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Medieval Sourcebook:

Justinian:

Novella 146:

On Jews



8.ii.553. Nov.146. Justinian to Areobindas, P.P.

A Permission granted to the Hebrews to read the Sacred Scriptures according to Tradition, in Greek, Latin or any other Language, and an Order to expel from their community those who do not believe in the judgment, the Resurrection, and the Creation of Angels.

Preface.

Necessity dictates that when the Hebrews listen to their sacred texts they should not confine themselves to the meaning of the letter, but should also devote their attention to those sacred prophecies which are hidden from them, and which announce the mighty Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And though, by surrendering themselves to senseless interpretations, they still err from the true doctrine, yet, learning that they disagree among themselves, we have not permitted this disagreement to continue without a ruling on our part. From their own complaints which have been brought to us, we have understood that some only speak Hebrew, and wish to use it for the sacred books, and others think that a Greek translation should be added, and that they have been disputing about this for a long time. Being apprised of the matter at issue, we give judgment in favour of those who wish to use Greek also for the reading of the sacred scriptures, or any other tongue which in any district allows the hearers better to understand the text.

Ch. I.

We therefore sanction that, wherever there is a Hebrew congregation, those who wish it may, in their synagogues, read the sacred books to those who are present in Greek, or even Latin, or any other tongue. For the language changes in different places, and the reading changes with it, so that all present may understand, and live and act according to what they hear. Thus there shall be no opportunity for their interpreters, who make use only of the Hebrew, to corrupt it in any way they like, since the ignorance of the public conceals their depravity. We make this proviso that those who use Greek shall use the text of the seventy interpreters, which is the most accurate translation, and the one most highly approved, since it happened that the translators, divided into two groups, and working in different places, all produced exactly the same text.

i. Moreover who can fail to admire those men, who, writing long before the saving revelation of our mighty Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, yet as though they saw it coming with their eyes completed the translation of the sacred books as if the prophetic grace was illuminating them. This therefore they shall primarily use, but that we may not seem to be forbidding all other texts we allow the use of that of Aquila, though he was not of their people, and his translation differs not slightly from that of the Septuagint.

ii. But the Mishnah, or as they call it the second tradition, we prohibit entirely. For it is not part of the sacred books, nor is it handed down by divine inspiration through the prophets, but the handiwork of man, speaking only of earthly things, and having nothing of the divine in it. But let them read the holy words themselves, rejecting the commentaries, and not concealing what is said in the sacred writings,

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and disregarding the vain writings which do not form a part of them, which have been devised by them themselves for the destruction of the simple. By these instructions we ensure that no one shall be penalised or prohibited who reads the Greek or any other language. And their elders, Archiphericitae and presbyters, and those called magistrates, shall not by any machinations or anathemas have power to refuse this right, unless by chance they wish to suffer corporal punishment and the confiscation of their goods, before they yield to our will and to the commands which are better and clearer to God which we enjoin.

Ch.II.

If any among them seek to introduce impious vanities, denying the resurrection or the judgment, or the work of God, or that angels are part of creation, we require them everywhere to be expelled forthwith; that no backslider raise his impious voice to contradict the evident purpose of God. Those who utter such sentiments shall be put to death, and thereby the Jewish people shall be purged of the errors which they introduced.

Ch. III.

We pray that when they hear the reading of the books in one or the other language, they may guard themselves against the depravity of the interpreters, and, not clinging to the literal words, come to the point of the matter, and perceive their diviner meaning, so that they may start afresh to learn the better way, and may cease to stray vainly, and to err in that which is most essential, we mean hope in God. For this reason we have opened the door for the reading of the scriptures in every language, that all may henceforth receive its teaching, and become fitter for learning better things. For it is acknowledged that he, who is nourished upon the sacred scriptures and has little need of direction, is much readier to discern the truth, and to choose the better path, than he who understands nothing of them, but clings to the name of his faith alone, and is held by it as by a sacred anchor, and believes that what can be called heresy in its purest form is divine teaching.

Epilogue.

This is our sacred will and pleasure, and your Excellency and your present colleague and your staff shall see that it is carried out, and shall not allow the Hebrews to contravene it. Those who resist it or try to put any obstruction in its way, shall first suffer corporal punishment, and then be compelled to live in exile, forfeiting also their property, that they flaunt not their impudence against God and the empire. You shall also circulate our law to the provincial governors, that they learning its contents may enforce it in their several cities, knowing that it is to be strictly carried out under pain of our displeasure.

Source.

from James Parkes: *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism*, (New York: JPS, 1934), 392-393

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Medieval Sourcebook: Procopius: JUSTINIAN SUPPRESSES THE NIKA REVOLT, 532



[From History of the Wars, I]

At this time [January 1, 532] an insurrection broke out unexpectedly in Byzantium among the populace, and, contrary to expectation, it proved to be a very serious affair, and ended in great harm to the people and to the senate, as the following account will show.

In every city the population has been divided for a long time past into the Blue and the Green factions; but within comparatively recent times it has come about that, for the sake of these names and the seats which the rival factions occupy in watching the games, they spend their money and abandon their bodies to the most cruel tortures, and even do not think it unworthy to die a most shameful death. And they fight against their opponents knowing not for what end they imperil themselves, but knowing well that, even if they overcome their enemy the fight, the conclusion of the matter for them will be to be carried off straight away to the prison, and finally, after suffering extreme torture, to be destroyed. So there grows up in them against their fellow men a hostility which has no cause, and at no time does it cease or disappear, for it gives place neither to the ties of marriage nor of relationship nor of friendship, and the case is the same even though those who differ with respect to these colours be brothers or any other kin. . . . I, for my part, am unable to call this anything except a disease of the soul. . . .

At this time the officers of the city administration in Byzantium were leading away to death some of the rioters. But the members of the two factions conspiring together and declaring a truce with each other, seized the prisoners and then straightway entered the prison and released all those who were in confinement there. . . . Fire was applied to the city as if it had fallen under the hand of an enemy. . . . The emperor and his consort, with a few members of the senate shut themselves up in the palace and remained quietly there. Now the watch-word which the populace passed to one another was Nika [i.e., "Conquer"]. . . .

....On the fifth day of the insurrection in the late afternoon the Emperor Justinian gave orders to Hypatius and Pompeius, nephews of the late emperor, Anastasius, to go home as quickly as possible, either because he suspected that some plot was being matured by them against his own person, or, it may be, because destiny brought them to this. But they feared that the people would force them to the throne (as in fact fell out), and they said that they would be doing wrong if they should abandon their sovereign when he found himself in such danger. When the Emperor Justinian heard this, he inclined still more to his suspicion, and he bade them quit the palace instantly. . . .

On the following day at sunrise it became known to the people that both men had quit the palace where they had been staying. So the whole population ran to them, and they declared Hypatius emperor and prepared to lead him to the market place to assume the power. But the wife of Hypatius, Mary, a discreet woman, who had the greatest reputation for prudence, laid hold of her husband and would not let go, but cried out with loud lamentation and with entreaties to all her kinsmen that the people were leading him on the road to death. But since the throng overpowered her, she unwillingly released her husband, and he by no will of his own came to the Forum of Constantine, where they summoned him to the throne; . . .

The emperor and his court were deliberating as to whether it would be better for them if they remained

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or if they took to flight in the ships. And many opinions were expressed favouring either course. And the Empress Theodora also spoke to the following effect: "My opinion then is that the present time, above all others, is inopportune for flight, even though it bring safety. . . . For one who has been an emperor it is unendurable to be a fugitive. May I never be separated from this purple, and may I not live that day on which those who meet me shall not address me as mistress. If, now, it is your wish to save yourself, O Emperor, there is no difficulty. For we have much money, and there is the sea, here the boats. However consider whether it will not come about after you have been saved that you would gladly exchange that safety for death. For as for myself, I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial-shroud." When the queen had spoken thus, all were filled with boldness, and, turning their thoughts towards resistance, they began to consider how they might be able to defend themselves if any hostile force should come against them. . . . All the hopes of the emperor were centred upon Belisarius and Mundus, of whom the former, Belisarius, had recently returned from the Persian war bringing with him a following which was both powerful and imposing, and in particular he had a great number of spearmen and guards who had received their training in battles and the perils of warfare. . .

When Hypatius reached the hippodrome, he went up immediately to where the emperor is accustomed to take his place and seated himself on the royal throne from which the emperor was always accustomed to view the equestrian and athletic contests. And from the palace Mundus went out through the gate which, from the circling descent, has been given the name of the Snail. . . . Belisarius, with difficulty and not without danger and great exertion, made his way over ground covered by ruins and half-burned buildings, and ascended to the stadium. . . . Concluding that he must go against the populace who had taken their stand in the hippodrome—a vast multitude crowding each other in great disorder—he drew his sword from its sheath and, commanding the others to do likewise, with a shout he advanced upon them at a run. But the populace, who were standing in a mass and not in order, at the sight of armoured soldiers who had a great reputation for bravery and experience in war, and seeing that they struck out with their swords unsparingly, beat a hasty retreat. . . . [Mundus] straightway made a sally into the hippodrome through the entrance which they call the Gate of Death. Then indeed from both sides the partisans of Hypatius were assailed with might and main and destroyed. . . . There perished among the populace on that day more than thirty thousand. . . . The soldiers killed both [Hypatius and Pompeius] on the following day and threw bodies into the sea. . . . This was the end of the insurrection in Byzantium.

from Procopius, *History of the Wars*, I, xxiv, translated by H.B. Dewing (New York: Macmillan, 1914), pp. 219-230, slightly abridged and reprinted in Leon Barnard and Theodore B. Hodges, *Readings in European History*, (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 52-55

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2.2 Purifying practice: *The Quinisext Council (691/692)*. Original in Greek.



As it became clear that Islam and its conquests were going to be a permanent challenge to Byzantium, Emperor Justinian II (r.685–695; 705–711) called a council of bishops to meet in Constantinople to hammer out the rules of Christian discipline. The council divided its canons (102 in all) among the three categories of persons traditional in the east: the secular clergy (e.g., bishops and priests); monks and nuns; and laypeople. Justinian meant for the council to be ecumenical and to include the pope at Rome. But the pope, Sergius I (687–701) did not attend and later refused to sign the document. Sergius objected to two canons, one permitting priests to have wives if their marriage had taken place before their ordination, the other prohibiting certain days of fasting. Later popes, however, approved the council canons, though with reservations.

The canons included here cover some lay practices and new attitudes toward icons.

1. What pastimes did the canons condemn, and why?
2. How separate do the lives of clergy and laypeople seem to have been according to the evidence of the canons?

[Source: R.H. Percival, trans., *The Canons of the Council in Trullo, often called The Quinisext Council* (<https://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/trullo.asp>, slightly modified and notes added.)]

CANON 50.

No one at all, whether cleric or layman, is from this time forward to play at dice. And if any one hereafter shall be found doing so, if he be a cleric he is to be deposed, if a layman let him be cut off.¹

CANON 51.

This holy and ecumenical synod altogether forbids those who are called “players [actors],” and their “spectacles,” as well as the exhibition of hunts, and the theatrical dances. If anyone despises the present canon, and gives himself to any of the things which are forbidden, if he be a cleric he shall be deposed, but if a layman let him be cut off.

CANON 61.

Those who give themselves up to soothsayers [fortune-tellers] or to those who are called *hecatontarchs* or to any such, in order that they may learn from them what things

they wish to have revealed to them, let all such, according to the decrees lately made by the Fathers concerning them, be subjected to the canon of six years.² And to this [penalty] they also should be subjected who carry about she-bears or animals of the kind for the diversion and injury of the simple; as well as those who tell fortunes and fates, and genealogy, and a multitude of words of this kind from the nonsense of deceit and imposture. Also those who are called expellers of clouds, enchanters, amulet-givers, and soothsayers.

And those who persist in these things, and do not turn away and flee from pernicious and Greek pursuits of this kind, we declare are to be thrust out of the Church, as also the sacred canons say. “For what fellowship hath light with darkness?” as the Apostle says, “or what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” [2 Cor. 6:14–16].

¹ Deposition means that the cleric is removed from office. The layman is “cut off” from communion, i.e., from the body of the faithful. No provision is offered for penance and reintegration.

² *Hecatontarchs* were old people, mainly women, reputed to have special knowledge. They sold medicines or amulets made of the hair of the female bears or other animals referred to in the next sentence. The “canon of six years” refers to a penance of six years.

CANON 62.

The so-called Calends [first day of the month], and what are called Bota [feasts in honor of Pan] and Brumalia [feasts in honor of Bacchus], and the full assembly which takes place on the first of March, we wish to be abolished from the life of the faithful. And also the public dances of women, which may do much harm and mischief. Moreover, we drive away from the life of Christians the dances given in the names of those falsely called gods by the Greeks whether of men or women, and which are performed after an ancient and un-Christian fashion; decreeing that no man from this time forth shall be dressed as a woman, nor any woman in the garb suitable to men. Nor shall he assume comic, satyric, or tragic masks;¹ nor may men invoke the name of the execrable Bacchus when they squeeze out the wine in the presses; nor when pouring out wine into jars, practicing in ignorance and vanity the things which proceed from the deceit of insanity. Therefore, those who in the future attempt any of these things which are written, having obtained a knowledge of them, if they be clerics we order them to be deposed, and if laymen to be cut off.

CANON 65.

The fires that are lighted on the new moons by some before their shops and houses, upon which (according to a certain ancient custom) they are wont foolishly and crazily to leap, we order henceforth to cease. Therefore, whosoever shall do such a thing, if he be a cleric, let him be deposed; but if he be a layman, let him be cut off.

For it is written in the Fourth Book of the Kings: "And Manasses built an altar to the whole host of heaven, in the two courts of the Lord, and made his sons to pass through the fire, he used lots and augurs and divinations by birds and made ventriloquists and multiplied diviners, that he might do evil before the Lord and provoke him to anger." [2 Kings 21:5–6]

CANON 66.

From the holy day of the Resurrection of Christ our God until the next Lord's day, for a whole week,² in the holy churches the faithful ought to be free from labor, rejoicing in Christ with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and celebrating the feast, and applying their minds to

the reading of the holy Scriptures, and delighting in the Holy Mysteries; for thus shall we be exalted with Christ and together with him be raised up. Therefore, on the aforesaid days there must not be any horse races or any public spectacle.

CANON 71.

Those who are taught the civil laws must not adopt the customs of the Gentiles, nor be induced to go to the theatre, nor to keep what are called Cylestras,³ nor to wear clothing contrary to the general custom; and this holds good when they begin their training, when they reach its end, and, in short, all the time of its duration. If anyone from this time shall dare to do contrary to this canon he is to be cut off.

CANON 73.

Since the life-giving cross has shown to us Salvation, we should be careful that we render due honor to that by which we were saved from the ancient fall. Wherefore, in mind, in word, in feeling giving veneration (*proskynesis*)⁴ to it, we command that the figure of the cross, which some have placed on the floor, be entirely removed therefrom, lest the trophy of the victory won for us be desecrated by the trampling under foot of those who walk over it. Therefore, those who from this present represent on the pavement the sign of the cross, we decree are to be cut off.

CANON 76.

It is not right that those who are responsible for reverence to churches should place within the sacred bounds an eating place, nor offer food there, nor make other sales. For God our Savior teaching us when he was tabernacling [i.e., living] in the flesh commanded not to make his Father's house a house of merchandise. He also poured out the small coins of the money-changers, and drove out all those who made common the temple. If, therefore, anyone shall be taken in the aforesaid fault let him be cut off.

CANON 77.

It is not right that those who are dedicated to religion, whether clerics or ascetics, should wash in the bath with

¹ These were the masks worn by actors in tragedy, comedy, and satyr plays in ancient Greece. The Quinisext canons are the last extant references to these ancient practices.

² I.e., the whole week after Easter.

³ Uncertain meaning.

⁴ Bowing or prostrating oneself to show honor to something.

women, nor should any Christian man or layman do so. For this is severely condemned by the heathens. But if anyone is caught in this thing, if he is a cleric let him be deposed; if a layman, let him be cut off.

CANON 78.

No one may drive any beast into a church except perchance a traveler, urged there by the greatest necessity, in default of a shed or resting-place, may have turned aside into said church. For unless the beast had been taken inside, it would have perished, and he, by the loss of his beast of burden, and thus without means of continuing his journey, would be in peril of death. And we are taught that the Sabbath was made for man: wherefore also the safety and comfort of man are by all means to be placed first. But should anyone be detected without any necessity such as we have just mentioned, leading his beast into a church, if he be a cleric let him be deposed, and if a layman let him be cut off.

CANON 82.

In some pictures of the venerable icons, a lamb is painted to which the Precursor¹ points his finger, which is received as a type of grace, indicating beforehand through the Law, our true Lamb, Christ our God. Embracing therefore the ancient types and shadows as symbols of the truth, and patterns given to the Church, we prefer “grace and truth,” receiving it as the fulfillment of the Law. In order therefore that “that which is perfect” may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in colored expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and

that we may recall to our memory his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death, and his redemption which was wrought for the whole world.

CANON 91.

Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the fetus, are subjected to the penalty of murder.

CANON 92.

The holy synod decrees that those who in the name of marriage carry off women and those who in any way assist the ravishers, if they be clerics, they shall lose their rank, but if they be laymen they shall be anathematized.

CANON 96.

Those who by baptism have put on Christ have professed that they will copy his manner of life which he led in the flesh. Those therefore who adorn and arrange their hair to the detriment of those who see them, that is by cunningly devised intertwinings [elaborate hairstyles or wigs] and by this means put a bait in the way of unstable souls, we take in hand to cure paternally with a suitable punishment: training them and teaching them to live soberly, in order that having laid aside the deceit and vanity of material things, they may give their minds continually to a life which is blessed and free from mischief, and have their conversation in fear, pure [and holy]; and thus come as near as possible to God through their purity of life; and adorn the inner man rather than the outer, and that with virtues, and good and blameless manners, so that they leave in themselves no remains of the left-handedness of the adversary [the Devil]. But if any shall act contrary to the present canon let him be cut off.

2.3 The iconoclastic argument: *The Synod of 754.* Original in Greek.



Byzantine emperor Leo III (r.717–741) may have launched iconoclasm, but he treated icons as an abuse, not a heresy. His son, Constantine V (r.741–775), took the next step, calling a Church council in 754 to declare the veneration of icons a violation of “the fundamental doctrine of our salvation.” The synod, whose proceedings survive only because they were included in the account of the later iconodule (pro-icon) synod of 787, compared

¹ John the Baptist. In John 1:29 he sees Jesus and says “Behold the Lamb of God.”

“unlawful art” to the great heresies of Nestorius and Arius, who challenged the orthodox view concerning the nature of the persons of the Trinity. No representation of Christ, the iconoclastic bishops argued, could accurately portray the correct union of His two natures, man and God. The synod included no patriarch or papal representative, but it did involve over 300 bishops—a very large number.

1. Why do the bishops of the synod argue that artists who depict Christ “introduce a fourth person into the Trinity”?
2. How might you argue that iconoclasm was more popular in its day than later iconodule propaganda might suggest?

[Source: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ser., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 14: *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 543–45 (slightly modified and notes added).]

The holy and Ecumenical synod, which by the grace of God and most pious command of the God-beloved and orthodox Emperors, Constantine and Leo¹ now assembled in the imperial residence city, in the temple of the holy and inviolate Mother of God and Virgin Mary, surnamed in Blachernai² have decreed as follows.

Satan misguided men, so that they worshiped the creature instead of the Creator. The Mosaic law and the prophets co-operated to undo this ruin; but in order to save mankind thoroughly, God sent his own Son, who turned us away from error and the worshiping of idols and taught us the worshiping of God in spirit and in truth. As messengers of his saving doctrine, he left us his Apostles and disciples, and these adorned the Church, his Bride, with his glorious doctrines. This ornament of the Church the holy Fathers and the six Ecumenical Councils have preserved inviolate. But the before-mentioned demiurgos of wickedness [i.e., Satan] could not endure the sight of this adornment and gradually brought back idolatry under the appearance of Christianity. As then Christ armed his Apostles against the ancient idolatry with the power of the Holy Spirit and sent them out into all the world, so has he awakened against the new idolatry his servants our faithful Emperors and endowed them with the same wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Impelled by

the Holy Spirit they could no longer be witnesses of the Church being laid waste by the deception of demons and summoned the sanctified assembly of the God-beloved bishops, that they might institute at a synod a scriptural examination into the deceitful coloring of the pictures which draws down the spirit of man from the lofty adoration of God to the low and material adoration of the creature, and that they, under divine guidance, might express their view on the subject.

Our holy synod therefore assembled, and we, its 338 members, follow the older synodal decrees and accept and proclaim joyfully the dogmas handed down, principally those of the six holy Ecumenical Synods. In the first place the holy and ecumenical great synod assembled at Nicaea, etc.³

After we had carefully examined their decrees under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we found that the unlawful art of painting living creatures blasphemed the fundamental doctrine of our salvation—namely, the Incarnation of Christ—and contradicted the six holy synods. These condemned Nestorius because he divided the one Son and Word of God into two sons, and on the other side, Arius, Dioscorus, Eutyches, and Severus, because they maintained a mingling of the two natures of the one Christ.⁴

¹ Constantine V (r.741–775); his son Leo was only four years old when the Synod of 754 met; he eventually ruled as Leo IV (r.775–780).

² A church at Constantinople, the shrine of the Virgin at the west end of the Theodosian Walls.

³ A shorthand way to refer to the other synods.

⁴ Nestorius, Arius, Dioscorus, Eutyches, and Severus represent the heresiarchs (the originators of the heresies) of early Christianity. Each had a different view of the nature of the persons of the Trinity.

Wherefore we thought it right to make clear with all accuracy in our present definition the error of such as make and venerate these, for it is the unanimous doctrine of all the holy Fathers and of the six Ecumenical Synods that no one may imagine any kind of separation or mingling in opposition to the unsearchable, unspeakable, and incomprehensible union of the two natures in the one hypostasis or person. What avails, then, the folly of the painter, who from sinful love of gain depicts that which should not be depicted—that is, with his polluted hands he tries to fashion that which should only be believed in the heart and confessed with the mouth? He makes an image and calls it Christ. The name *Christ* signifies *God and man*. Consequently, it is an image of God and man, and consequently he has in his foolish mind, in his representation of the created flesh, depicted the Godhead which cannot be represented and thus mingled what should not be mingled. Thus, he is guilty of a double blasphemy—the one in making an image of the Godhead and the other in mingling the Godhead and manhood. Those fall into the same blasphemy who venerate the image, and the same woe rests upon both, because they err with Arius, Dioscorus, and Eutyches, and with the heresy of the Acephali.¹ When, however, they are blamed for undertaking to depict the divine nature of Christ, which should not be depicted, they take refuge in the excuse: We represent only the flesh of Christ which we have seen and handled. But that is a Nestorian error.² For it should be considered that that flesh was also the flesh of God the Word, without any separation, perfectly assumed by the divine nature and made wholly divine. How could it now be separated and represented apart? So is it with the human soul of Christ which mediates between the Godhead of the Son and the dullness of the flesh. As the human flesh is at the same time flesh of God the Word, so is the human soul also soul of God the Word, and both at the same time, the soul being deified as well as the body, and the Godhead remained undivided even in the separation of the soul from the body in his voluntary passion. For where the soul of Christ is, there is also his Godhead; and where the body of Christ is, there too is his Godhead. If then in his passion the divinity remained inseparable from these, how do the fools venture to separate the flesh from the Godhead and represent it by itself as the image

of a mere man? They fall into the abyss of impiety since they separate the flesh from the Godhead, ascribe to it a subsistence of its own, a personality of its own, which they depict, and thus introduce a fourth person into the Trinity. Moreover, they represent as not being made divine that which has been made divine by being assumed by the Godhead. Whoever, then, makes an image of Christ either depicts the Godhead which cannot be depicted and mingles it with the manhood (like the Monophysites),³ or he represents the body of Christ as not made divine and separate and as a person apart, like the Nestorians.

The only admissible figure of the humanity of Christ, however, is bread and wine in the holy Supper. This and no other form, this and no other type, has he chosen to represent his incarnation. Bread he ordered to be brought, but not a representation of the human form, so that idolatry might not arise. And as the body of Christ is made divine, so also this figure of the body of Christ, the bread, is made divine by the descent of the Holy Spirit; it becomes the divine body of Christ by the mediation of the priest who, separating the oblation [offering] from that which is common, sanctifies it.

The evil custom of assigning names to the images does not come down from Christ and the Apostles and the holy Fathers; nor have these left behind them any prayer by which an image should be hallowed or made anything else than ordinary matter.

If, however, some say we might be right in regard to the images of Christ on account of the mysterious union of the two natures, but it is not right for us to forbid also the images of the altogether spotless and ever-glorious Mother of God, or of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, who were mere men and did not consist of two natures; we may reply, first of all: If those fall away, there is no longer need of these. But we will also consider what may be said against these in particular. Christianity has rejected the *whole* of heathenism, and so not merely heathen sacrifices, but also the heathen worship of images. The Saints live on eternally with God, although they have died. If anyone thinks to call them back again to life by a dead art, discovered by the heathen, he makes himself guilty of blasphemy. Who dares attempt with heathenish art to paint the Mother of God, who is exalted above all heavens and the Saints? It is not permitted to Christians, who have

¹ The Acephali was another name for the followers of Eutyches.

² The “error of Nestorius” was to stress the independence of the two natures—divine and human—of Christ.

³ The Monophysites, like the followers of Eutyches, rejected both the Orthodox assertion of the hypostatic (or “underlying”) union of the “two natures” of Christ and the Nestorian assertion of a union that was not hypostatic but rather accidental.

the hope of the resurrection, to imitate the customs of demon-worshippers and to insult the Saints, who shine in so great glory, by common dead matter....

Supported by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, we declare unanimously, in the name of the Holy Trinity, that there shall be rejected and removed and cursed out of the Christian Church every likeness which is made out of any material and color whatever by the evil art of painters.

Whoever in future dares to make such a thing, or to venerate it, or set it up in a church, or in a private house, or possesses it in secret, shall, if bishop, presbyter, or deacon, be deposed; if monk or layman, be anathematized¹ and become liable to be tried by the secular laws as an adversary of God and an enemy of the doctrines handed down by the Fathers. At the same time, we ordain that no incumbent of a church shall venture, under pretext of destroying the error in regard to images, to lay his hands on the holy vessels in order to have them altered because they are adorned with figures. The same is provided in regard to the vestments of churches, cloths, and all that is dedicated to divine service. If, however, the incumbent of a church wishes to have such church vessels and vestments altered, he must do this only with the assent of the holy Ecumenical patriarch and at the bidding of our pious Emperors. So also no prince or secular official shall rob the churches, as some have done in former times, under the pretext of destroying images. All this we ordain, believing that we speak as does the Apostle, for we also believe that we have the spirit of Christ; and as our predecessors who believed the same thing spoke what they had synodically defined, so we believe and therefore do we speak and set forth a definition of what has seemed good to us following and in accordance with the definitions of our Fathers.

(1) If anyone shall not confess, according to the tradition of the Apostles and Fathers, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost one godhead, nature and substance, will and operation, virtue and dominion, kingdom and power in three subsistences, that is in their most glorious Persons, let him be anathema.²

(2) If anyone does not confess that one of the Trinity was made flesh, let him be anathema.

(3) If anyone does not confess that the holy Virgin is truly the Mother of God, etc.

(4) If anyone does not confess one Christ both God and man, etc.

(5) If anyone does not confess that the flesh of the Lord is life-giving because it is the flesh of the Word of God, etc.

(6) If anyone does not confess two natures in Christ, etc.

(7) If anyone does not confess that Christ is seated with God the Father in body and soul, and so will come to judge, and that he will remain God forever without any grossness, etc.

(8) If anyone ventures to represent the divine image of the Word after the Incarnation with material colors, let him be anathema!

(9) If anyone ventures to represent in human figures by means of material colors by reason of the incarnation, the substance or person of the Word, which cannot be depicted, and does not rather confess that even after the Incarnation he [i.e., the Word] cannot be depicted, let him be anathema!

(10) If anyone ventures to represent the hypostatic union of the two natures in a picture and calls it Christ and thus falsely represents a union of the two natures, etc.

(11) If anyone separates the flesh united with the person of the Word from it and endeavors to represent it separately in a picture, etc.

(12) If anyone separates the one Christ into two persons and endeavors to represent Him who was born of the Virgin separately and thus accepts only a relative union of the natures, etc.

(13) If anyone represents in a picture the flesh deified by its union with the Word, and thus separates it from the Godhead, etc.

(14) If anyone endeavors to represent by material colors God the Word as a mere man, who, although bearing the form of God, yet has assumed the form of a servant in his own person, and thus endeavors to separate him from his inseparable Godhead so that he thereby introduces a quaternary into the Holy Trinity, etc.

(15) If anyone shall not confess the holy ever-virgin Mary, truly and properly the Mother of God, to be higher than every creature whether visible or invisible and does not with sincere faith seek her intercessions as of one having confidence in her access to our God, since she bore him, etc.

(16) If anyone shall endeavor to represent the forms of the Saints in lifeless pictures with material colors which are of no value (for this notion is vain and introduced by

¹ I.e., excommunicated from the Church.

² I.e., excommunicated from the Church.

the devil) and does not rather represent their virtues as living images in himself, etc.

(17) If anyone denies the profit of the invocation of Saints, etc.

(18) If anyone denies the resurrection of the dead and the judgment and the condign [appropriate] retribution to everyone, endless torment and endless bliss, etc.

(19) If anyone does not accept this our Holy and Ecumenical Seventh Synod, let him be anathema from the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and from the seven holy Ecumenical Synods!

[At this point the making or teaching of any other faith is prohibited, and the penalties for disobedience are enumerated.]

The divine Kings Constantine and Leo said: Let the holy and ecumenical synod say, if with the consent of all the most holy bishops the definition just read has been set forth.

The holy synod cried out: Thus we all believe, we all are of the same mind. We have all with one voice and voluntarily subscribed. This is the faith of the Apostles. Many years to the Emperors! They are the light of orthodoxy! Many years to the orthodox Emperors! God preserve your Empire! You have now more firmly proclaimed the inseparability of the two natures of Christ! You have banished all idolatry! You have destroyed the heresies of Germanus [of Constantinople], George and Mansur.¹ Anathema to Germanus, the double-minded, and worshiper of wood! Anathema to George, his associate, to the falsifier of the doctrine of the Fathers! Anathema to Mansur, who has an evil name and Saracen² opinions! To the betrayer of Christ and the enemy of the Empire, to the teacher of impiety, the perverter of Scripture, Mansur, anathema! The Trinity has deposed these three!

¹ Germanus I (r.715–730) was the Patriarch of Constantinople. He opposed iconoclasm and was sent into exile. Mansur (“Victorious”) was the Arabic surname of John of Damascus, a Syrian monk and saint, who also opposed iconoclasm.

² I.e., Arab.

BYZANTIUM IN ASCENDANCE

4.7 Patronage of the arts: “Theophanes Continuatus,” *Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus* (before 963). Original in Greek.



Although Constantine VII (r.945–959) was known as the Porphyrogenitus because he was born in the purple porphyry-paneled imperial bed chambers, he was shunted aside by Romanus I Lecapenus (whose *Novel* appears above, p. 177). Constantine ascended to the throne by deposing Romanus’s sons. To ensure his power and reputation, he hired the most able military generals and patronized the finest scholars and artists. “Theophanes Continuatus” is the name given to a collection of imperial biographies written by various writers. The one for Constantine—whose real author is much disputed—includes an admiring assessment of the emperor’s artistic and architectural achievements, excerpted here.

1. What did “Theophanes” admire most about Constantine’s patronage of the arts?
2. What role did the emperor himself have in the art and architecture produced during his reign, at least according to “Theophanes”?

[Source: *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453*, ed. Cyril Mango (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 207–9 (notes modified).]

15. Furthermore, he restored the imperial vestments as well as the crowns and diadems that had been damaged for a long time. He also embellished the Bucoleon¹ with statues which he gathered from different places, and he installed a fish-pond there.... 20. We ought also to mention the roof of [the hall of] the Nineteen Couches.² For perceiving it to be rotten, altogether unsightly and about to collapse, he restored it, and chose to make new and splendid the gilded ceiling which had fallen apart with the passage of time. He contrived in it octagonal cavities which he embellished with perforations and various

carved shapes resembling the tendrils and leaves of the vine and the form of trees, and these he sprinkled with gold, making [the ceiling] so beautiful as to amaze the beholder. 21. And for his son, the Emperor Romanus, he built more palaces than previous emperors had done.... At the Tetraconch of the apostle Paul³ which had lost its ancient beauty, he, with a view to instilling a new beauty into it, set up various golden figures and images.

22. This man [Constantine] was, I believe, more thoroughly versed in the art of painting than anyone before him or after him. He often corrected those who labored

¹ Enclosed within the complex of the Great Palace, the Bucoleon was a group of buildings comprising a harbor, a quay, and a palace overlooking the Sea Walls.

² A ceremonial dining hall in the Great Palace.

³ A tetraconch is a church with a central bay framed by four walled “conches”—semicircular lobes.

at it and appeared to be an excellent teacher—indeed, he not only appeared as such, but was universally admired as a prodigy in an art that he had never learned. Who could enumerate all the instances in which the Porphyrogenitus set craftsmen right? He corrected stone carvers and builders, workers in gold leaf, silver-smiths and iron-smiths and in every case he showed his excellence. 23. Being a lover of beautiful things, the same Constantine constructed the silver doors of the Chrysotriklinos;¹ furthermore, with much industry, he made a silver table for the reception of guests and the adornment of the dining-room, which table, in addition to its natural color, he beautified with materials and plaques of various other hues, thus affording a greater pleasure to his guests than they would have derived [solely] from the savor of the repast.

24. He also built a guardhouse of porphyry² in front of his chamber, wherein he contrived a receptacle of water surrounded by marble columns shining smooth. And what else did his noble mind [invent]? He set upon the water pipe a silver eagle, looking not ahead but sideways, his neck high and proud as if he had caught a prey, while

stifling a serpent that was coiled round his feet. In the vestibule or the imperial chamber he also put up artful mosaic images, a spectacle of diverse colors, materials, and forms....

28. Who would be able to describe the sacred objects and hangings which he presented to the common propitiatorium (I mean the great and admirable one)?³ Each time he came, he wished not to appear empty-handed in the sight of God, and so repaid his debt by lavish offerings of objects wrought in gold, of pearls, precious stones and cloths. These adorn the holy of holies and proclaim [the name of] Constantine who offered them....

33. It is also fitting that we should speak of the Chrysotriklinos which the ingenious Emperor turned into a blooming and sweet-smelling rose-garden by means of minute, variegated mosaic cubes imitating the colors of freshly opened flowers. Enclosed by spiral convolutions and shaped by the composition itself, these [cubes?] are altogether inimitable. He girded [the hall] with silver, encompassing it as with a border (*antux*),⁴ and so offered the spectator a source of inexhaustible delight.


¹ The Chrysotriklinos was the main reception hall of the imperial palace at Constantinople.

² Purple marble. Porphyry was the imperial color.

³ Hagia Sophia, the great church constructed by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century.

⁴ This probably refers to a decorative silver molding running along the entire interior of the hall.

BYZANTIUM: DECLINE AND FALL

8.7 Before the fall: Patriarch Anthony, *Letter to the Russian Church* (1395). Original in Greek. 

This impassioned letter to Grand Prince Vasily I of Moscow from Patriarch Anthony IV (r.1389–1390 and again 1391–1397) evokes the imperial ideal that once held sway at Byzantium. But it was only a memory by Anthony's time. At the end of the fourteenth century, the ruler of Moscow could boldly disparage the emperor, and the emperor, Manuel II Palaeologus (r.1391–1425), a weak vassal of the Ottoman sultan, could give no reply to their critiques. Byzantium had shrunk to include only a bit of Greece, a few islands, and the city of Constantinople, while the Turks were largely in control of vast regions that had once been Byzantine. Under these circumstances, the patriarch of Constantinople, not the emperor, was the only man with enough standing to reply to Vasily.

1. What must have been the content of Vasily's letter, to which this is a response?
2. How does the patriarch argue that the emperor's position in the Church has not been diminished by the Ottoman advance?

[Source: Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 143–44.]

¹ This is a blanket pardon for anyone who might have fought against Mehmed. Lemnos was captured by Mehmed in 1456, then taken, retaken, and ravaged by both sides for the next 20 years. Its strategic location at the approach to the Dardanelles made possession essential for the control of shipping.

² The Morea was the usual name for southern Greece.

³ This became a major issue in settling Venetian-Ottoman boundaries in Greece and required a series of boundary commissions in which representatives and the oldest inhabitants from both sides worked out what should be the dividing line.

⁴ The Ottomans used Byzantine dating. The year 6987 was equivalent to 1478. While a number of Mehmed's letters and treaties use this dating, it is unclear whether this results from his secretaries following Byzantine precedents in dealing with the West, or whether it indicates his claim to rule the empire of the Romans. The peace agreement was not signed because in Ottoman tradition such documents, or *'ahd-names* were considered to be issued unilaterally by the sultan.

The holy emperor has a great place in the church, for he is not like other rulers or governors of other regions. This is so because from the beginning the emperors established and confirmed the [true] faith in all the inhabited world. They convoked the ecumenical councils and confirmed and decreed the acceptance of the pronouncements of the divine and holy canons regarding the correct doctrines and the government of Christians. They struggled boldly against heresies, and imperial decrees together with councils established the metropolitan sees of the archpriests and the divisions of their provinces and the delineation of their districts. For this reason the emperors enjoy great honor and position in the Church, for even if, by God's permission, the nations [primarily the Ottoman Turks] have constricted the authority and domain of the emperor, still to this day the emperor possesses the same charge from the church and the same rank and the same prayers [from the church]. The *basileus* [emperor] is anointed with the great myrrh and is appointed *basileus* and *autokrator* of the Romans, and indeed of all Christians. Everywhere the name of the emperor is commemorated by all patriarchs and metropolitans and bishops wherever men are called Christians, [a thing] which no other ruler or governor ever received.

Indeed, he enjoys such great authority over all that even the Latins themselves, who are not in communion with our church, render him the same honor and submission which they did in the old days when they were united with us. So much more do Orthodox Christians owe such recognition to him....

Therefore, my son, you are wrong to affirm that we have the church without an emperor, for it is impossible for Christians to have a church and no empire. The *Basileia* [empire] and the church have a great unity and community—indeed they cannot be separated. Christians can repudiate only emperors who are heretics who attack the church, or who introduce doctrines irreconcilable with the teachings of the Apostles and the Fathers. But our very great and holy *autokrator*, by the grace of God, is most orthodox and faithful, a champion of the church, its defender and avenger, so that it is impossible for bishops not to mention his name in the liturgy. Of whom, then, do the Fathers, councils, and canons speak? Always and everywhere they speak loudly of the one rightful *basileus*, whose laws, decrees, and charters are in force throughout the world and who alone, only he, is mentioned in all places by Christians in the liturgy.

8.8 The fall bewailed: George Sphrantzes, *Chronicle* (before 1477). Original in Greek.

George Sphrantzes (1401–1477), born into a noble and pious family, was brought up at the imperial court in Byzantium and personally knew the last three emperors. For much of his adult life, until the fall of the Byzantine Empire, he served Constantine XI (r.1449–1453) as diplomat, ambassador, and spy. His *Chronicle*, which uses the vernacular Greek of the time rather than the classicizing Greek of most Byzantine historians, is an unusually personal and often eyewitness account. With the fall of Constantinople, Sphrantzes was briefly enslaved, as was his wife, whom he ransomed. He continued to work for the remnants of the imperial house until, in 1456, he and his wife retired to monasteries.

1. What made George Sphrantzes's life "wretched"?
2. Why did Sphrantzes want the emperor to marry the widow of Sultan Murad, and what did he arrange when the widow refused?

[Source: *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401–1477*, trans. Marios Philippides (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 21, 57–64, 69–71 (notes modified).]

I am George Sphrantzes the pitiful First Lord of the Imperial Wardrobe, presently known by my monastic name Gregory. I wrote the following account of the events that occurred during my wretched life.

It would have been fine for me not to have been born or to have perished in childhood. Since this did not happen, let it be known that I was born on Tuesday, August 30, 6909 [1401]. The revered and holy Lady Thomais, as my godmother, sponsored my baptism....

28.7 On October 31, 6957 [1448], our emperor Lord John passed away. He was fifty-six years, ten months, and eleven days old. On November 1, he was buried in the Monastery of the Pantocrator. He had been emperor for twenty-three years, three months, and ten days.

29.1 On November 13 of the same year, Lord Thomas arrived by ship in the City [i.e., Constantinople]; he had heard of the emperor's death only as he was passing through Callipolis.¹

2. His arrival put an end to the intrigues of his brother Lord Demetrius, or rather to those of his agents to declare him emperor. Demetrius was not a despot and had not been born in the purple; he had an older brother still alive, a man who excelled in all good activities and was free from misfortune. Proper claim and justice prevailed by command of the holy empress, her sons the despots, and by the opinion and will of the nobility.

3. On December 6, I set out with an embassy to inform the sultan that the empress, the brothers, right of birth, and the love and wisdom of nearly the whole population of the City chose Lord Constantine emperor. The sultan approved the choice and sent me away with honor and gifts.

4. In the same days lords from the City were sent to the Morea: Alexius Philanthropenus Lascaris, who had been dispatched to the City by my master together with Lord Thomas the despot, on the despot's business with the emperor, and Manuel Palaeologus Iagrus. Lord Constantine the despot was crowned emperor at Mistra on January 6 [1449].²

5. On March 12 of the same year [1449], he came to

the City on board a Catalan vessel and was received with joy by all.

6. In August of the same year, the honored despot Lord Thomas, who was born in the purple, departed for the Morea.

7. On September 1, 6958 [1449], Lord Demetrius the despot also left for the Morea. Before their departure, a reconciliation took place in the presence of their lady mother, their brother the emperor, and ourselves, the chosen nobles: they took oaths which they violated, and were rewarded with misfortunes, as I saw later. How they were disposed toward each other is not essential to my narration, as I was absent from the City and do not have accurate knowledge.

30.1. On October 14 of the same year [1449], I was dispatched to the *mepes*—that is king—of Georgia, King George, and to the emperor of Trebizond, Lord John Comnenus, with remarkable gifts and a great, impressive retinue consisting of young nobles, soldiers, celibate priests, singers, physicians, and musicians with their instruments. The Georgians knew the names of our instruments but had not seen them before and wished to inspect and hear them. For this reason many came from the furthest parts of Georgia to hear them.

2. My mission in those places was to arrange a marriage for my emperor [Constantine IX Palaeologus], whichever of the two families seemed suitable to me. He required me to submit my unbiased report on the advantages and disadvantages of each for his final decision. I sent messengers and letters by messengers, and my lord answered me by others. But his messengers' boat was wrecked in the Amisus area³ and before my lord and emperor discovered what had passed and sent others, I spent two years minus thirty days in those parts.

3. While I was there, on March 23 of the same year [1450], our memorable holy empress, who had taken the veil under the name Patience and had become a nun, passed away and was buried next to her late husband, our memorable emperor, in the Monastery of the Pantocrator.

4. In February 6959 [1451], Sultan Murad died. I had

¹ Later, Callipolis became Gallipoli. "Lord Thomas" was one of the brothers of "Lord John"—Emperor John VIII Palaeologus (r.1425–1448). So were Lord Demetrius and Lord Constantine, mentioned below. Constantine became emperor (with the approval of Sultan Mehmed II). Demetrius and Thomas vied for control over the Morea (southern Greece); both were despots there until 1460, when they had to surrender it to the Turks.

² That the emperor of Constantinople was crowned at Mistra and not in the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was thought by contemporary writers to be a serious break with tradition. Constantine is known to history as Constantine XI Palaeologus.

³ The Amisus area is the southern coast of the Black Sea.

not learned of his death while I was in Georgia, but, when I reached Trebizond,¹ the emperor Lord John Comnenus said to me: “Come, Mr. Ambassador, I have good news for you and you must congratulate me.”

I rose, bowed, and responded: “May God grant Your Holy Majesty a long reign, as you have always been kind to us in many ways. Even now you are about to grace us, once more, with good news. I regret I have nothing worthy of Your Majesty to compensate for this favor.”

He related the sultan’s death and said that Murad’s son [i.e., Mehmed II] was now in power, had bestowed many honors on him, and had even decided to continue the friendship which that house had enjoyed with his father.

5. Overcome by grief, as if I had been told of the death of those dearest to me, I stood speechless. Finally, with considerable loss of spirit, I said: “Lord, this news brings no joy; on the contrary, it is a cause for grief.” “How so, my friend?” he asked. And I responded: “The late sultan was an old man, had given up the conquest of our City, and had no desire of attempting anything like it again; he only wished for friendship and peace. This man, who just became sultan, is young and an enemy of the Christians since childhood; he threatens with proud spirit that he will put in operation certain plans against the Christians.

6. “Our City has been in financial stress and is in great need of funds since the days of the illness of the emperor, your son-in-law; my lord, the newly crowned emperor, wants a period of peace in order to straighten out the City’s affairs. If God should grant that the young sultan be overcome by his youth and evil nature and march against our City, I know not what will happen. Indeed God would have granted a joyous occasion if this man, Murad’s son, had died instead. It would have been truly good news, since Murad had no other son, and he would have become weaker from grief and died soon after. In the meantime that house would have become stronger and, at his death, increased into great honor.”

The emperor responded: “You are one of the more prudent and most honored advisors of his house. You will know better about these matters. In any case, God has the power to bring about the best.”

I said, “Indeed it is so, as you say.” Our conversation was left at that.

31.1. After I heard this, and that the widow of the late sultan and daughter of the Serbian despot had returned

to her parents with full honors, and as I was required to stay in Trebizond for many reasons, I sent by a boat leaving for the City some horses, two boys—whom the king of Georgia had taken as his booty in his expedition against Samahin and given to me as gifts—and some other things that had come into my possession as gifts or in other ways. I sat down and wrote a report to my lord the emperor concerning my mission in Georgia and my plans in Trebizond, as well as the reasons for my long stay.

2. Furthermore, I composed a second letter, the contents of which I will reveal presently, and gave one of the young nobles with me the letters. I sent him with the following instructions: “Present my first report to our lord the emperor when you pay your respects, and also give an oral, detailed version of our mission. Hand over my second letter on the following day.”

3. The second letter ran as follows: “I was informed by the emperor of the sultan’s death when I reached Trebizond. I also heard that the sultan’s widow and cousin returned to her homeland and parents. So it seems to me better for many ends to propose marriage to her, should you agree to do it instead of my errand.

4. “I can discover only four arguments opposing this marriage: (1) Her family is inferior to yours; (2) the Church may object on the grounds of close kinship; (3) she has been married already; and (4) she is older and there is the factor that she may be in danger during childbirth, a common risk according to physicians.

5. “Against the first argument I suggest that it is not untoward, since she is not inferior to my lady, your memorable mother. Against the second, a marriage alliance with Trebizond will have to be pardoned by the Church if much money is donated to individual churches and to the poor. A pardon, on the other hand, will be more easily obtained if you marry in the Serbian House, in view of the fact that the Church, celibate priests, monks, nuns, and the poor are in the despot’s debt and have respect for him.

6. “About the third argument I maintain that it is not against tradition; Lady Eudocia had been previously married to a Turkish chief of an insignificant and poor principality and had even given birth to his children before she married your grandfather. Your potential bride, by contrast, was the wife of a very powerful monarch, and she, it is generally believed, did not sleep with him. As for the fourth, it is up to God, and His will shall prevail.

7. “As the other advantages of this match have been

¹ The empire of Trebizond was one of the Greek successor states that emerged in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, when, in 1204, crusader armies conquered Constantinople.

demonstrated and her parents will gladly accept it, send one servant of your house, or a monk to test this proposal. Let there be no delay; do it.”

8. When my messengers arrived in the City on May 28 [1451], the emperor was away, hunting wild boars. As soon as he was told of the return of the envoys from Georgia, he finished the hunt and came from the estate in high spirits. He rejoiced at the advice on the Serbian match, as my account will reveal later.

9. On the same night of May 28 I had a dream: it seemed to me that I was back in the City; as I made a motion to prostrate myself and kiss the emperor’s feet, he stopped me, raised me, and kissed my eyes. Then I woke up and told those sleeping by me: “I just had this dream. Remember the date.”¹

10. When my lord and emperor realized that I had not returned, but that the envoys were members of my retinue, he read my first report, became sad, appeared depressed, and accused me of tardiness. On the following day he read my second report and regained his cheer, as if I had returned. Immediately, he dispatched to Serbia Manuel Palaeologus, the nephew of Lady Cantacouzena, our protostrator’s wife, to test this proposal of marriage.² Her parents listened to it with delight and were ready to settle the final details.

11. Then it was discovered that the sultan’s widow had made a vow to God and decided that if He freed her from the house of her late husband she would not remarry for the rest of her life, but would remain in His service, as far as possible. Thus the proposed match failed.

12. In August of the same year [1451], our patriarch Lord Gregory [Mamas] fled the City and became an exile.³

32.1. On September 14, 6960 [1451], I arrived safely in the City on board the ship of Antonio Rizzo, the good man who later suffered martyrdom for his faith in Christ.⁴ I had almost completed, or rather confirmed, a marriage with the House of Georgia, as I had come to the conclu-

sion that a marriage with the House of Trebizond would be far less advantageous....

9. The document was prepared, signed, and sealed with gold. It specified that the daughter of the king would become the wife of the emperor and queen of Constantinople and that he would be her husband, according to the agreement reached by the king of Georgia and myself. We summoned the king’s nobleman of the second rank, who had come with me in the City, and in his presence, my lord the emperor drew with his own hand three crosses in red ink on the upper part of the document, thus providing the confirmation demanded by Georgian tradition. He handed the document to the envoy and, pointing at me, he said: “With God’s help, this man, in charge of three ships, shall arrive next spring in order to bring her to me.” The envoy bowed and departed....

35.1. On March 26 of the same year 6960 [1452], the sultan occupied the straits with the intention of constructing his castle. I kept postponing my mission [to Georgia] from day to day, because a land route was now out of the question and would be dangerous; I had to locate a suitable ship.

2. In June of the same year the war was finally brought to our area; the Turkish army charged, captured all inhabitants found outside the walls, and blockaded the City. When the erection of the castle had been completed, the sultan left on August 31 and attacked the fortifications of the City.

3. On September 3, 6961 [1452], he departed for Adrianople; for two days he had been apparently securing his castle and its position.

4. In autumn of the same year Turahan, with his sons and a huge army, invaded the Morea.⁵ At that time the inhabitants of the Morea captured one of his sons.

5. On January 17 of the same year [1453], Lord Andreas Palaeologus was born, the successor and heir of the Palaeologan Dynasty.

6. On April 4 of the same year [1453], the sultan

¹ The significance of this dream undoubtedly had something to do with the date of May 28, as it was early in the morning of May 29, 1453 that Constantinople fell to Mehmed and the emperor perished in the assault.

² The protostrator held an important post at the imperial court.

³ Gregory supported the provisions of the Council of Florence (1439), which declared the union of the Greek and Latin Churches, recognized papal primacy, declared a form of the Creed congruent with the Catholic position, and recognized the existence of Purgatory. The whole package was extremely unpopular at Constantinople.

⁴ Although Sphrantzes does not refer to Rizzo again, we know his fate. After the construction of the Turkish fortress Rumeli Hisari, all vessels sailing south were ordered to stop and allow inspection of their cargo. Antonio Rizzo ignored these instructions, and his vessel was sunk on November 26, 1452. Rizzo and his crew were captured and killed.

⁵ Turahan was a Turkish general.

returned and laid siege to the City with all sorts of engines and stratagems by land and sea.¹ He surrounded the entire 18 miles of the City with 400 small and large vessels from the sea and with 200,000 men on the land side. In spite of the great size of our City, our defenders amounted to 4,773 Greeks, as well as just about 200 foreigners.

7. I was in a position to know the exact figure of our strength for the following reason: the emperor ordered the tribunes to take a census of their communities and to record the exact number of men—laity and clergy—able to defend the walls, and what weapons each man had for defense. All tribunes completed this task and brought the lists of their communities to the emperor.

8. The emperor said to me: “This task is for you and no one else, as you are skilled in arithmetic and also know how to guard and keep secrets. Take these lists and compute, in the privacy of your home, the exact figure of available defenders, weapons, shields, spears, and arrows.” I completed my task and presented the master list to my lord and emperor in the greatest possible sadness and depression. The true figure remained a secret known only to the emperor and to myself.

9. On Tuesday May 29 [1453], early in the day, the sultan took possession of our City; in this time of capture my late master and emperor, Lord Constantine, was killed. I was not at his side at that hour but had been inspecting

another part of the City, according to his orders. Alas for me; I did not know what times Providence had in store for me!

10. My late emperor, the martyr, lived for forty-nine years, three months, and twenty days. His reign lasted four years, four months, and twenty-four days. He had been the eighth emperor of the Palaeologan Dynasty. The first was Michael, the second Andronicus, the third Michael, the fourth Andronicus, the fifth John, the sixth Manuel, the seventh John, and the eighth was Constantine. The Palaeologan Dynasty ruled over the City for 194 years, ten months, and four days.

11. I was taken prisoner and suffered the evils of wretched slavery. Finally I was ransomed on September 1, 6962 [1453], and departed for Mistra. My wife and children had passed into the possession of some elderly Turks, who did not treat them badly. Then they were sold to the sultan’s Mir Ahor (i.e., Master of the Horse), who amassed a great fortune by selling many other beautiful noble ladies.

12. My children’s beauty and proper upbringing could not be concealed; thus, the sultan found out and bought my children from his Master of the Horse for many thousand aspers. Thus their wretched mother was left all alone in the company of a single nurse; the rest of her attendants had been dispersed.

8.9 Byzantine culture persists: *Petitions from the Greek Community at Venice* (1470–1511). Original in Latin and Italian.



There had long been a small Greek community in Venice, a city of about 100,000 inhabitants. But with the conquest of Constantinople and further Ottoman expansion thereafter, a large group of immigrants—perhaps 4000—settled in Venice. At first, the Greek Orthodox rites were highly suspect in Catholic Venice, but after the Council of Florence in 1439, which reconciled the two Churches, the Greek community was allowed to have its own church, San Biagio (Document 1). Around 1498 it successfully petitioned the Venetian Council of Ten to allow it to have a confraternity, a Scuola (Document 2). Such institutions mixed social, economic, and religious functions, looking out for all their members and offering prayers for their souls after death. Ten years or so later, a group of soldiers from the Greek

¹ The Ottomans also relied on gunpowder weapons, for which see “Weapons and Warfare in the Middle Ages,” in “Reading through Looking,” pp. XX–XXIII.

community successfully petitioned to have another church in Venice, this time dedicated to San Giorgio (Document 3).

1. What evidence is there in these documents that the Greek community was a disadvantaged minority at Venice?
2. How do these documents suggest that Byzantine culture persisted at Venice?

[Source: *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450–1630*, ed. David Chambers and Brian Pullan with Jennifer Fletcher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 333–36 (some notes added or modified).]

*[Document 1: Decree of the Council of Ten and Zonta, March 28, 1470.]*¹

BE IT DETERMINED that orders shall be issued that in the city of Venice no services may be held according to the Greek rite in any place other than San Biagio, as has been resolved on other occasions, upon a penalty of 100 lire to any priest and of 50 lire to any layman who attends such services. This law shall be made known to the Greeks, that no one may plead ignorance, and the Lords of the Night and the Heads of the Sestieri shall exact these fines and give all the money to the accusers.²

[Document 2: Petition of the Greek community, c.1498]

Most Serene Prince, most illustrious Signoria, most glorious and exalted Council of Ten,³

In all sincerity, submission and reverence, this petition is made in the name of the community of Greeks who live in this most holy and nourishing city, and especially in the names of the most loyal and warm-hearted servants, Zuan of Sancta Maura, carpenter, and Master Alesio of Corfu, spicer, who have the duty of asking this favor of Your Serenity. For the Greeks have at all times been good and most loyal servants of this most holy State, and have striven at every opportunity to meet the needs of Your Serenity, both on land and on sea, especially in the conquest of Dalmatia, where they thought it a glorious thing

to spill their blood for the expansion of your state and exposed themselves to certain death, because at that time most of the galleys of your illustrious government were manned by the people of the Levant. The said Greeks, knowing the most merciful disposition of Your Most Excellent Serenity, and trusting in their past service and unflinching loyalty, beg and petition Your Serenity and the most illustrious and excellent Council of Ten that as a matter of grace they may in their infinite mercy permit the Greeks to found a Scuola at the church of San Biagio in the sestier of Castello, as the Slavs, Albanians and other nations have already done;⁴ and the Greeks ask this on the grounds of their devotion. The Scuola shall be dedicated to St. Nicholas, and the greatest good will result from it, especially through giving maintenance to sick and feeble persons, through giving burial to those who from time to time die in great poverty, and through helping widows and orphans who have lost their husbands and fathers in the service of Your Serenity and are sunk in misfortune and intolerable want.

[Your petitioners] commend themselves to your favor, humbly and upon bended knees.

28 NOVEMBER 1498. IN THE COUNCIL OF TEN
By the authority of this Council the humble request of the above petitioners shall be granted, that they may establish a Scuola in the church of San Biagio in Venice in the name and tide of St. Nicholas. They may not receive more

¹ The Council of Ten was Venice's most powerful governmental body. Zonta refers to a board of people here joined with the Council.

² The Lords of the Night and the Heads of the Sestieri constituted the main police and judicial powers in Venice. There were six Lords of the Night in each sestier (district). Not only could they assess fines (as here) but they could also arrest people, inflict torture, hear cases, and sentence people to jail or death.

³ The "Serene Prince" was the doge, or duke, of Venice; the "Signoria" consisted of the doge and his Councilors.

⁴ The Albanians had the Scuola di Santa Maria e San Gallo degli Albanesi (near the church of San Maurizio), and the Slavs had the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni (the Slavs).

than 250 males, but they may admit as many females as may wish to enter the Scuola....

[Document 3: Petition of the Greek soldiers to the Council of Ten, October 4, 1511.]

Every good Christian must set the holy faith above all other things, and must pursue it with all energy and diligence as the be-all and end-all of his actions and as the thing which will lead him to the blessed state he desires.

We have been brought to this land by your excellencies to serve as your soldiers and as defenders of your glorious State, and most of us have brought with us our families—that is, our wives and children—with the intention of living and dying under your protection. We have no church in which to give the thanks due to Our Lord God by celebrating divine service according to the Greek rite, since the chapel of San Biagio, previously granted by your lordships to our nation for this purpose, no longer suffices, for the place is too small and our people have increased to such an extent that they cannot be accommodated either inside or outside it. In that chapel, too, there is such a mixture of people, tongues, voices and services, both Greek and Latin, at the same time that it creates a confusion worse than that of Babylon, when God, enraged at Nimrod for his rebellion, confounded the human race by the division of languages.¹ They do not understand us, nor we them: indeed, it might be said that neither they nor we can understand each other, and even, dared we say it, that God himself cannot understand our prayers or theirs for the confusion that arises from such variety and miscellany. Worse still, there is no place to bury the dead, as in all [other] churches. They mingle our bones with those of galley-men, porters and other low creatures; even this would be more tolerable if the graves were not upon the public way, and those poor bodies and bones were not dug up and thrown into the water within a few days of burial. This is done to clear the place, that others may be buried, for burials are the

greatest source of gain for the parish priest of San Biagio, since the church is very poor and has no other income. It is fine for that priest, but most cruel and evil for us. At the Last Judgment the fishes of the sea will be hard put to it to yield up our bones and organs that our bodies may be completely restored.

Impelled, therefore, by these hardships, discomforts and grievances, and having nowhere else to turn, we apply to your lordships, knowing you to be most Christian, devout and merciful, and beg you humbly upon our knees to permit us to purchase a site in this city and there at our own expense to build a church in praise of Our Lord and in the name of our most holy leader St. George, so that with God's help and St. George's favor we may be more warmly inspired to dedicate our lives to the service, honor and benefit of your lordships. We ask this not out of cowardice or meanness of spirit, or from any lack of loyalty and love towards you, but solely to make it known that we have no place of burial, an abuse which will not recur when we have a cemetery of our own. This we beg as a special favour, being confident that your lordships will grant it, both because you are men of honor and devotion, and to show us that in your eyes we are no worse than the Armenian heretics and the Jewish infidels who here and in other parts of your lordships' dominions have synagogues and mosques for worshipping God in their own misguided way. On the contrary, we believe that your lordships regard us as true and Catholic Christians, and will treat us as such by granting us this most holy favor. Otherwise we shall know that your lordships treat us worse than the Turks and Moors do their Christian subjects, for they let them have churches and conduct their ceremonies and services in public, and we, who are such loyal servants of your lordships and Christians to boot, cannot believe that you will refuse us this most honorable request, but rather hope that you will grant us even more than we ask.

And to your lordships we commend ourselves for ever.²

¹ See Gen. 10:8–10 and 11:1–9.

² The petition was granted on October 4, 1513. A year later, the doge approved the purchase of land for the church with the stipulation that the pope had to permit the construction. This was quickly granted, but the church was not begun until 1539 and not completed until 1573.