not only men, but the race of women also, are not ashamed to sleep as nakedly as when they were born. They give over immature daughters to corruption. They dress their wives in men’s clothing. We are not ashamed to celebrate the holy days of the feasts with flutes, all satanic songs, carousals, drunkennesses and other shameful customs.”<sup>10</sup>

The low moral level is matched by widespread crass superstition, surviving from pagan antiquity. Future events are predicted by the movements of icons; omens are taken from greetings and farewells, and in the taking of auguries the cries of domestic fowl and flights of ravens are observed; people deceive themselves in believing, like astrologers, that hours, fates, chances, the zodiac, planets, control life; they believe in the Nereids of the sea and that spirits inhabit the land. Some burn incense before fig trees, cucumber plants and house plants; others greet the new moon and worship it; calends are celebrated, the amulets of March are worn, wreathes are placed on houses in May, and the jumping over of fires is practised. “Spells are our refuge in the fertility of fields, in health and increase of flocks, fortune in the hunts, fruitfulness of the vineyards. The pursuit of sin grows and the flight of virtue accelerates.”<sup>11</sup>

Society has come apart at the seams and is disintegrating. “Our rulers are unjust, those who oversee our affairs are rapacious, the judges accept gifts, the mediators are liars, the city dwellers are deceivers, the rustics are unintelligible, and all are useless. Our virgins are more shameless than prostitutes, the widows more curious than they ought to be, the married women disdain and keep not faith, the young men are licentious and the aged drunkards. The nuns (have) insulted their calling, the priests have forgotten God, the monks have strayed from the straight roads. . . . Many of us live in gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, foulness, licentiousness, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, envy and theft. We have become arrogant, braggart, avaricious, selfish, ungrateful, disobedient, irreconcilable . . . It is these things and others like them which bring down upon us the chastisements of God.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Oeconomus, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 227.

<sup>10</sup> Oeconomus, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 227.

<sup>11</sup> Oeconomus, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 228.

<sup>12</sup> Oeconomus, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 228.

## II

The basic secular and religious explanations of Byzantine failure and Muslim success reveal only certain broad attitudes toward Islam. In the one case the secularist often ignores Islam, in the other the Byzantines do mention Islam, but only in the negative sense of considering Muslims the vehicle by which God is chastising the errant Greeks. Though such a historical rôle did not necessarily prove the superiority of the Islamic religion, at the same time it did not prove its religious inferiority to Christianity. What then, in the eyes of the Christians, were the signs and proof of the fact that religiously Islam was inferior to Christianity? In order to answer this fundamental question Greek authors once more turned to religious polemic. Essentially a religious exercise, polemic retained the old ideological outlook wherein the Byzantine Empire was divinely ordained. The polemicists of the later period followed the older categories which earlier authors had established and in this respect were not innovative. That which is new in the revival of religious polemic is the sense of immediacy and relevance. The Turks were now threatening the heartlands of the empire, and the subjugated Christians were being exposed to the relentless forces of cultural absorption, that is to say, Islamization. Much of this literature was composed not as a theoretical literary or religious exercise but with a view to specific circumstances.

The twelfth-century author Bartholomaeus of Edessa wrote in a city which was the focus of very bitter warfare between Christianity and Islam, which changed hands frequently, and which finally fell victim to a frightful massacre at the hands of the Muslims. All this is reflected in the vitriol and virulence of Bartholomaeus' refutation of Islam. The disputations of Gregory Palamas transpired in the domains of the Ottoman sultan Orhan, where, he relates, both Christians and Muslims asked him repeatedly to explain the religious significance of the Turkish conquest. When the Turks finally allowed a Greek metropolitan to re-enter Ephesus thirty-five years after the conquest, Matthew of Ephesus soon got into difficulties as a result of frequent religious debates with the newly settled Muslims. The emperor John Cantacuzene composed his polemical treatise at the request of a Turk from the Ottoman court who had fled to Byzantium and then converted to Christianity. Perhaps the most remarkable of such 'relevant' compositions is the treatise which Manuel Palaeologus recorded of



his twenty-six debates with the Persian *müderris* of Ankara in 1390–91. These examples emphasize two interesting points: all levels of Byzantine society were concerned with the Islamic advance, and so were compelled to reformulate certain aspects of their *Weltanschauung*. It was such a burning issue that not only clergymen but emperors themselves turned their pens to the subject. In fact the search for new source materials led Demetrius Cydones to translate the important Latin treatise of the Florentine Dominican Ricoldo da Monte Croce (†1320), the *Improbatio Alcorani*, into Greek between 1354–60. This became the most important reference for late Greek authors writing on Islam.

Having satisfied themselves that the Turkish Muslims had prevailed over Byzantium because of the sins of the Christians, the Greek authors embarked upon a demonstration of Islam's inferiority to the Christian religion. First and foremost they rejected the revealed character of the Muslim scriptures and the status of Muhammad as a prophet. The Koran is not the law of God because the Old and New Testaments (which Muslims accept) do not prophesy Muhammad's coming and revelation. And, the polemicists continue, this is proved by further considerations. The Koran differs in literary form, being written in verse, from other divinely revealed texts. Its contents, too, are at variance with the essentials of God's law and even with the teachings of the philosophers on virtue, for Muhammad said nothing of virtue but concerned himself with war and rapine. The Koran is not only self-contradictory, illogical, and devoid of proper order and arrangement, but it contains falsehoods. For these reasons, the polemic of Ricoldo-Cydones concludes, the Koran is not truly a revealed book.<sup>13</sup>

The Christian theologians dwelt in particular upon the proposition that Muhammad's revelation was not satisfactorily witnessed, as had been that of Christ. The coming of Christ had been prophesied in the Old Testament, and it had been witnessed by the numerous miracles of the New Testament and by the Evangelists. These miracles, as essential to the witnessing of divine revelations, continued long after Christ's sojourn on earth. The very spread of Christianity by the Apostles and the gift of tongues, the miracles wrought at the graves

<sup>13</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, in PG 154 (1866) 1052–1112.

of the martyrs, all present valid testimonial to Christian revelation.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Muhammad's mission was not only unmentioned in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, it was not reliably witnessed either by individuals or by miracles. Palamas and other Greek polemicists argued that nothing can be accepted without proof or witness, and this proof can be of two categories, proof from Muhammad's works and proof from reliable individuals. Both were lacking. Muhammad did not resurrect the dead, heal the sick, or halt the winds and waves, as had Christ. And the few miracles which were claimed by the Muslims were not satisfactorily witnessed. Who saw Gabriel convey God's revelation to Muhammad as the latter slept? Even if the angel had actually appeared to Muhammad, it was the angel rather than Muhammad who was the real apostle. And was it not strange that though the Muslims required several witnesses to the taking of a wife, yet they accepted Muhammad's miraculous leap to heaven on the sole testimony of Fatima? The conclusion of the argument was that Muhammad had come to deceive. Christ had warned that though prophecy had come to an end with John, there would be pseudo-prophets. The basic attitude of the Christians in regard to Muhammad and the Koran was that they were both false because they were unprophesied and unwitnessed.<sup>15</sup>

Doctrinally the Christian theologians charged the Muslims with believing in a God who was pure matter, devoid of intellect and spirit. They arrived at this position by a curious argument which commenced with the Muslim attack upon the Christian Trinity as a manifestation of polytheism, denying that God had as associates the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Christians reasoned that by divesting God of the Son *λόγος* and of the Spirit *πνεῦμα*, the Muslims rendered God *ἄλογος* ('without reason') and *ἄπνονος* ('spiritless'), and so reduced Him to dead matter. Then by a mistranslation of God's epithet, *samad*, which occurs in Sura 112, the Christian polemicists attempted to drive home their charge. In this Koranic passage *samad* actually refers to God *Eternal*. But inasmuch as the term also had the meaning of 'not hollow', or 'solid', the Greek translators rendered the term not as *αἰώνιος* ('eternal') but as *ὀλόσφυρος*, 'compact, solid.' In short,

<sup>14</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, PG 131 (1864) 33. John Cantacuzene, PG 154, 392–433, 500, 512–13, 517.

<sup>15</sup> Nicetas Choniates, PG 140 (1887) 108. Euthymius Zigabenus, PG 131, 333. Bartholomaeus of Edessa, PG 104 (1896) 1389–93.

the Greeks took the denial of the Trinity as an indication that the Muslims believed in an impotent God who was pure matter.<sup>16</sup> In the twelfth century this mistranslation of *samad* as *δλόσφυρος* proved to be a stumbling block in the conversion of Turkish Muslims to Christianity. For in the formula of abjuration the clergymen had actually inserted an abjuration of God as ‘eternal’. Consequently the emperor Manuel Comnenus attempted to delete the term from the formula so that the objections of the Turks could be removed.<sup>17</sup>

But attitudes of the Byzantines toward Islam were more frequently, and more vividly, reflected in their comments on Muslim ethics and ritual. The outward manifestations of religious differences were more immediately obvious than obscure doctrinal subtleties. In those regions where Muslims and Christians lived side by side, differences of this nature were constantly and saliently evident. The Christian argument fastened upon the ethical teachings of Muhammad and the Koran, charging the Muslims with following a religion which not only condoned the life of the “lascivious and murderer,” but one which also purported to give divine sanction for such a life. How could a religion which permitted a man to acquire several wives and innumerable concubines be considered moral?<sup>18</sup> The unrestrained hedonism of Muslim life was, to the Christians, manifested in a variety of ways. Not only were ‘sodomitic’ practices allowed<sup>19</sup> and the defloration of virgins and the custom of prostitution,<sup>20</sup> but wives were easily and frequently divorced. The immorality in such “easy” divorce was compounded, in the eyes of the Christians, by the fact that should the husband wish to remarry the wife, he could not do so until she had been taken in wedlock by another man. Thus the law of divorce and remarriage involved further and legalized adultery.<sup>21</sup> This was not to be wondered at, the Christians charged, for Muhammad himself was a fornicator who used aphrodisiacs,<sup>22</sup> a pseudo-

<sup>16</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, PG 130 (1865) 1337. John Cantacuzene, PG 154, 392, 440–92. Eichner *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 159–61.

<sup>17</sup> Nicetas Choniates, ed. I. Bekker (*CSHistByz*, Bonn 1835) 278–84. C. Bones, “Ο Θεσσαλονίκης Εὐσεβῆς καὶ οἱ δύο ‘τόμοι’ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Μανουὴλ Α΄ Κομνηνοῦ (1143/80) ὑπὲρ τῶν εἰς τὴν Χριστιανικὴν Ὀρθοδοξίαν μεθισταμένων Μωαμεθανῶν,” *Eret* 19 (1949) 162–69.

<sup>18</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, PG 154, 1065. John Cantacuzene, PG 154, 548, 549, 552.

<sup>19</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus, PG 130, 1349. Ricoldo-Cydones, PG 154, 1045.

<sup>20</sup> John Cantacuzene, PG 154, 545.

<sup>21</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, PG 154, 1081. Nicetas Choniates, PG 140, 112.

<sup>22</sup> Bartholomaeus of Edessa, PG 104, 1388.

prophet who manufactured a revelation ordering his companion Zeyd to relinquish his beautiful wife so that Muhammad could marry her.<sup>23</sup> The very hedonistic and physical character of Muhammad's teaching was, to Byzantines, sufficient to indicate that it was a false teaching.

"In addition, there is no sin which is so unendurable among prophets as licentiousness and depravity, because, as says Hieronymous, the Holy Spirit will not touch the prophetic heart during erotic acts."<sup>24</sup> The philosophers themselves had stated that man, when involved in carnal acts, cannot think. And so it was that many learned Muslims and Christians accepted Islam by reason of the hedonistic intensity of these acts which defeated their reason.<sup>25</sup> Since Muhammad pronounced his law as a man who was enslaved by the carnal knowledge of his wives, it followed that the Koran is entirely senseless.<sup>26</sup> "For as Aristotle said, in the fourth book of the Ethics and in the twelfth of the Metaphysics, life of the mind is the noblest. The gluttonous and aphrodisiacal (life) is the basest, for it becomes an obstacle to the good of the mind."<sup>27</sup> Muhammad had cleverly utilized this hedonism in his teachings to convert men to Islam and to keep the Muslims in his religion despite their reason.<sup>28</sup>

Muhammad also preached a religion of violence, the Byzantine authors continue, not one of peace. He admonished the Muslims to kill the Christians because God will reward them in heaven for this religious murder.<sup>29</sup> In the Koran the Muslims are admonished to slay all those Christians who do not pay a tax to the Muslims. But is it possible, inquire the Christian theologians, that God would be pleased with the one-fifth of the booty and spoils taken in wars and in the slaying of men? Obviously God, who is just and merciful, could never demand such a tribute.<sup>30</sup> Muhammad, whose religion encourages conversion by the sword and the slaying of Christians, is obviously not preaching the commands of God but of Satan, who has armed him with the sword. Hence the false religion which he has

<sup>23</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *PG* 140, 112–13, 128. Euthymius Zigabenus, *PG* 130, 1353.

<sup>24</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1077.

<sup>25</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1105.

<sup>26</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1077.

<sup>27</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1084.

<sup>28</sup> John Cantacuzene, *PG* 154, 552.

<sup>29</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1045, 1080. Nicetas Choniates, *PG* 140, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1112.

created has inaugurated the third great period of the persecution of the Christian Church. The first era had been that between the Crucifixion and Constantine's conversion, and the second had been coterminous with the Arian, Sabellian, Macedonian and other heresies which the Church Fathers successfully combated.<sup>31</sup>

Muslim ritual was considered to be legalistic and hypocritical, and it was frequently, though often incorrectly, ridiculed. At Ramadan the Muslims are forbidden to eat or drink during the day, and yet at night they are free to stuff themselves and to copulate with their wives. What kind of fasting is this? In performing ablutions before the prayer the 'believer' must wash his *πρωκτόν* with finger and water, and then with the same finger he must wash his mouth. If he has drunk wine, he must be careful that none of the wine has spilled on his clothing. If the clothing has been soiled by wine, it must be washed. Bartholomaeus of Edessa, the most virulent of the polemicists, jeers, "The pithos is full of wine, but on the outside it is washed."<sup>32</sup>

Themselves accused of idolatry in connection with the devotion to icons and the cross, the Christians believed that it was the Muslims, in fact, who were idolatrous. The Byzantines assumed that the Ka'bah was a remnant of Arab paganism, indeed a head of Aphrodite, and that the Muslims performed ceremonies about the Ka'bah foolishly believing that either Abraham had copulated with Agar on the stone or else that he had tied his camel there when he was about to sacrifice Isaac.<sup>33</sup>

The composition of these polemical treatises represents only one measure which Byzantine society adopted in the face of the Muslim threat. It might appear that the composition of polemics and the spread of their contents not only among the upper classes but also among the masses of the Christians were insignificant in the struggle with Islam and simply represent another instance of Byzantine archaism and ineffectiveness. But this polemic did serve an important function in that it provided a simple and credible rationalization for Christian low fortunes and thus furnished an important emotional

<sup>31</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1104–5, 1037–40.

<sup>32</sup> Bartholomaeus of Edessa, *PG* 104, 1405, 1393, 1408–9. Euthymius Zigabenus, *PG* 130, 1349.

<sup>33</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *PG* 140, 109. Euthymius Zigabenus, *PG* 130, 1340–01.

and intellectual basis for the partial survival of Christianity in Asia Minor and for its mass survival in the Balkans.

The contents of this literature, by ignoring those elements in Islam which were derivative of Christianity and Judaism and therefore common to both Islam and Christianity, presented Islam as a completely unrelated religion. It was not conceived as a heresy or schism, on the level of Monophysitism and Nestorianism, or Catholicism, nor was it on as exalted a rung of the religious ladder as Judaism. Though it has often been asserted that after the initial impact of Islam in the seventh century the Byzantine *literati* had considered Islam to be a heresy much as Monophysitism, most often this was not the case in the late Byzantine outlook. Byzantine Christians by and large believed Islam to be a false religion propounded by a pseudo-prophet. It was no mere *αἵρεσις* or deviation from the true religion but *ἀσέβεια*, *ἀνομία*. The Muslims were *ἄπιστοι*, Muhammad was a *τρικατάρατος ψευδοπροφήτης* who had promulgated *ἄθέσμους ἐντολάς*.<sup>34</sup> Consequently Islam was a pseudo-religion, the political and military triumphs of its adherents were a thing of the moment ordained by God as chastisement of the Christian world, and all this reflected the unworthiness of the Christians rather than of Christianity.

### III

The discussion of polemical literature provides a convenient point of transition from consideration of the attitudes of the dominant social classes to an examination of the attitudes which the masses entertained of Islam. The highly intellectual secularism of a Metochites would have been restricted to the small circles of atticizing savants and would have been virtually incommunicable to the majority of Byzantine society. The attitudes projected in the religious and religiously oriented literature, however, were less heady, were couched in familiar terms if not always in intelligible language, and penetrated society at large through the preachings of the monks and clergy. Just as in the upper classes there were those who rejected the classical view of superiority, so among the less well educated there were those who saw the absurdity in such claims and who left com-

<sup>34</sup> Georgius Sphrantzes, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest 1966) 34, 436. Michael Ducas, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest 1958) 39.

positions in the vernacular ridiculing the old outlook.<sup>35</sup> By and large, however, the masses adhered to the belief that Islam was a false religion, Christianity was the true religion, and that Muslim victory arose from the fallen state of the Christians.

Under the impetus of military defeat and political subjugation which brought new dimensions into their *Weltanschauung*, the illiterate masses reacted with their own characteristic manifestations: the development of a folklore which attempted to explain the alteration of their world. These various folkloristic and prophetic elements had as a common and unifying element the belief that Byzantium would be conquered by the Muslim Turks, but that after varying periods of time the Greeks would rise, defeat the Turks and reconstitute their empire. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the most widespread of these legend-prophesies centered about the *μαρμαρωμένος βασιλιάς* ('the petrified emperor'), the last liturgy in St Sophia, the fate of the officiating priest and altar, and finally the red or golden apple.<sup>36</sup>

The most popular element in these legends, an element which was common to the entire Greek world, was the story of the petrified empire. According to versions of this legend an angel intervened during the final battle of 29 May 1453 to save the emperor Constantine Palaeologus as he was fighting the Turks. The angel took him away from the battle to an underground cavern near the Golden Gate in the western regions of Constantinople. Here he would remain in a petrified state (or asleep) until God should again send His angel. At this time God's messenger would raise the emperor, return his sword to him, and the emperor would then issue forth with his army. He would enter Constantinople through the Golden Gate and give chase to the Turks as far as the Red Apple Tree, where he would massacre them. The legend of the final mass in St Sophia and of the fate of the

<sup>35</sup> F. Dölger, "Byzantine Literature," *CMH* IV.2 (1967) 257-59.

<sup>36</sup> W. Heffening, *Die türkischen Transcriptionstexte des Bartholomaeus Georgievits aus den Jahren 1544-1548. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik des Osmanisch-türkischen (AbhKM 27.2, Leipzig 1942) 22-37. R. Dawkins, "The Red Apple," 'Αρχεῖον τοῦ Θρακικοῦ λαογραφικοῦ καὶ γλωσσικοῦ θησαυροῦ, ἐπίμετρον ΣΤ' τόμου (1941) 401-06. For a different view of the 'red apple', E. Rossi, "La leggenda turco-bizantina del Pomo Rosso," *StBiz* 5 (1937) 542-53. G. Megas, "La prise de Constantinople dans la poésie et la tradition populaire," *Le cinquième anniversaire de la prise de Constantinople, L'Hellenisme contemporaine* (Athens 1953) 125-33. C. Mango, "The Legend of Leo the Wise," *Zbornik radova vizantoloshkog instituta* 6 (1960) 59-94.*

great altar was similarly widespread. In this story the Turks broke into St Sophia just prior to the consecration during the divine liturgy, at which point the priest disappeared into the walls of the church. The interrupted liturgy will, however, be completed when the Greeks retake the city, at which time the priest will emerge from his hiding place to consummate the liturgy. The altar of the church, which sank into the sea of Marmara, will also return to the church at this time.

Of this genre is the legend of the golden apple, a legend which had a slightly more complicated evolution. The great bronze statue of the emperor Justinian, which was located in the Augustaeum, enjoyed a long history of popular legend. The mounted emperor held in his left hand the globus crucifix, and his right hand was outstretched in the direction of the east. Procopius not only describes the statue but reports the interpretation of its symbolism which was current in the sixth century: the orb signified the world, the cross symbolized the faith by which Justinian held world dominion, and his right hand was raised to stay the advance of the barbarians from the east. After the disappearance of the Sassanid state the symbolism of the outstretched hand was re-interpreted to refer to the Muslim Empire. By the fourteenth century, at a time when the Turks were preparing to cross from Asia Minor into Europe, the fall of the globe (or 'apple' as it came to be called) from the statue's hand was interpreted as an unmistakable sign that the Greeks had lost their political power to the Turks. The Turks adopted the legend of the Red Apple, or *kizil elma*, for whom it symbolized the political dominion of the Christian infidels. First it had resided in Constantinople, then it moved west to Buda, Vienna and Rome. The legend in Turkish hands became bound to the legend of the end of the Ottoman Empire after a certain number of years. In a later Greek tradition of the destruction of the Turkish empire at the hands of the Blond Race there is even an apportioning of the defeated Turks into three groups: one-third will be massacred, one-third driven out, and one-third will be converted to Christianity.

These legends, though they gave no immediate impetus to historical action, became a vital part of the Greek 'world of ideas' which, along with the religious polemical literature, helped to sustain the Christian faith among the conquered Greeks. The vitality of some of this material is indicated by the fact that a portion of it was absorbed into contemporary Turkish folklore. But the legend of the reappearance



of the last emperor and the reconquest of Constantinople remained central themes in a folklore which was to become the basis of the Greek *μεγάλη ιδέα* of modern times, for these particular legends invariably ended with the positive avowal that possession of the empire would return to the Greeks. As one popular song proclaimed, Romania would once more bloom! Popular attitudes toward Islam, as embodied in Greek folklore, tended to fuse with and reinforce those of the religiously oriented literature. Indeed there are indications that the spirit of Metochites' arbitrary Tyche in human affairs was also present in the manner with which the populace at large viewed political change.

#### IV

But as I indicated in the beginning, the written documents and folklore are not the only sources for Byzantine attitudes toward Islam. There are the deeds and actions of the Greek Christians, whether noble or peasant, in the face of the Islamic imposition. An interpretation of these historical reactions to Islam is as important as the documents. In fact one must search the history of the late mediaeval period to see whether the attitudes toward Islam reflected in the written and folkloristic testimony were effectively held by Byzantine society at large, or whether they were the beliefs of a restricted number of literate laymen and clergy and of restricted numbers of the lower classes.

Until the fall of Constantinople there is clear evidence that the representatives of Byzantine formal culture embodied the traditional attitudes toward Islam in concrete actions. There were unflagging efforts of the emperors to save the Church and the Christians in lands conquered by the Turks. For some two centuries they made vigorous, but only partially successful, efforts to maintain the declining ecclesiastical administrative structure in Turkish Anatolia. Greek aristocrats and princesses in Turkish courts did what they could to alleviate the conditions of the sultans' Christian subjects. In many instances the emperors organized wholesale migrations of Christians in order to bring them from Muslim lands in Anatolia to Christians domains. In numerous other instances large numbers of Christians fled the Turkish conquest, seeking to avoid subjugation to a foreign people who professed the Islamic faith. The emperors even

had ambitions to convert the Turks themselves, and extensive conversions of Turks did take place, but within Byzantine rather than Turkish domains.

The depth of Byzantine inimical attitudes toward Islam is most graphically manifested in the phenomenon of martyrdom and crypto-Christianity. Martyrdom in the Byzantine Church had, up to the Turkish conquest, been restricted to the period of the Roman persecutions and to the Iconoclastic era. But the process of the Turkish conquest imposed anew the conditions of both martyrdom and crypto-Christianity.<sup>37</sup> Such conditions were sufficiently widespread to create a whole new category of martyrs in the Greek Church, the so-called neo-martyrs. The first record of neo-martyrdom is that of the Byzantine general Gabras, who was martyred in the late eleventh century.<sup>38</sup> The thirteenth-century Nicetas the Younger was a merchant who shed his blood for the faith in the town of Nyssa.<sup>39</sup> St George of Sofia, martyred in the Ottoman capital of Adrianople in the fifteenth century, had been a soldier in the Ottoman armies.<sup>40</sup> Byzantine general, Greek merchant, Christian soldier in the sultan's armies, all three could have escaped the fires of their tormentors had they merely accepted Islam. And in the latter two cases it was the Christians who, by their undiplomatic actions, had entered into quarrels with Turks and literally provoked their own martyrdom by damning Islam and Muhammad as a false religion and pseudo-prophet respectively. Lest there be any doubt as to the frequency of martyrdom in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one need only read such contemporary accounts as that of the sixteenth-century commercial representative of the house of Fugger, Hans Dernschwam.<sup>41</sup> The traditional Byzantine attitude toward Islam as expressed in literature was, as is illustrated in these cases, certainly a vital one. Its believers followed this attitude to its logical conclusion. Crypto-

<sup>37</sup> Miklosich et Müller, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) I.183–84, 197–98.

<sup>38</sup> A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν Τραπεζοῦντος," *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 12 (1906) 132–37.

<sup>39</sup> H. Delehay, "Le martyre de Saint Nicéas le Jeune," *Mélanges G. Schlumberger* I (Paris 1924) 205–11.

<sup>40</sup> C. Patrinely, "Μία ἀνέκδοτη Διήγησις γιὰ τὸν ἀγνωστο Νεομάρτυρα Γεώργιο (1437)," *Ὁρθόδοξος Παρουσία* 1 (1964) 65–74.

<sup>41</sup> Hans Dernschwam's *Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553/55)*, ed. F. Babinger (Munich Leipzig 1923) *passim*. Nicodemus Agiorites, *Νέον Μαρτυρολόγιον*, 3rd ed. (Athens 1961).

Christianity, already widespread in fourteenth-century Bithynia, demonstrates again the power of the traditional Byzantine attitude but tempered with a more temporal outlook as to its consequences.<sup>42</sup> Finally, and most importantly, there is the historical fact that Orthodox Christianity survived, among the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, into the modern period. This demonstrates that in the minds of most of those who remained Christian, Christianity was superior as a revealed religion. Had they not had this belief, economic, social, political and legal conditions were so much in favor of Muslims that Christians would not have chosen to remain Christian. Demonstrably the traditional attitudes toward Islam were widespread and deeply rooted.

However strong were these traditional attitudes toward Islam and Orthodox Christianity—and we have seen how powerful they were—nevertheless Christians did apostasize to Islam. By the early sixteenth century the formerly Christian peninsula of Anatolia was about 90 per cent Muslim and the Balkan region slightly less than 20 per cent Muslim.<sup>43</sup> The reasons for the preponderance of Islam in Anatolia and for the numerical superiority of Christianity in the Balkans are complex, and as they have been treated elsewhere there is no need to deal with them here. The disparity between the traditional Byzantine attitudes and the actions of religious apostates demonstrates the fact that ideologies lose their vitality and cannot survive when the institutions behind the ideologies either disappear, atrophy, or experience repeated and severe shocks. The mass conversions of Anatolians, and the large-scale Christian survivals of the Balkans are to be explained by this basic principle.<sup>44</sup> Under such stresses many lost their faith in the traditional explanations. Then there were the skeptics who simply had not time to wait for God's angel to awaken the sleeping emperor in order to remove the Turks. The attitudes of many were simply reflections of their concern with the convenience and pleasures of this world. Many were ultimately persuaded by the simple

<sup>42</sup> Miklosich et Müller, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) I. 183–84, 197–98. R. M. Dawkins, "The Crypto-Christians of Turkey," *Byzantion* 8 (1933) 247–75. F. Hasluck, "The Crypto-Christians of Trebizond," *JHS* 41 (1921) 199–202.

<sup>43</sup> Ö. Barkan, "Essai sur les données statistiques des registres de recensement dans l'empire ottoman aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1 (1958) 9–36.

<sup>44</sup> S. Vryonis, "The Conditions and Cultural Significance of the Ottoman Conquest in the Balkans," *IIème Congrès international des études du Sud-Est Européen* (Athens 1970) 1–9.

decision to save their lives. There were large numbers, however, particularly in Asia Minor, who, long deprived of the support of their Christian institutions, were gradually and peacefully persuaded by the dervishes that there was little difference between Islam and Christianity. These converted to Islam, though in many respects they remained semi-Christian through the retention of much from their Christian cult.

Ricoldo-Cydones grasped all this when he divided the Muslims into four groups. "Let it be known that those who follow the error of Muhammad are four groups. The first group is that which came into Islam through the sword, as it is said. Even now those recognize their error, (and) they would renounce it if they did not fear the sword. Another group is that which has been deceived by the devil and believes the lies to be true. The third group is that which does not wish to renounce the error of their ancestors but (who) say that they (will) maintain that which their fathers followed . . . The fourth group is that of those who because of the ease of the path, (because) of the multitude of women, and (because) of the other laxities, preferred rather the impurity."<sup>45</sup>

Two Greek texts refer to specifically Turkish rather than Islamic practices, but contributed to a coloration of Byzantine attitudes toward Islam. One of the criteria for the rejection of Islam as a truly revealed religion was its supposed advocacy of violence. In illustrating this 'murderous' character of Islam John Cantacuzene made an interesting but perhaps irrelevant observation. "What could be worse than such cruelty and misanthropy when they murder the innocent? For whenever the Muslims go to war and one of them falls in battle, they do not blame themselves as causers of the war, but each one slaughters as many living men as he can over the dead body. The more he slays the more does he reckon it to be of aid to the soul of the dead man. If, however, he who wishes to aid the soul of the dead man has no captives, he buys Christians if he can find any. And these he slays over the dead body or over the latter's grave. How can he (Muhammad) who legislates such things be of God?"<sup>46</sup> This is a reference not to Islamic practice but rather to a shamanistic funeral custom associated with the nomadic peoples of the Asiatic steppe, a

<sup>45</sup> Ricoldo-Cydones, *PG* 154, 1105.

<sup>46</sup> John Cantacuzene, *PG* 154, 545.

practice already described in the pages of Herodotus dealing with the Scythians.<sup>47</sup> Cantacuzene had undoubtedly seen such ceremonies among the Turkish mercenaries whom he had hired, and so he assumed them to be of Islamic origin. Here a specifically Turkish phenomenon gave further emphasis to the Byzantine view of Islam as a religion of violence.

A quite different view of the Turks (Scythians) emerges from the pen of Metochites. Among the immediate causes for the defeat of Byzantium and the victory of the Turks Metochites lists the superior virtue of the latter. The 'Scythians', Metochites relates, were from time immemorial a great and unsubjected race. That is not to say that some of them were never at any time under foreign rule, rather that the entire race was never under one rule. They are a numerous and bellicose people, prone to wars with foreigners and with one another. In ancient times they crossed the Danube, plundered Thrace, and passing through the Ionian regions they overran Italy, the Celtic lands, Spain, and crossed over into Libya. In more recent times these 'Scythians' have enslaved most of Asia, Babylon, Assyria and lands as far as India.

Metochites explains why the 'Scythians' throughout their history have remained unconquered. It is because they have lived a type of life entirely different from that of the rest of mankind, a manner of existence which foreign peoples cannot assail and destroy. Though the 'Scythians' live together in a society as do all other men, they live a beastly life, unpracticed in any contrivance and productivity. The 'Scythians' neither dwell in cities nor safeguard their lives with walled enclosures, nor do they live in rural villages. They know not the care of crafts, commerce, the cultivation of fields and gardens, and they are not familiar with the customs of men in normal societies. They wander constantly, not merely to one land in summer and to another in winter, but to other lands as well. They move about in search of water and pasture, remaining largely under the open skies. If they need protection against winter they erect felt huts on a circular framework of little sticks, and these huts, which they carry about on wagons, satisfy their needs for housing. Their cuisine is simple and devoid of lavish gastronomical preparations. They eat the flesh and milk from their flocks and also wild animals and fowl which they hunt. They

<sup>47</sup> J.-P. Roux, *La mort chez les peuples altaïques anciens et médiévaux* (Paris 1963).

warm a little meat over the flames and without any further preparation eat it, doing so only to discharge the inescapable demands of the body. It is in this manner, Metochites relates, that the 'Scythians' were from the beginning accustomed to a light, simple, unburdened life, naturally avoiding twisted reasoning, knavery, trials, arguments, contradictions of speech, court pleadings and slander. They have no elected judges, orators, assessors of laws, interpreters of dogmas, distorters, professors and perverters of speech in advocacies and accusations, contests of wordiness, such as are customary among Greeks and among other barbarians. Because of the simplicity of their life and its freedom from material concern, the 'Scythians' have led a more just life than many other peoples. As support for his assertion Metochites adduces Homer, who also alludes to these qualities and virtues.<sup>48</sup>

The *Περὶ Σκυθῶν* of Metochites is of considerable interest inasmuch as it appears, on first glance, to be an objective evaluation of the superior qualities of the Turks, their moral virtues arising from the simplicity of their life. In fact Metochites is praising the 'noble savage' (so familiar in the literature of more modern times), who living close to nature is free from the artificialities of urban life which so pervert human character. A closer look at the *Περὶ Σκυθῶν* reveals it as a stereotyped piece which goes back to classical Greek and Roman literature, reminding one of the best known of this genre, Tacitus' *Germania*. Tacitus idealized the low state of development among the Germanic barbarians in order to hurl his literary shafts at conditions in Roman society which he found disagreeable and undesirable. Metochites similarly converted Scythian barbarity into a state of moral purity, so that using it as a foil he might attack the shortcomings of his own society. He admits that he has 'lifted' the material for this chapter on the Scythians from Herodotus, Diodorus, Dionysius, Aelian and Homer. The chapter is, accordingly, a 'scissors-and-paste' product taken from ancient authors and applied to the Turks. The term 'Scythian', as Metochites employs it, refers to all the Germanic peoples of the early mediaeval period as well as to the Turks and Mongols. In short, it is synonymous with 'nomad' and 'migratory' and therefore with a way of life, rather than with any ethnic group. His observations on nomadic life are vastly oversimplified and ignore

<sup>48</sup> Theod. Metoch. *Misc.* 732-34.

the fact that nomadic groups are possessed of certain crafts, do indulge in commerce and marginal agriculture, often live in close symbiotic relationship with sedentary groups. It further oversimplifies the phenomenon of the Turkish conquest, which after all was not exclusively a nomadic affair. Had the Seljuks and Ottomans never developed beyond the nomadic state, they could never have erected the political structures of the Seljuk sultanate and Ottoman Empire. In addition, these Seljuk-Ottoman states had all the trappings of society—cities, guilds, elaborate court ceremonial, teachers and students of law, judges and theologians.

The parallel between Metochites and Tacitus is striking: both moralize and use the 'noble savage' as a literary device to this end. One can hardly imagine Tacitus or Metochites, products of a highly developed urban and intellectual milieu, adopting the crude life which they pretended to admire. Thus what on first view seems to be a new attitude of the Byzantines toward Islam is doubly deceptive. If it is an attempt to display Islamic society under the Turks it has failed completely, for it has ignored the essence of Ottoman society, from both the religious and the urban points of view. Second, Metochites is not really concerned with Turco-Islamic qualities, but rather with the decline of his own society.

The more usual view of the Turks in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries among the Byzantines was that they were among the less elevated in terms of civilization. Indeed they were barbarians, and the high civilization of Islam is somehow not related to them. Witness even the eulogistic description which Metochites presented. The nomadic life which he describes is in no way related to the complex of Islamic higher urban, economic, social and cultural institutions. To the Byzantines these barbarians appeared as cruel (*χαλεποί, άνελεήμονες*) infidels (*άπιστοι*) who persecute Christianity (*χριστομάχοι*). Their thirst for money (*φιλοχρήματον γένος*) is matched only by their sexual lusts for maids and youths, which lust does not abate even before the beasts of the field.<sup>49</sup> These particular attitudes toward the Turks coincided with opinions held about Muslims even prior to the appearance of the Turks, and so they were reinforced.

In this sketch of Byzantine attitudes toward Islam, a vast subject

<sup>49</sup> Pseudo-Sphrantzes, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest 1966) 468. Michael Ducas, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest 1958) 59, 85, 361.

which would justify a book, I have made no attempt to disengage all the errors of fact in the views which Orthodox Christians entertained of Islam. Despite the fact that opponents rarely make efforts to understand the positions of their foes, their erroneous conceptualizations are not any the less effective bases for conduct and action.

We have examined the attitudes of both the upper and lower classes and then measured the strength and efficacy of these attitudes in terms of historical events and phenomena. Implicit in this discussion has been the proposition that ideas and ideology are not autarkic, that they have no autonomous life or independent dynamic. The classical Byzantine ideology survived only where the Turkish conquests did not cause a disastrous failure of the institutions supporting this ideology, that is to say in the Balkans. But in Asia Minor the disappearance of the traditional Byzantine ideology was due to the failure of its supporting institutions rather than to a failure of the ideology itself, a failure induced by the nature of the Turkish conquests.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The substance of this essay was presented at a conference on Islam in the Late Middle Ages, held at the University of Washington, Seattle, in spring 1970.