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Source: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 1978), pp. 5-25

Published by: [Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035764>

Accessed: 30/09/2014 19:09

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# BYZANTIUM AND THE EASTERN SLAVS AFTER 1453\*

IHOR ŠEVČENKO

To Kenneth M. Setton

## I

Sometime between 1466 and 1472, a merchant from Tver' by the name of Afanasij Nikitin traveled from his native city, which is northwest of Moscow, to a place in India southeast of Heyderabad. There, he must have come across a large statue of Buddha; in any case, in a big temple complex, he saw an idol which he called "But" and about which he had this to say: "*But* is carved out of stone, is very big, and raises his right

\* The first draft of this essay was read at a Dumbarton Oaks Symposium back in 1968. It has been written mostly from sources. Thus, to take an example from the very beginning, the opening paragraphs of the essay go back to Afanasij Nikitin's *Travelogue* and Epiphanius the Wise's *Letter to Cyril of Tver'*, rather than to the informative article by D. A. Belobrova, "Statuja vizantijskogo imperatora Justiniana v drevne-russkix pis'mennyx istočnikax i ikonografii," *Vizantijskij vremennik* 17 (1960): 114–23. Understandably, practically all the sources on which the present essay rests have appeared in print. Only in two instances did I rely on unpublished material. The manuscripts alluded to on pp. 14–15 and 17–18 below are *Sinaiticus Graecus* 1915, fols. 28<sup>r</sup>–60 (Paisios Ligarides' Answers to the Tsar's Sixty-One Questions) and Jerusalem, *Panagiu Taphou* 160, especially fols. 1<sup>v</sup>, 153<sup>v</sup>–154, 258<sup>v</sup>, 259<sup>v</sup>–260<sup>v</sup> (Paisios Ligarides' Prophecies).

An essay is best read without encumbering footnotes, and I have followed this principle here. Still, I wish to mention two works, separated by a century, in order to provide the reader with some perspective and with a minimum of bibliographical guidance. The early (and still quite useful) book is by F. A. Ternovskij, *Izučenie vizantijskoj istorii i ee tendencioznoe priloženie v drevnej Rusi*, vol. 1 (Kiev, 1875), vol. 2 (Kiev, 1876); the recent monograph which, in space and time, goes over much of the ground covered in the present essay, is by William K. Medlin and Christos G. Patrinelis, *Renaissance Influences and Religious Reforms in Russia* [=Etudes de philologie et d'histoire, 18] (Geneva, 1971). The superb monograph by B. L. Fonkič, *Grečesko-russkie kul'turnye svjazi v XV–XVII vv.* (Moscow, 1977), deals only with the fate of Greek manuscripts in Muscovy. It does, however, devote important pages to two figures touched upon in the present essay, Arsenij Suxanov and Arsenius of Ellasson.

hand up and extends it as does Justinian, the emperor of Constantinople”: *aky Ust’janъ carъ Carjagradsky*. Nikitin was referring to Justinian’s famous equestrian statue. As far as we know, Nikitin had never been to Constantinople; anyhow, by this time, that statue had, in all likelihood, been torn down by Mehmet II. This statue is mentioned but thrice in Old Russian literature. On the other hand, we know that about 1400, the painter Theophanes the Greek had drawn a picture of St. Sophia, together with the Augusteion where Justinian stood, for the benefit of the Muscovites; that the Muscovites copied his pattern on many icons; and that their copies included a representation of Justinian’s equestrian statue. It is one such icon that Afanasij must have been recalling in his travelogue. For the art historian, then, Nikitin’s reference is a minor problem, with a ready solution.

It is not so for the intellectual historian. For him, it is of importance to be able to tell those interested in Byzantium’s survival in Eastern Europe that when a half-educated Russian merchant of post-Byzantine times had to provide a frame of reference for a new experience in a faraway land, the first thing he thought of was a statue of a Byzantine emperor, which he had never seen.

This essay will not be about the causes of events, the meaning of Patriarch Nikon’s reform, or Muscovite library catalogues. It will be about states of mind and about people, some like Afanasij Nikitin, some more sophisticated than he, who had to accommodate their frames of reference to the fact that Byzantium was no more.

## II

The stories of the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 read in Eastern Europe fall into two kinds: the short chronicle entries and the longer reports. The short entries made in local chronicles seem to have been roughly contemporary with the event itself. Yet, oddly enough, none of them bewailed the fate of the Orthodox Greek Christians. In fact, most did not expressly mention the Greeks at all when speaking of the city’s fall. One short chronicle entry was peculiar and a sign of things to come — it contained a remark to the effect that, although he took the city, the sultan did not discontinue the “Russian” faith there — this must have meant the Orthodox faith, since the two were apparently equated. On the other hand, all the longer reports sympathize with the Greeks, but, except for the Dirge of John Eugenikos translated into Slavonic by 1468, they are not contemporary with the event; at least, they appear in chrono-

logical compilations no earlier than the sixteenth century. Accordingly, the Chronograph of 1512, which closed with a dirge of Slavonic origin on the conquest of the city, showed empathy with the Greeks. However, the author's point of view was that of Orthodoxy in general, rather than Byzantium alone. The Greek Empire was mentioned along with the Serbian, Bosnian, and Albanian empires, and towards the dirge's end, a passage destined for fame in the history of Muscovite political ideology proclaimed that while these empires had fallen, "Our Russian land is growing, getting ever younger, and more exalted; may Christ allow it to become rejuvenated and spread its boundaries until the end of time."

The reason for this state of affairs is that the fall of Constantinople, which for us is such a landmark in history, was not the most decisive event in the shaping of Muscovite intellectual attitudes towards late Byzantium and the post-Byzantine world. That decisive event was the Council of Florence. To the Muscovites, what happened at Florence was the betrayal of the Orthodox faith by the Greek emperor, the Greek patriarch, and the silver-loving Greeks. The Council of Florence, too, gave rise to a number of Muscovite works. In them, the Greek apostasy was contrasted, more and more stridently as time went on, with the unswerving Orthodoxy of the Muscovite prince.

As long as the Council of Florence rankled, times were not propitious for spreading general treatises about the end of Byzantium, since such texts could not but arouse sympathy for the hapless, if shifty, Greeks. When the treatises were spread, they were made to serve the purposes of the Muscovites, not those of the Greeks.

Muscovite bookmen knew two contradictory things to be true at once: they knew, and wrote, that the Greek Empire had failed in its faith at Florence before it failed politically on the walls of the imperial city. Yet, they also knew that their own Orthodox faith, and more, had come from the Greek Empire. Knowing two contradictory things at the same time makes one feel uncomfortable. With Muscovite bookmen, this led to ambiguous attitudes towards Byzantium, and, later, towards the Greeks.

Occasional ambiguity towards Byzantium had been with the Eastern Slav elite ever since the Christianization of that region and the *Primary Chronicle* is a good witness to this; after the city's fall, however, this ambiguity was to become more frequent and ever more painful. The Greeks had proved, and were to prove again in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, unreliable in their faith. Their empire was prostrate, and defiled by the Turks. Yet the Muscovite bookmen of about 1500 and for a century afterwards could point to no new frame of

historical reference and to no new system of cultural values other than that which their predecessors had taken over from Byzantium.

The Russian writer Epiphanius the Wise dated the time at which a special alphabet was created for the newly-Christianized Permians as follows: “The alphabet for the Permians was created in the year 6883 — that is 1375 — 120 years before the end of the world was expected at the end of the seventh millennium, while John was emperor of the Greeks, while Philotheos was patriarch, while Mamaj was ruler of the Horde, while Dmitrij Ivanovič was prince of Rus’ — as we see, Dmitrij Donskoj comes in last place — while there was no metropolitan in Rus’, and while we were waiting for someone to come from Constantinople.”

Epiphanius was writing at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Yet Byzantium continued to provide chronological framework for much of Russian historical writing or compilations after the fall, as well. The Chronograph of 1512 — which we already know — is divided into chapters. When this world chronicle’s narrative comes to the fourth century, each of the chapters opens with the entry “rule of emperor such and such” or “Greek Empire,” in which Byzantine history is given and whereupon other events follow.

What was true for the principle of general organization held true for the correlations between single events. When one of the chronicles came up to the year 1480, which included the famous confrontation on the Ugra River between Ivan III and the Tartar khan, it exhorted the Russians to act with vigor against the Hagarenes, so as to avoid the fate of other lands which had been conquered by the Turk, like Trebizond and Morea. When, toward 1550, a writer — either the tsar’s adviser Sil’vestr or his metropolitan Makarij — addressed Ivan the Terrible predicting the tsar’s conquest of the empire of Kazan’, he quoted four events in world history: of the four, only one was Russian — namely, this very confrontation between the haughty tsar of the Great Horde, Ahmet, and Ivan III. He put it side by side with one biblical and two Byzantine victories, won by the people of God against the infidel. The biblical one was the slaughter of the warriors in Sennacherib’s army under the walls of Jerusalem at the hand of the angel of the Lord; the Byzantine ones were the two long Arab sieges of Constantinople: under Constantine Pogonatus (674–78) and under Leo III (717). By this device, the author was demonstrating to Ivan IV that the stand-off on the Ugra was a historical event of worldwide significance, and that the fall of Kazan’ would be another.

Parallels between rulers were even easier to establish than those between events. Constantine, Theodosius, and Justinian the Great were

the most popular models held out to the Ivans, Aleksejs, and Fedors. Bad rulers had their Byzantine counterparts, as well. Here Phocas easily won on points, followed by Constantine Copronymus. Not surprisingly, Ivan the Terrible was most often quoted in such company. Byzantine prelates, too, were introduced for purposes of comparison. When Ivan the Terrible condemned his former advisor, Sil'vestr, *in absentia*, this was likened to the condemnation of John Chrysostom. A century later, the patriarch Nikon consoled himself by reciting the examples of Byzantine prelates who had been banished and yet later returned to their thrones: John Chrysostom, again, and Athanasius the Great.

Whether the task was to instruct a tsar in the art of governing, to put a heretic on the stake, to condone the more than four marriages of Ivan the Terrible, or to trap a patriarch who improvidently abdicated when he should not have, a Byzantine legal, historical, or hagiographical passage was put to good use, and to the practical exclusion of any other. A tsar would be fed a quotation from the sixth novel of Justinian about priesthood and empire, and the quotation would be reinforced by exempla of love between men of spirit and men of action, culled from the Old Testament and from Byzantine history: Constantine the Great loved Pope Silvester, Theodosius I, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Arcadius, John Chrysostom. A synod of Russian bishops would prove the illegal character of the fourth marriage by referring to Leo VI, the emperor, and Nicholas, the patriarch. When it came to dealing with the heretic Judaizers around 1500, it was pointed out that Empress Theodora and her son Michael had condemned many heretics — among them the patriarch Iannij, or John the Grammarian — to life imprisonment. Since, however, the Judaizers had to be punished with death, St. Theodosia was enrolled into the holy ranks. Did she not kill the official attempting to destroy the icon of Christ at the Brazen Gate in Constantinople by pulling the ladder out from under him? Joseph of Volokolamsk was the man who quoted St. Theodosia, for he liked examples of resolute action in defense of a righteous cause.

Whenever a historical miracle was needed, a Byzantine model was there, even if its meaning was to be put on its head. Nestor-Iskinder, the purported author of the longest Slavic report on the final conquest, described how, on the eve of the fall of the city, a light left the church of St. Sophia through the windows of the dome, turned into a ball of fire, and ascended to heaven — a sure sign that there was no hope left for the empire, now forsaken by God. Avraamij Palicyn, the monk of Sergius Trinity Lavra, described the siege of his monastery by the godless Poles

towards the beginning of the seventeenth century. He observed much the same thing, but in *his* version the light *descended* from heaven, turned into a ball of fire and *entered* his church through a window above.

### III

All Muscovite political ideology developed after Byzantium's fall — roughly, in the first half of the sixteenth century — but Byzantium, dead and alive, remained the central point of reference for all of it. The Muscovite bookmen aimed at securing for Moscow a meaningful place in the sequence of world history and a central spot in the world of true faith. Since, in 1492 — that is, the year 7000 — the end of the world should have occurred but didn't, the metropolitan of Moscow, Zosima, published Paschal Tables for subsequent years. In the preface, he established a historical sequence from Constantine the Great through Vladimir of Kiev to Ivan III. He called Ivan the new Constantine — which was routine — and Moscow, the new Constantinople — which was said for the first time in Russian recorded history. Philotheos of Pskov's familiar theory of Moscow as the Third Rome rested on the twin pillars of the failure of the Greek faith at the Council of Florence and the failure of Greek arms in the Second Rome. The *Story of the Princes of Vladimir*, composed by Spiridon-Sava, a prelate who had been to Constantinople, had Prince Vladimir Monomax obtain both the regalia and the imperial title from the Byzantine emperor Constantine of the same family name. The regalia were said to have been transmitted to Kiev by a metropolitan, two bishops, and three Byzantine officials. Neither the metropolitan nor the bishops are known from any episcopal list; the title of *Praefectus Augustalis* of Egypt was mistaken for a proper name, but the point was made.

The *Story of the Princes of Vladimir* also traced the lineage of the Kievan, and therefore Muscovite, princes back to Caesar Augustus of the old First Rome. Here we seem to lose the scent leading us to Constantinople — in fact, scholars have not yet established by what means Augustus appeared in the Kremlin. But even at this point, I submit, we might get to Byzantium, if *via* a Serbian detour. Serbian princely genealogies linked the Serbian princes and the brother-in-law of Constantine the Great, Emperor Licinius, who was, of course, said to have been a Serbian himself. In turn, Constantine, or so the same chronicles say, was not only of Rascian, i.e., Serbian, blood, but also a relative of Caesar Augustus.

We know that the Muscovite princes of the early sixteenth century were related by marriage to the semi-independent Serbian princes of the fifteenth. Princely genealogies may have wandered with brides from Serbia up north. We are also sure that the author of the *Story of the Princes of Vladimir* knew Serbian literature, since he inserted a long passage from a Serbian work into his text.

Centers, political or ecclesiastical, which vied with Moscow or were bent on asserting their independence from it, relied on the same — that is, Byzantine — frame of reference. The eulogist of Prince Boris Aleksandrovič of Tver', a city which was Moscow's rival for a time, treated his hero like a Byzantine emperor, comparing him to Augustus, Justinian, Leo the Wise, and Constantine. The story of the Novgorodian white cowl, a headgear which for some time distinguished the archbishop of Novgorod from all other prelates of Russia, attributed the cowl's origin to Pope Sylvester and quoted the Slavic version of the Donation of Constantine. The cowl covered the distance between St. Peter's and Novgorod by stopping in Constantinople. And when it floated by sea from Rome to the imperial city, it duplicated a famous voyage which the icon of Maria Romana had made in the opposite direction at the beginning of the Iconoclastic period. From Constantinople, the cowl was sent on to Novgorod, presumably by the patriarch Philotheos.

Dependence on Byzantium did not necessarily mean a respect for the Byzantine Empire. In elaborating the ideology of their state, Muscovite bookmen also rested their case on the ever-unblemished Orthodoxy of their princes, and on the hereditary principle of these princes' succession. Byzantium could not boast the former — witness Constantine Copronymus — and in principle did not adhere to the latter. Muscovite autocratic power could be justified without the help of elaborate literary constructs, simply by referring to God, antiquity, and local tradition, and this method was openly applied, both by Ivan III and Ivan IV. By the seventeenth century the Muscovites could deride the Greeks and their past, since there had been Greek emperors who taught evil in the church, armed themselves against the holy icons, and became worse than pagans. How could it have been otherwise, if some of these emperors were like Leo the Armenian, who not only was of no imperial lineage, but did not even belong to the Greek nation?

But the Muscovite defiance of the Greek had a reverse effect, of a kind which in individual behavior psychologists call "delayed obedience." A local Constantinopolitan synod was asked to confirm Ivan IV's imperial coronation of 1547. This happened in 1561. In 1590, another synod,

which dubbed itself ecumenical, confirmed the creation of the Muscovite patriarchate. Thus, the Greeks' approval was sought on each of the two occasions when Muscovites made steps towards ideal supremacy within the Orthodox world. Finally, in 1666, when Patriarch Nikon had to be crushed, those who sat in judgment over him, and stripped him of his insignia, were the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria. In 1592, a unique device appeared in the letter which Moscow's newly created patriarch, Job, addressed to Constantinople. The letter referred to Greek ecclesiastics coming from "the Greek Empire," to a council "of the whole Greek Empire" still to be held at Constantinople, and to conciliar decisions made, and prayers said, both in "the Russian and in the Greek Empire." Once, Job even referred to "all the cities and places of the Greek Empire." For once, after 1453, a make-believe world was created in which Byzantium was alive again, not just within the body of the Eastern church, but side by side with the empire of Muscovy. The prize — that of obtaining patriarchal rank — was so considerable that it was worthwhile for the Muscovite chancery to indulge in the reverie for the benefit of the Greek prelates.

#### IV

The first recorded Greek refugee arrived in Moscow seeking alms and ransom for his family in 1464, and was warmly recommended to his fellow Christians by Metropolitan Theodosius. He was followed by a long procession of other refugees — members of Sophia Palaeologina's entourage, merchants, abbots and monks from Athos, Patmos, St. Sabas, Mt. Sinai, and even the Island of Milos, patriarchs, bishops, and finally, ecclesiastics doubling as intellectuals. It is the last group that interests us most. Orthodox Eastern Europe sought the guidance, or at least the services, of Greek teachers and scholars for 250 years after Byzantium's fall. These Greeks were a variegated group of people. From among them I shall single out a positive hero and a resourceful villain. As usual, the extremes, though less representative, will be allotted time at the expense of the man in the middle, although he probably reflected the majority of the Greek *daskaloi*, earning their honest bread in Eastern Europe, as did Arsenius, archbishop of Elasson, who left his teaching in L'viv (Lemberg) to go to Moscow with Patriarch Jeremiah II in 1588.

Maksim the Greek, our positive hero, came to Moscow in 1518, and was a unique phenomenon in the history of Muscovite culture. This is not because he had spent time in Italy and brought with him stories of

Savonarola, Lodovico Sforza il Moro, and the neo-pagan circles of the Renaissance. In the sixteenth century and later, other Greeks coming to Moscow had known the West as well as he. Maksim the Greek is so important because through him for the first and only time between Volodimer the Great in the tenth century and Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth, Eastern Europe was exposed to prolonged contact with a representative of the refined layers of Byzantine culture. It is a pity that this should have happened only after Byzantium's fall. If the Muscovites could follow Maksim's Slavic, which he never thoroughly mastered — he mixed, *more Serbico*, his genitives and locatives — they learned, or could have learned, something about Greek secular literature from him. In one of his treatises, he offered the plot of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*; he quoted the beginning of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and the seventy-fourth verse of the Fifteenth Book of the *Odyssey*: "Treat a man well, while he is with you, but let him go when he wishes," a plea *pro domo*, since Maksim had been accused of heresy and interned. He knew his mythology and told the Muscovites that Zeus gave birth to Pallas from his head. To my knowledge, Maksim was also the only author in Old Rus'ian literature before the seventeenth century ever to have used the words "Hellene" and "Hellenic" in a positive sense.

Since he was a good Byzantine, however, Maksim sprinkled his prose with Byzantine proverbs, if barely recognizable in their Slavic garb. I also suspect that he did not adduce the line from the *Odyssey* directly, but remembered it from the early Byzantine rhetorician Aphthonios, who quoted it in his collection of set oratorical pieces. It is probably through Aphthonios that Maksim introduced his Russian readers to the genre of *ethopoiia*; moreover, he inserted in his writings an entry from the *Lexicon of Suda*, a saying by Pseudo-Menander from Stobaeus, and a story on the virtuous and chaste Belisarius. He could also transcend both Classicism and Byzantinism and show an open mind. To the Muscovites he spoke of the existence of a large land called Cuba — politically one of his more prophetic statements. His own Greeks he told to free their souls from the illusory and vain hope that the imperial power in Constantinople would be reestablished as it had been before, or that the Greeks would arise from the slumber of carelessness and indifference in which they had sunk for many years.

In terms of imponderables which bring one's downfall, Maksim's trouble was his having been too much of a scholar. He talked too much, and he quoted his authorities as a scholar would, even though some, like Origen or Eusebius, were tainted with heresy. Being a true erudite, he dis-

daind discussing Basil the Great and John Chrysostom at length, because, he said, they were too well known — a wrong approach with the Muscovites, who had always displayed a talent for dwelling on the obvious at length. Maksim showed a scholar's vanity — and a foreigner's impertinence — when he made fun of the old, and therefore venerable, Slavic translators who had not been able to tell *ekklisia*, 'church', from the verb *ekklise*, 'to exclude'. Finally, Maksim displayed the scholar's *hubris*. Proud of his achievements as corrector of the Psalter, he compared himself to the later translators of the Old Testament into Greek — Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. Had he known his milieu better, he would have realized that some fifty years before, an archbishop of Novgorod considered these very translators heretical perverters of the Holy Writ. Such a man was treading on thin ice. Maksim was banished, and never allowed to leave Muscovy and see his beloved Athonite monastery of Vatopedi. It gives one food for thought about the Muscovy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to realize that this highly cultured Byzantine was long revered in Russia for his statements on the sign of the cross, whereas his classical references were never picked up.

Of Arsenius, archbishop of Elasson, our middle-of-the-road traveler, I shall only say that he was a leading *daskal* in the school organized by the Epiphany Fraternity of L'viv in the 1580s. He left his teacher's position there to follow Patriarch Jeremiah II to Moscow in 1588, and he wrote a description of his trip in politic verse glued together by repetitions and assonance rhymes. He presented the establishment of the patriarchate in Moscow as a series of triumphs for the patriarch of Constantinople, and wrote from the perspective of a hanger-on with an empty stomach and grasping hands. The most detailed description in Arsenius's poem was of the vessels and table utensils displayed at the banquet held after the Russian metropolitan Job had been ordained patriarch. In Moscow, Arsenius did well; he resided in the Kremlin, distinguished himself as a copyist of manuscripts, and wrote on contemporary Muscovite history.

Our resourceful villain will be the metropolitan of Gaza, Paisios Ligarides. From 1662 on, he was Tsar Aleksej's main foreign expert on the means for bringing about Patriarch Nikon's downfall. Nearly everybody grants him learning and intellectual agility — Byzantine philologists remember him for bringing Photius's Sermon on the Rus'ian attack of 860 to Moscow, and should commend him for his use of Photius's *Bibliotheca*. Everybody — modern scholars and Paisios's contemporaries alike — condemn the lack of scruples of this international adventurer. I shall not dwell on the well-known career of this notorious man. Instead, I

shall introduce a new find and use it to suggest that in at least one aspect of the Nikon affair, the unprincipled Paisios showed some consistency — namely, in fidelity to the Greek point of view.

The find is a manuscript of Sinai, perhaps the autograph of Paisios, with answers to the sixty-one questions which Tsar Aleksej had secretly posed to him in the presence of the Boyar's Council, in all likelihood sometime soon after 26 November 1662. In the last century, Vladimir Solov'ev observed that the Greeks who had come to Moscow to judge Nikon condemned him for his un-Byzantine ways — that is, for resisting the tsar — but disculpated him on counts where he behaved like a Byzantine — that is, for following Greek customs. The Sinai manuscript bears out Solov'ev's observation. To all the tsar's questions obliquely attacking Nikon, Paisios answered to the former's satisfaction. All those touching on ritual and presenting a choice between the traditional Muscovite and the Greek interpretation, he answered in favor of the latter. Could the emperor convoke a local Synod? By all means. If a prelate talks offensively against the emperor, what punishment is fitting for him? If out of stupidity, then compassion. If otherwise, his tongue should be cut out. If a bishop abdicates, does he retain power over his see? He does not. On the other hand, should the passage of the Credo run: "To whose Kingdom there *is* no end," rather than "*shall be* no end?" No. This is redolent of Origen's heresy. Should Alleluia be sung two or three times? Three. How do you make the sign of the cross? With three fingers. And, finally, in what letters were the words that Constantine saw in heaven written — Latin or Greek? In Greek letters, according to the view of Emperor Leo the Wise.

## V

Everybody agreed that Byzantium fell on account of its sins. What these sins were depended on the point of view and interests of the observer. To the Muscovites, whether of the fifteenth century or of the seventeenth, the most grievous sins of Byzantium, and therefore of its heirs, the Greeks, were two: the most serious explicit sin was against the faith, and the most serious implicit sin was to have lost.

Five years after the city's fall, the metropolitan Jonah held up the example of the empire to the Lithuanian bishops, to deter them from yielding to the Pope. When Constantinople remained faithful to Orthodoxy, it was invincible. The imperial city had not suffered from the Bulgarians nor from the Persians, who kept her seven years as in a net,

because on that occasion — which, we must assume, was the siege of 626 — she had kept her piety. By the mid-seventeenth century, there were enough proofs that the Greeks had lost their piety, and that the Muscovites were the sole depositories of it. At the Moscow Council of 1666, the Old Believer Avvakum turned to the Greek patriarchs, and to many Greek prelates sitting in judgment on him, with — as he put it — their foxy Russian followers listening in, and said to them: “Your Orthodoxy has become variegated on account of the Turkish Mohammed’s violence. There is nothing astonishing in this. You’ve come to be weak. From now on come to us to be taught. By God’s grace there is autocracy here” — that is, freedom from foreign domination. Avvakum’s words were repeated throughout Muscovy both by the Old Believers and by Orthodox conservatives, and the Greeks were vulnerable to the argument of lost authority and power.

At first, the Muscovite case appeared to have one weakness. No matter how tarnished the Greek faith may have subsequently become, the fact remained that the Russes had gotten their Baptism from Greece. It was certainly a point on the Greek side during the disputation which they held with the conservative Russian monk and collector of Greek manuscripts, Arsenij Suxanov, in Moldavia in 1650. The Greeks kept asking Suxanov: “From where did you get your faith? You were baptized by us, the Greeks.” Two escapes from this impasse were possible. First, one could say, “We got it from God, and not from the Greeks.” Second, one could refer to a Slavic elaboration on an eighth-century Byzantine legend, and maintain that the Russes had accepted baptism originally from the apostle Andrew, not from the Greeks. Suxanov used both these escapes, but then went over to the offensive, asking the Greeks themselves from where they thought they had received *their* baptism. When they said they had received it from Christ and his Brother James, Suxanov — an early revisionist of Byzantine history — exploded this part of the myth of Hellenism. Christianity was no Greek monopoly; certainly not in Christ’s time in Palestine. Greeks, he knew, lived in Greece and Macedonia while Christ and St. James lived in Jerusalem. In Christ’s time, Jews and Arabs, not Greeks, lived there. The truth was that the Greeks received their baptism from St. Andrew, precisely as the Russes did; hence, they were in no respect better than the Russes. As for the Greeks’ claim to be “the source” for everyone, they should have considered a few facts: the first Gospel, by Matthew, was written in Jerusalem for the Jews, who had believed in him, and not for the Greeks. Ten years later, Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome for the Romans, and not for the Greeks. Hence, even the

Romans were ahead in receiving the glad tidings. The claim that the Greeks were the source for “all of us” was just overbearing talk; even if they had once been the source, it had dried up. The Turkish sultan lived among the Greeks, yet they were unable to give him water and lead him to the true faith. God’s word about the Greeks had come true. They had been first and now were last; the Russes had been last and were now first. The Greeks have been left behind (*zakosneli este*). The conclusion from all this was that the norm of what was Orthodox and what was not lay with the Russians of Suxanov’s time, and not with the Greeks.

## VI

If the Muscovites could not easily abandon the Byzantine frame of reference, it stood to reason that the Greeks, when dealing with Muscovy, would adhere to it. In 1593 the patriarch of Alexandria, Meletios Pigas, belatedly confirmed the establishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow. In his letter to the tsar he justified his consent by quoting and paraphrasing, without giving his source, parts of the twenty-eighth canon of the Council of Chalcedon. In its time, that council had raised the rank of the see of Constantinople, because, like Moscow in the 1580s, it was “a city adorned with a senate and an empire.”

All this amounted to flattering the barbarian. However, the Greeks also turned to Byzantium when they were countering Muscovite prejudices or just clinging to their own. When Byzantium gave out, they used their own heads, or cheated a bit. The Patriarchal Charter of 1561, confirming the imperial title to Ivan the Terrible, asserted that its issuance was necessary because Ivan’s coronation by the metropolitan of Moscow, Makarij, alone was not sufficient. This right was reserved exclusively for the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople. At an earlier time, Maksim the Greek took issue with those prelates who did not accept ordination from the patriarch of Constantinople, because he lived in the dominion of the Turk. Pagan domination did not impugn one’s faith. Before the year 300 the Church Universal was also subjugated, yet it had maintained its purity. Maksim did not begrudge Moscow Constantinople’s old title of “New Jerusalem,” but he saw no reason to assert, as one of his Muscovite correspondents had done, that Old Jerusalem had lost its sanctity. Although they lost the empire, the Greeks retained the Logos. They did lose everything that was passing and worldly; Orthodoxy, however, *μη γένοιτο*, they not only did not lose, but taught to others. In this context, the monks of Athos — for it was they who thought up these arguments for

the Slavs shortly before 1650 — quoted the Gospel: “the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.”

When still living in Wallachia, Paisios Ligarides dedicated a big — and still unpublished — volume of the Prophecies (*Χρησμολόγιον*) to Tsar Aleksej Mixajlovič. This was in 1656, one year before Patriarch Nikon thought of inviting this gifted and potentially useful man to Moscow, and six years before Paisios actually went there and enrolled in the service not of Nikon, but of the tsar; Paisios believed in planning. He must also have believed that rulers to whom books are dedicated seldom read them, since his manuscript contains peculiar material on East European history. He had no difficulty countering the Muscovite boast of having been baptized by St. Andrew. Anyone could read in Constantine Porphyrogenitus that the first woman from Rus’ to receive baptism was Princess Olga, and in Theophanes Continuatus that the Russes were christianized under Basil I. In his further forays into the history of Old Rus’, Ligarides came up with more astounding trophies. Rjurik, Sineus and Truvor, the traditional founders of the Rurikid dynasty, were Byzantines (*Ῥωμαῖοι τὸ γένος*). Consequently, Ligarides said, “the Muscovites had been handed down not only the faith, but also the empire, from us, the Byzantines (*Ῥωμαῖοι*).” On the other hand, Vladimir Monomax, the Muscovite ideologist’s link with Byzantium, was not connected with the empire after all. He was called Monomax simply “because he was monarch in all of *Rossia*.” However, Ligarides did stress Moscow’s real link with a Byzantine ruling house. He played the marriage of Ivan III with Sophia Palaeologina up for all its worth. Ivan III’s many and unexpected victories, “so they say,” were due to this most astute and loving mother’s wisdom and advice. And Tsar Aleksej himself was reminded on the very first folio of the Prophecies that his lineage went back to Sophia.

Towards the year 1700, and following fifteen years of tug-of-war, Greek was to yield to Latin as a basic tool of education in Moscow. About that time, the patriarch of Jerusalem, Dositheos, made a last stand for Byzantine culture and delivered himself of a panoply of prejudices current since Photius. “To the person who told you that children should not be taught in Greek but in Latin,” so he wrote to a Russian, “answer: First, the Old Testament was translated by the Holy Ghost into Greek and not into another language.” After making ten more equally cogent points, Dositheos concluded: “in matters politic, secular, rhetorical, logical, poetical, philosophical, arithmetical, geometrical, and astronomical, the Hellenes are the teachers of the Latins.”

When arguments born of pride are spoken by the weak, they are seldom the better part of wisdom. In order to secure a passage from the frontier

town of Putyvl' to Moscow with its promise of rubles and sable, in order to avoid possible imprisonment, or at least prolonged religious reorientation, in a monastery in the north, it was wiser to admit, even if you were a Greek, that the Greeks had not retained one-half of the faith — wiser, too, to flatter Muscovite rulers, even before 1547, as worthy of being called emperors not only of Russia but of the whole earth, and to bestow imperial or biblical titles on them. Sometimes Byzantine epithets suffered depreciation, as when two Greek metropolitans and one patriarch called the Ukrainian hetman Xmel'nyč'kyj a new Moses and a new Constantine, and when Paul of Aleppo compared him to Basil I.

But behind currying favor with the Muscovite, there also lay a genuine hope — that of liberation from the Turkish yoke. Already Maksim the Greek exhorted Vasilij III to follow in the steps of Constantine and Theodosius and rule “over us,” that is, the Greeks. Hopes of liberation continued throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As late as 1698 the patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos passed on the rumor that Peter I had assured the king of England that in the year 1700 he would be celebrating liturgy in the church of St. Sophia. There was much wishful thinking and much prophetic mumbo-jumbo in these calls for Muscovite help. Through his book on the Prophecies, Ligarides was something of a specialist on the topic; he knew the prophecies of Andrew the Fool — such as the one that the “yellow,” i.e., blond, people, were destined to beat the Turk — the prophecy of Gennadius Scholarius, and even the one contained in the *Turco-Graecia* of Martin Crusius. Other people circulated prophecies purportedly coming from the Turks themselves, predicting that a northern ruler would subjugate the Turkish land. Even the anti-Greek Suxanov was swayed by the Greek passion — to which, by the way, the West, too, had succumbed in the sixteenth century — and translated into Russian Gennadius Scholarius's decipherment of prophetic letters, said to have been inscribed on the sarcophagus of Constantine.

To give strength to the prophecies, Greek and other Balkan visitors circulated stories about tens of thousands of Serbians, Bulgarians, Albanians, and Greeks ready to rise if the tsar would only cross the Danube. The tsar, however, was very cautious. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, Ivan Peresvetov reported the Greeks' hopes that Ivan IV would liberate them from the Turk, but sixteenth-century Muscovy firmly refused to be dragged into an anti-Turkish action. The *Povest' o dvux posol'stvax* is, to my knowledge, the first semi-official Muscovite tract prophesying Constantinople's liberation by the tsar; it dates — or so its editor says — from the early seventeenth century.

Before the liberation of Orthodox Christians could be practically

envisaged by Muscovy, the infidel had to be sized up; here, the Greeks were useful indeed. Along with Christian relics, they brought information on the Turk. Alms given by the Muscovite government to the Eastern patriarchs were also payments for providing intelligence about Turkish affairs. Between 1630 and 1660, ten Greek metropolitans were in the Russian service. Some Greek diplomats were double agents, and some were denounced as Janissary spies. Others were impostors appearing with forged recommendations from the Eastern patriarchs obtained in Moldavia, for, according to one of the Russian informants, in the second half of the seventeenth century Moldavia was a great center for forging patriarchal charters.

On the whole, however, the Greeks served the Russian cause well, sometimes laying down their lives. In 1657 the Turks were said to have hung the patriarch of Constantinople, Parthenios III, for his relations with the Russian government. Greek patriarchs and metropolitans were instrumental and successful in mediating the submission of Hetman Xmel'nyč'kyj to Moscow in 1654. One of them received 600 rubles for his services in this matter, but others, like Dositheos of Jerusalem, served not for money, but out of conviction. Since they hoped that the Russian tsar would liberate them, the Greeks could believe that he was the defender and protector of Orthodoxy throughout the world and should be obeyed by all Orthodox without exception.

## VII

There was one area of Eastern Europe where Greek prelates could count on the respect of local bookmen and where nobody was checking on their credentials. This area was the Ukrainian and Belorussian lands under Polish-Lithuanian domination. In these lands the community of faith between Greeks and natives was reinforced by the similarity of fate. As the Turks lorded it over the Greeks, so the Catholic apostates, the Poles, persecuted the Eastern church.

As spokesmen for hostile but independent powers, the Jesuit Peter Skarga in the sixteenth century and our acquaintance Suxanov scorned the Greeks in almost identical terms — Skarga saying that learning had died among the Greeks and had turned towards “us Catholics,” Suxanov asserting that all that was best with the Greeks had gone over to “us Muscovites.” But the subjugated Orthodox of L'viv, Kiev, and Vilnius needed the Greeks to help them establish schools in response to the Catholic challenge and even more, to help them reestablish the Orthodox

hierarchy in their lands. Schools under either princely or burgher patronage were created from the 1580s on, half a century before the first such attempts were undertaken in Moscow, and Greeks participated in their inception everywhere. Cyril Lukaris, later patriarch of Constantinople, and Arsenius of Elasson, before his more profitable trek up north, were teachers in these schools. Latin joined Greek and soon overshadowed it. However, Latin was studied because one needed it to succeed in a Catholic state, while — as one of the early seventeenth-century Kievan writers put it — “it was not necessary to drive Kievans to learn Greek.”

Between 1616, when its first books appeared, and 1700, the Kievan press of the Caves monastery published mostly Slavonic translations of liturgical and Byzantine texts. Several of them were new or revised translations from the Greek, and the Kievans, unlike the Muscovites, showed no mistrust for Greek originals printed in the West. In 1624, they printed John Chrysostom's Sermons on the Acts. The translation was made by one Gavriil Dorofejevič, “the *daskal* of the most philosophic and artful Helleno-Greek tongue in L'viv, from the Helleno-Greek archetype printed in Eton (*v Etoni izobraženom*).” To my knowledge, this was the earliest mention of Eton in Eastern Europe.

In their polemics with Catholics after the Union of 1596, the Orthodox of the Ukraine had to face the perennial argument about the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Meeting this argument with much empathy, the Orthodox described the spiritual purity of the Greeks, since they were unhampered by the cares of the worldly empire and free to seek the kingdom of God under the eye of the tolerant Turk — a rosy picture indeed. True, the Greeks were not ruling any longer. This, however, was an advantage when it came to the salvation of their souls, for the Greeks now had to be humble and did not raise the sword of blood. Even the pagans, in the midst of whom they lived, wondered at their piety. One or two prophecies about the rebirth of Byzantium were quoted out of habit, but they had nothing of the vigor and impatience of those the Greeks addressed to the seventeenth-century Muscovite rulers.

Such meekness disappeared, however, when the Orthodox of Poland and Lithuania had to counter the claim for the superiority of Latin learning. One of the polemicists went beyond Dositheos of Jerusalem's old contention that Latin wisdom was Greek, and beyond the dusting off of Plato and the church fathers. Around the year 1400, he said, the sciences had been brought to the West by people like Chrysoloras, Theodore of Gaza, George of Trebizond, Manuel Moschopoulos — here

the chronology was a bit wobbly — and Demetrios Chalkokondylas. Thus, “now,” when the “Russes” were going to “German lands” for the sake of learning, they were taking back what was their own and had been lent to the Westerners by the Greeks for a short time. I know of no parallel to this argument in an early modern Slavic text. The Orthodox polemicists of Poland-Lithuania were remarkably up-to-date on what went on in the Greek lands in their own time — a result of close contacts with various Greek hierarchs. One of the treatises, written in 1621, quoted in the same breath John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the letter of Cyril Lukaris, dated 1614, to show that the true church of Christ was the church of persecution. To show that holiness had not left the Eastern church, the same treatise compiled a list of about 130 saints having shone in various Orthodox lands. The list opened with the saints of Greece, excluding Athos, which had a special rubric. The first name on the list was Seraphim, a martyr and a national hero of the Greeks beheaded by the Turks in 1612. He was said to have been abbot of St. Luke monastery in Hellas (Hosios Lukas?), a piece of information of possible use to modern Greek historians.

The cultural level of these anti-unionist polemics was higher than anything the Muscovites could offer in the first half of the seventeenth century. The point is brought home if we juxtapose the bibliography of 155 items — not many of which were appended just for show — of Zacharias Kopystens'kyj's *Palinodia* (1621) with the few books quoted during the disputation held in Moscow in 1627 with Lavrentij Zyzanij, the Ukrainian author of a catechism. Among other Greek texts, the *Palinodia* referred to Nicephorus Gregoras, Zonaras, and Chalkokondylas, while the Muscovites merely referred to Nicephorus, patriarch of Constantinople, and to the book of Esop, “the Frankish wise man.” However, these erudite polemics lacked the Muscovite bookmen's clarity and seriousness of purpose. When the Muscovites quoted the *Story of the Princes of Vladimir*, they knew that their goal was to enhance the glory of Moscow. But when the Ukrainian Kopystens'kyj quoted the same story in a preface to the *Sermons* of John Chrysostom, he did so just to beef up the genealogy of the book's patron, the prince Četvertyns'kyj.

Even in the Ukraine, deep respect for the Greeks and Greek lore was limited to the erudite Orthodox. A less learned West Ukrainian writer of about 1600, Ivan Vyšens'kyj, scorned Plato and Aristotle, associated them with Origen, and found John Chrysostom, or better yet, the *Horologion* and the *Oktoechos*, preferable. In matters of language, Vyšens'kyj thought that Slavic — by which he meant both Church Slavonic and the

semi-popular language in which he himself wrote — was more honored before God than Greek and Latin. This adherence to native tradition at the expense of Byzantine models had its reward. Vyšens'kyj is the most vigorous and exciting writer of early seventeenth-century Ukrainian literature, as Protopop Avvakum — who also rejected what he called the “Hellenic swiftness,” was “not learned in dialectics,” and wrote in practically vernacular Russian — is the most vigorous and best writer of seventeenth-century Russian literature. One difference, however, helps to measure the distance which, in the seventeenth century, separated the two cultural communities from Greece. When in difficulty, Avvakum exchanged a book of Ephrem the Syrian for a horse and a Nomocanon for the services of a helmsman; he did not know Greek. Vyšens'kyj, who spent much of his life as a solitary monk on Mt. Athos, knew it well. He could make Greek puns and raise his Slavonic tongue to the level of the calque of the Greek at will. Thus he could call the hated Michael VIII Palaeologus *Mateolog* and, in another passage, *Suetoslov*, which in both cases is “Mr. Vainword,” expressed once by means of Greek and another time by means of Slavic components.

### VIII

If the Muscovites mistrusted the learned Greek visitors, it was because so many of them had indulged in suspicious activities in the West before coming to their land. Maksim the Greek had worked in Venice with Aldus Manutius; Ligarides studied in the *Athanasianum* of Rome; Patriarch Nikon's helper, Arsenius the Greek, in Venice and Padua; and the Brothers Leichudes, the ill-fated directors of the Slavo-Greco-Latin Academy in Moscow, in the same two cities. The Greek books these men brought with them and from which the Muscovites were supposed to learn the correct faith had been printed in Venice, Paris, or, as we now know, Eton. In the Greeks' own writings, quotations from John Chrysostom stood side by side with those from St. Augustine — a suspect author — or, worse yet, from Martin Crusius, or Aleksander Gwagnin.

However, at the very time when Muscovite conservatives decried Greek books printed in the West, the cultural impact of the West upon Moscow had been in swing for half a century. In 1617, the Chronograph of 1512 — a text quoted at the beginning of this essay — underwent a face-lifting. In the new recension, many chapters still began with the old entry entitled “The Greek Empire,” but the final dirge on the Conquest of Constantinople was omitted, and a shorter version of Nestor-Iskinder's story was

substituted. The body of the chronograph was substantially enlarged by translations from Polish chroniclers, and among other pieces of new information was a description “of the islands of wild men whom Germans called the New World or the Fourth Part of the Universe.”

Even Muscovite conservatives had to relent: they found themselves invoking Latin sources in defense of super-Orthodox causes. In 1650 Arsenij Suxanov was telling the Greeks of Russia’s venerable traditions. The city of Novgorod had been established just after the flood and was so powerful, he said, that the Latin chroniclers had written about it: “Who can oppose God and the Great Novgorod?” The Latin chroniclers, I suspect, were in reality the Ukrainian polemicist Kopystens’kyj. Kopystens’kyj in turn quoted a phrase “*Quis potest contra Deum et magnum Novogradum*” which he attributed to a certain “Krancius,” who turns out to have been Albert Kranz, a German historian writing in Latin. In Moscow itself, Ligarides refuted the petition of the Old Believer Pop Nikita in Latin, and the refutation was then translated into Russian. Incidentally, the situation was no different in the Ukraine. There, anti-Catholic polemicists prided themselves on their knowledge of Greek, put Greek sentences into their works, and quoted from Byzantine chroniclers. However, the long passages from Gregoras that one polemicist used to impress his readers were quoted not from the original, but from the Latin translation of 1562 by Hieronymus Wolf of Augsburg.

In 1722, Feofan Prokopovyč was obliged to help his protector Peter I, who had had his first son condemned to death and had just lost another. To do so, Prokopovyč wrote a treatise proving that an emperor could establish an heir other than his son, and quoted a number of examples from Byzantine history; thus, he cited Leo I for having bypassed his son-in-law Zeno; however, his source was not a Byzantine chronicler, but Cassiodore. He also mentioned Phocas the Tyrant, but his reference was to the German Calvisius, whose *Opus Chronologicum* was published in 1605, rather than to a Greek source.

The story of those who relied on the Byzantine or Muscovite frame of reference could be carried into Peter I’s time and beyond it; however, the recounting would be repetitious and outside the mainstream of Russia’s cultural history. Peter’s name conjures up the image of Amsterdam and St. Petersburg, not of Constantinople and Moscow. In Russian political schemes of the eighteenth century, Byzantium was no longer used as a frame of reference, but purely as an item of propaganda; this was evident in Peter’s appeal to the Montenegrins and in Catherine II’s grand project, dating from the 1780s, to establish a Greek empire with her

grandson, appropriately christened Constantine, ruling in Constantinople. The most interesting nugget this latter project offers to the intellectual historian is Joseph II's quip that he would not suffer the Russians in Constantinople, since the vicinity of the turban would be less dangerous to Vienna than that of the Russian *šapka*, shades — conscious perhaps — of the saying unfairly attributed to Lukas Notaras on the eve of the fall of the city.

Lukas Notaras brings us back to 1453, our point of departure. The years between the middle of the fifteenth and the end of the seventeenth century were the years of Eastern Europe's de-Byzantinization, and the story they tell the intellectual historian about Muscovite Russia can be summed up thus: After Florence and Constantinople's fall, Russian bookmen attempted to build a cultural and ideological framework of their own by re-using the very elements which Byzantium had given them — often indirectly — in the preceding four centuries of their history. This building of new castles out of old blocks did not give the bookmen enough self-confidence in the face of Russia's formerly glorious but by then debased Greek mentors. Hence the instances of defiance against the Greeks by the Muscovites throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the meantime, the neo-Byzantine castles continued to be built not only from old blocks and from their native imitations, but also from Western components. This was a contradictory situation, and it did not last. When a new system, based on Western blueprints, emerged about 1700, the Russian elite, without ever becoming oblivious to the Byzantine heritage, relegated it to the sidelines.

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