

LORD BYRON AND GREEK ORTHODOXY

Lord Byron's challenges to institutionalised religion, man-made Christian doctrines, Catholic or Calvinist practices or interpretations of the Holy Scriptures were aired in his Biblical dramas *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, the Germanic *Manfred*, the Hellenic "Prometheus", and the international *Don Juan*. Comparable attitudes vis-à-vis Christianity and clergymen are found in his letters and journals. The epistles, in particular, inform us about the many contacts he had had throughout his life with several churchmen, mostly Protestant, ranging in status from elementary school educator to Archbishop of Canterbury<sup>1</sup>.

The Greek Orthodox Church—one of the oldest and, certainly, the most important branch of Eastern Christendom—obviously did not attract Lord Byron either as a theological opponent of Western Christendom or as a religious curiosity whose creed, ritual, and sufferings in captivity were of interest. In his poems we find very few allusions to features or details of Greek Orthodoxy, and no odes to, or celebrations of, heroic Greek clergy defying or fighting the infidel Turk, such as we encounter in the verse of contemporary European and American romantics<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, in his letters and journals such allusions are few. Most of them, however, are important because they prove that he knew the ecclesiastical history of the East quite well. Also, two of the four Greek Prelates he met during the last years of his life played very significant parts in the cause of Greek freedom, a cause Byron chose to make his own as well.

1. Byron had written to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Right Rev. Charles Manners-Sutton, for a special license to get married. See, Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1957), II, 500; and his edition of *Byron's Letters and Journals* (London: John Murray, 1982), IV, 243-5. For the sake of brevity just *Byron* and *LJ*, respectively, with volume and page numbers in subsequent references here. One of Byron's early teachers was the Rev. Mr. Ross, later a minister in Aberdeen. *Byron*, I, 35.

2. For instance, the Suliote Monk Samuel of Kunghi was alluded to by the American S. L. Fairfield in his long poem "The Suliote Polemarque", *The Philadelphia Album and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, III (22 October 1828), 168. Victor Hugo and Wilhelm von Müller composed poems about Bishop Joseph; Constantine Nicolopoulos wrote one in French about the Metropolitan Porphyrius.

In his letters we also find some references to Greek patristic writers and scholars—even to a Saint of the early Church—that are of considerable cultural and psychological interest. An examination of these references and allusions will then be the primary purpose of this essay. My conclusions are that Byron's relations to Greek Orthodoxy were a) cultural, and b) political. Some fundamental theological and doctrinal issues also intrigued him, especially details in accord with his own rebellious nature. These broad categories will assist in our approach.

### A. Cultural Echoes

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto II, right after the passage opening with the address to "Monastic Zitsa" (XLVIII), comes a stanza containing the Greek word *caloyer* (good old man, καλόγερος) that is, a *monk* in the vernacular (Romaic) that Byron professed to somehow manage—a word he passed on to several American poets:

Admist the grove that crowns yon tafted hill,  
Which, were it not for many a mountain nigh  
Rising in lofty ranks, and loftier still  
Might well itself be deem'd of dignity,  
The convent's white walls glisten fair on high:  
Here dwells the caloyer, nor rude is he,  
Nor niggard of his cheer; the passer by  
Is welcome still; nor heedless will he flee  
From hence, if he delight kind Nature's sheen to see.

This brief mention of the Greek monk, sympathetic as it is, does not tell us much about Orthodox monastics. Nor are "the convent's white walls" a detailed and lush description comparable to Byron's purple passages elsewhere in the same work. This monk is just a decorative feature in the calm scenery, not unlike Wordsworth's equally unimportant hermit in the first part of "Tintern Abbey".

We also find the same word in *The Giaour*, "How name ye yon lone Caloyer?" (line 787). No matter how important this "Caloyer" is in the melodramatic plot of the narrative poem, the Prior's (and the narrator's) descriptions of this mysterious person and his behaviour have nothing to do with Greek Orthodox monasticism, of course. The hero is Venetian, thus a Catholic, just like the monastery. And the overall flavour quite Oriental, indeed.

The absence of Orthodox clergy, shrines, or feasts from Byron's works can certainly be attributed to the fact that he was not much impressed by what he saw with his own eyes in the Orthodox East, or what he heard trusted

persons say about them, or famous writers wrote about them (e.g., Gibbon)<sup>3</sup>. Professor Marchand twice in his *Byroniana* quotes a note of Byron to *Childe Harold* referring to his faithful servant 'Vascillie'. Basil, who was an Albanian Christian, "had a great veneration for the [Greek Orthodox] church, mixed with the highest contempt of churchmen, whom he cuffed upon occasion in a most heterodox manner. Yet he never passed a church without crossing himself. When his inconsistency was pointed out, he replied: 'Our church is holy, our priests are thieves'"<sup>4</sup>. This attitude, which characterises many Greek believers even today, must have found fertile soil in a person of a strict Protestant upbringing like the young Byron in Aberdeen. The limited education of priests and the dinginess of village churches must have convinced the Poet of their unsuitability as poetic material.

During his first trip to Greece Byron met an elderly but wealthy Greek bishop at Livadia (December 1809). This man, named Gregorius, if he was a bishop at all, surprised the Poet as a "free thinker". Byron recorded the meeting with this merry cleric commenting, "This worthy hypocrite rallied his own religion with great intrepidity (but not before his flock), and talked of the mass as 'coglioneria' [nonsense, humbug]. It was impossible to think better of him for this..."<sup>5</sup>. We do not know much else about this man; since, however, the official episcopal catalogues of the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and other scholarly sources published by professors and academicians (John Anastasiou, Athanasius Kominis, Athanasius Martinos) mention no Bishop of Levadia and Thebes, or any other Greek diocese then, by the name of Gregorius, it seems to me that this colourful Gregorius was just an educated archimandrite (unmarried priest and monk) whom Byron and his party took for a bishop since his rank and title were higher than just a priest's<sup>6</sup>. Byron, however, showed interest in their discussion, as he did many

3. In his long review of Sir William Gell's *Topography and Antiquities of Ithaca* (1807), published in *The Monthly Review* (August 1811) as "Review of Gell's Geography of Ithaca, and Itinerary of Greece", Byron quoted a passage describing the "celebration of the feast of the Ascension" on that island but did not comment on it at all.

4. See, *Byron*, I, 218n; based on Byron's Note No. 11 to *Childe Harold II*. Also, *LJ*, I, 228n.

5. Byron mentioned no name either in his "Papers Referred to by Note 33" (*Poetry* II, 188), or any other epistle. Professor Marchand derived it from J. H. Browne's later account.

6. See, John E. Anastasiou, «Βιβλιογραφία τῶν Ἐπισκοπικῶν Καταλόγων τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος», *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* (1979).

years later (August 1823) when he ran into another of Gregorius's Lent festivities, in Ithaca this time, without recognising him first. When he was reminded who this clergyman was, Byron suffered to be embraced by him like a dear friend and started chatting with Gregorius<sup>7</sup>. Despite his second encounter with him, Byron never mentioned this man in a letter or journal entry. I suspect that he had judged Gregorius to be entertaining and, otherwise, just like the priests that Basil detested as too mercenary.

At this juncture mention must be made of the Poet's visit and overnight stay in a monastery on a hill above Sami (not Samos, as Marchand wrongly spells it), Cephalonia, on the way back from Byron's crossing to Ithaca. Citing as sources the "Narrative" of James Hamilton Browne, Edward J. Trelawny's *Recollections*, and Thomas Smith's manuscript *His Very Self and Voice* (as published by Lovell), Leslie A. Marchand recreates an episode which intimates the poor condition of Byron's health in the Summer of 1823, especially his nervous strain, rather than his dislike of Orthodox services and clerics.

The warm welcome by torch-bearing *Calogeri* (monks) and the attempted ceremonial address by their Abbot, who had prepared a longish oration for the occasion, were too much for the tired and taxed Poet. Acting like a maniac, Byron snatched a lamp and ran out of the church crying, "My head is burning; will no one relieve me from the presence of this pestilential mad-man?" It took Dr. Bruno's pills and diligent efforts by Trelawny and Browne before Byron's fit subsided and he could go to sleep. Late next morning, rested and having completely recovered, Byron "was now disposed to be exceedingly courteous towards the abbot....," the biographer assures us<sup>8</sup>. This episode, though, was given undue attention by writers like Trelawny, who misplaced it in Ithaca rather than Cephalonia, and derivative Greek accounts which proliferated its sensational and dramatic quality, often adding imaginative details as to utterances and actions by Byron and the Greek friars<sup>9</sup>. Byron never mentioned it in his records, of course.

7. James Hamilton Browne, "Narrative of a Visit to the Seat of War in Greece", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, XXXVI (September 1834), 394; as cited by Marchand in *Byron*, III, 1109.

8. *Byron*, III, 1111 and 1112.

9. On the basis of unreliable information found in the memoirs that Trelawny dictated to the Greek novelist Stephanos Xenos in London (1860), "Recollections from the Greek Revolution", a later historian, Demetrius Gatopoulos, wrote a Greek article "Byron in Ithaca", in which he also misplaced the monastery to Ithaca rather than the correct island, Cephalonia, quoted angry words spoken by Byron and the Abbot against each other, and

We know for certain that Byron had attended a Greek Orthodox wedding for he mentioned having been to one in a letter to his mother (12 November 1809) stating that he had not enough space to describe it. He probably attended other rituals or sacraments celebrated in Greek churches, especially during 1823-24, but he never cared to discuss any even as a picturesque curiosity. On the contrary, he occasionally referred to Greek superstition and fanatical adherence to religious taboos, such as the refusal of his Suliotes to do any work on holidays, the frequent callings for the help of the Saints and the Virgin when facing the slightest difficulty or danger, and so on<sup>10</sup>.

After his visit to Constantinople, Byron wrote his mother (28 June 1810) from that great imperial city: "...but Lady Wortley errs strangely when she says 'St. Paul's [Cathedral] would cut a poor figure by St. Sophia's. I have been in both, surveyed them inside and out attentively. St. Sophia's is undoubtedly the most interesting from its immense antiquity, and the circumstances of all the Greek Emperors from Justinian having been crowned there, and several murdered at the Altar, besides the Turkish Sultans who attended it regularly, but it is inferior in beauty & size to some of the other Mosques, particularly 'Soleyman Etc.' and not to be mentioned in the same page with St. P's (I speak like a *cockney*) however, I prefer the Catholic Cathedral of Seville to St. P's, St. Sophia's and any religious building I have ever seen"<sup>11</sup>.

After this candid reference to the greatest Cathedral of the Orthodox Church, honouring the Holy Wisdom of God, one should not be surprised that Byron's mentions of kirks and lesser shrines in Greece (such as St. Dionysius, St. Euphemia, St. Nicholas, or even the Holy Mountain, Mount Athos) and the saints or feasts they celebrated, are so laconical and colourless. The young 'cockney' lord would simply be not impressed with them and their history or legends, after what he had seen in his own London and other great

even mentioned that the Poet, the following day, left a substantial donation for charities before leaving that shrine. None of these authors, though, bothers to mention the name of the Abbot or the title of the monastery. See. Παγκεφαλληνιακὸν Ἡμερολόγιον, επιμ. Σ. Σκηνωτάτου, Γ' ἔτος (Ἀργοστόλιον, 1939), 30-34. Philologist Nicholas D. Tzouganatos—in his Greek article "Life and Work of Lord Byron in Cephalonia", *Parnassus*, XVI, No. 4 (1974), 541 and note—maintains that the Monastery in question was that of "The Saints that have appeared", in Greek Ἅγιοι Φανέντες.

10. See, *Byron*, III, 1173; and *LJ*, I, 229. Since exact dates of letters are given in my text, I consider it redundant to also mention volume and page numbers in Marchand's two works.

11. Byron is quite wrong here. No Greek Emperor was ever murdered "at the Altar" or anywhere else on the premises of St. Sophia's. Consult Sir Steven Runciman's *The Great Church in Captivity* (1973), or any modern study of the Byzantine Empire by J. W. Barker, Peter Charanis, D. Constantelos and others.

cities in Western Europe. Of course, he had not seen St. Sophia's during the fine times of its Byzantine splendour. It is worth mentioning, though, that he emphasised St. Sophia's cultural and historical importance even though his information came mostly from Edward Gibbon's notoriously prejudiced account. A few more cultural observations of that nature, in his letters, actually show that Byron knew a good deal about the lore of the Eastern Christendom.

Byron greatly valued an expensively bound volume of Meletius' *Ancient and Modern Geography* (Παλαιὰ καὶ Νέα...) published in Venice in 1728 and again in 1807 by Panos Theodosiou. Meletius of Jannina (1661-1714) was a learned clergyman who became Archbishop of Athens (1703-14). He had also published treatises on rhetoric and ecclesiastical history<sup>12</sup>. In his letters to Henry Drury (7 July 1811) and Hobhouse (15 July 1811) Byron confesses that he had stolen the *Geography* of Meletius from "the Bishop of Chrysso" (Chrysopolis). To Hobhouse he insisted that he should "come and copy Meletius in person" (3 November 1811), for the volume was "so well bound & if we lose him!"—as he had written him earlier (13 October 1811). He also alluded to this book in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Richard Valpy (19 November 1811). To John Murray he was quite candid about this escapade: "On the title page of Meletius is an inscription in writing which must be *erased*—& made illegible" (13 June 1811), apparently some words identifying its rightful owner.

The Poet was also familiar with the writings of another, much earlier, Greek Orthodox scholar, Eusebius. Byron's Armenian tutor in the San Lazzaro Monastery in Venice, Padre Pasquale, was interested in having recently found parts of the lost Greek text of Eusebius in Armenian translation published by Murray in Byron's version into English. Byron wrote his publisher to that effect (27 February 1818). In a second letter (11 April 1818) he complained that Murray had not answered him about finding "Subscribers to the translation of the Armenian *Eusebius*". By that adjective the Poet emphasised the origin of the translated text, which had appealed to the Armenian nation on account of its partisan doctrines, and not to the nationality of its author. On this matter the Poet wrote Murray a third, short, formal, impatient note requesting him "to procure Subscribers", and stressing that "a second bundle" of English translation samples accompanied it (30 April 1818).

12. See, S. G. Makris's Greek article "Meletius", in the *Religious and Ethical Encyclopedia*, ed. by A. Martinos (Athens, 1964), VIII, 957-8—abbreviated as ΘΗΕ from the Greek, Θρησκευτική καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια.

There are several important early Church Fathers and scholars or archbishops by the name Eusebius (Pious, in Greek). The epithet *Armenian* that Byron used in his second letter makes it clear that he referred to Eusebius the Pamphilian (c. 265-339), a famous Greek church historian and Bishop of Caesaria who was a prolific writer. The *Patrologia Graeca* gives him six large volumes for his complete works<sup>13</sup>. There is also a list of his works compiled by the Armenian scholar Ebed Jesus in his language. No doubt, most of this lore Byron acquired in the Armenian Monastery, in Venice, rather than at Cambridge, and was eager to present to a scholarly readership in Britain. I believe, though, that there was another reason as well that prompted the young man to become so involved with this particular Eusebius. And this reason is a psychological one, a kind of rebellious urge. The details following hereafter are necessary to comprehend and justify it. Please, bear with me.

Earlier in his ecclesiastical career Eusebius was a supporter of Arius, a contemporary learned priest who had founded the heresy that came to be known as Arianism. Its main tenets advocated that Jesus Christ was not consubstantial to God the Father, but was a human being made by Him. This, of course, radically altered the concept of the Trinity and the nature of the Godhead. While this theory alarmed most ecclesiastical authorities and established theologians in East and West, its logic appealed to many others and to a great mass of Christians in various parts of the Empire, especially in Armenia, Palestine, and Africa. The Emperor, Constantine the Great, accepted Arianism as one of the faiths allowed by his tolerant administration to avoid friction that would certainly weaken his recently established political authority, after his triumph over Maxentius and other foes. Unlike his mother Helen, Constantine was not a fervent believer in Christianity until shortly before his death, and he used this new religion (rather than paganism) to further his imperial designs. Eusebius went along with this policy of the Emperor, who was his friend, for practically the same reasons, just as his namesake, Eusebius of Nicomedia, who later on actually baptised Constantine, had done. Both were pro-Arian for good political reasons rather than out of religious belief or doctrinal fanaticism<sup>14</sup>.

These political considerations were vehemently opposed by Athanasius (c. 295-373) whom later historians called "Great", and the Church canonised

13. Edited by J.-P. Migne, Turnholt, Belgique; 1967 edition, volumes 19 through 24.

14. See, H. Berkof, *Die Theologie des Eusebius von Caesaria* (Amsterdam, 1939); also, A. N. Zombos's Greek articles "Eusebius of Caesaria" and "Eusebius of Nicomedia" in *ΘΗΕ* V, 1078-83 and 1083-4.

in the eighth century, before the Schism between East and West. This learned clergyman was an Alexandrian Greek who later became Archbishop of his native city which was then an important metropolis (c. 328). Athanasius soon became the staunchest defender of Orthodoxy, and, despite numerous harrassments, arrests, tortures, and repeated exiles by the Emperor and his son Constantius, eventually triumphed over Arius and his heresy at the Council of Alexandria (362) which excommunicated the Arianists. By then the flexible Eusebius had died. The new Creed, expressing Athanasius's theology, completed the older one that the Oecumenical Synod (Council) had originally adopted at Nicea in 325. This is the famous "Nicean Creed", or "St. Athanasius's Creed", that all Christian Churches have honoured since, the Roman Catholics having later added the *filioque* article (that is, the Holy Spirit emanates from the Father *and from the Son*) which in our days has been de-emphasised by the two recent Popes of Rome as a gesture of good will to the Orthodox Churches.

Most Armenians, however, refused to accept St. Athanasius's doctrine about the consubstantiality of Father and Son, and, later on, were lured by the Monophysite heresy of archmandrite Eutyches (c. 444), professing that Jesus was "of one nature only", not both human and divine, a rather more sophisticated version of old Arianism, it seems. This newer heresy was condemned by the fourth Oecumenical Council (Synod) at Chalcedon (451), near Constantinople. Despite these ancient aberrations vis-à-vis the right belief (orthodoxia, in Greek) the Armenians in our century have de-emphasised their differences with Orthodoxy. There are even Eastern Orthodox theologians today who believe that the Armenian Church will eventually accept the Creed that all Orthodox Patriarchates have honoured since Nicea and the struggles of St. Athanasius, especially since they have steadfastly resisted all Roman Catholic (and Protestant) efforts to convert and absorb them<sup>15</sup>.

Byron, always an ardent liberal and opponent of the established orthodoxy in all matters, was apparently in sympathy with the *Armenian* [sic] Eusebius's right to support an unorthodox belief, at least in secular terms. As a Protestant of sorts, Byron believed in every Christian's right to understand and worship the Godhead according to the dictates of his conscience. By the

15. See, C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London, 1959); also, R. Bernard, *L'Image de Dieu d'après St. Athanase* (Paris, 1952); Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, trans. by L. W. Kesich (New York, 1963), pp. 63-94; plus P. Demetropoulos's Greek article "Athanasius the Great" in *ΘΗΕ* I, 522-44.

same token he apparently disliked St. Athanasius's right to exclusively define the nature and substance of the Godhead and to exclude from the universal body of the Church all dissenters. At least this is what Byron's references to that Saint make me infer.

In his letter of 29 April 1814 to Lady Melbourne, referring to a letter sent him by Annabella Milbanke, Byron rather angrily comments: "Seriously if she imagines that I particularly delight in canvassing the creed of St. Athanasius—or prattling of rhyme—I think she will be mistaken—but *you know* best—I don't suspect myself of often talking about poets or clergymen—of rhyme or the rubrick—but very likely I am wrong—for assuredly no one knows *itself*..." I take this allusion to St. Athanasius as an indignant rejection of Annabella's implied accusation that the metaphysics and nature of his poetry were unorthodox and doctrinaire, tending to exclude those who did not believe in them, or, at least, to alienate them. The context, that is, is secular rather than theological for we know that his confused theology did not much differ from that of his future wife's. A careful consideration of Byron's divinity notions in his poetry, epistles, and journals or notes—as compiled by L. A. Marchand in the last volume of *Byron's Letters and Journals*—shows that they were flexible and pragmatic.

In his letter to Tom Moore (15 September 1814) we find Byron's second allusion to St. Athanasius. A note appended to the letter by Dr. Marchand is of great help for the understanding of this reference: "Moore had reviewed four volumes of the poetry of Edward, Lord Thurlow, in the *Edinburgh Review* of September 1814. The tone of the review was light and condescending and not likely to please Lord Thurlow". Byron's tone is rather angry, at least in the beginning of his epistle, just as in his letter about Annabella's criticism. He starts without ceremonies: "This is the fourth letter I have begun to you within the month. Whether I shall finish it or not, or burn it like the rest, I know not. When we meet, I will explain why I have not written—*why* I have not asked you here [Newstead Abbey], as I wished—with a great many other *whys* and wherefores, which will keep cold. In short, you must excuse all my seeming omissions and commissions, and grant me more remission than St. Athanasius will to yourself, if you lop off a single shred of mystery from his pious puzzle. It is my creed (and it may be St. Athanasius's too) that your article on T..[Thurlow] will get somebody killed,...".

It seems to me that here Byron turns the tables, so to speak, and obliquely charges his good friend and fellow poet of having been too hard on Lord Thurlow's verse and of having excluded him from the community of poets where Moore and Byron were established—almost what Miss Milbanke had

implied that Byron had done to others. If my reading is correct, then obviously Byron used these two allusions to the author of the Nicean Creed in strictly secular terms, defending his own concept of poetry in the first case, and suggesting that Moore should not pontificate on the poetic merits of others as if he were (like St. Athanasius) the only authority on what is right, in the second. There is no theological argumentation in either of these letters, that is why I should classify this reference as a cultural allusion dictated by the emotional idiosyncrasy of Byron. Moreover, Moore was a commoner, whereas Thurlow was, like him, a peer, and Byron was touchy about such distinctions.

Byron, however, remained unhappy about St. Athanasius almost through the end of his life. If we believe what Dr. James Kennedy, a Methodist physician, wrote in his book about his 1823 discussions with the Poet on religious issues, Byron had asked Dr. Kennedy what was to be done with the creeds of St. Athanasius and others. The doctor's answer was: "With respect to the creed of Athanasius, the sooner we get quit of it the better". This response apparently pleased Byron, for he let Kennedy go on and on without interruptions or counter-arguments on his part<sup>16</sup>.

Before ending this phase of my essay I should perhaps mention Byron's letter to Dr. Kennedy (4 March 1824), from Missolonghi, in which the Poet writes that the Greek scholar and priest Neophytos Vamvas (not Vambas of Bambas) would be asked to decide on the quality of the modern Greek translation of the *Testaments* that Kennedy wanted him to distribute to the population of the area. Many Greeks had complained that their bad 'Romaic' and 'incorrectness' rendered them useless. It seems that Byron's Romaic was inadequate to the task, or he had no time, or perhaps he did not wish to displease the good doctor. We do not know if Professor Vamvas (1770-1855) issued his verdict then. We know, though, that in 1838 and later, Vamvas and Bible Society Protestants published their own translation of the *New Testament* in puristic, not Romaic, Greek—and this one was as controversial as the one Dr. Kennedy had tried to spread a generation before<sup>17</sup>.

### *B. Political Contacts*

Two of the Greek Orthodox Prelates that Byron had met in person played dramatic parts in the last phase of his life, the "Greek adventure". These are

16. James Kennedy, M. D., *Conversations on Religion with Lord Byron and Others Held in Cephalonia, a Short Time Previous to His Lordship's Death* (London: John Murray, 1830), p. 182.

17. See Professor N. B. Tomadakis's Greek article on Vamvas in *ΘΗΕ*, III, 578-9.

the Metropolitan Ignace of Arta, and the Bishop Joseph of Aetolia and Acarnania, the province whose capital was the town of Missolonghi.

Ignatius (1765-1828), after his studies in Constantinople, became Metropolitan of Arta and Nafpaktos (Lepanto) in 1798. His opposition to Ali Pasha's cruelties forced him to escape to Corfu (1805), and eventually to Orthodox Russia where the Czar Alexander appointed him Metropolitan of Hungaro-Wallachia in the Danube territory then under Russian occupation. When the Russians returned that area to the Sultan (1812), Ignatius fled to Italy and settled in Pisa. It must be emphasized that wherever he served as Prelate Ignatius was an energetic supporter of Greek education and national aspirations. Thus, soon after the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in March 1821, while in Pisa, he became an enthusiastic and influential worker for Greek political emancipation, meeting and coordinating various Greek leaders and maintaining correspondence with even more. Greek historian E. Protopsaltis thinks that Ignatius probably met with Lord Byron in Pisa, in 1823 or earlier<sup>18</sup>, whereas Professor Marchand implies that the two men met at Leghorn<sup>19</sup>.

Anyway, it is a fact that the exiled Metropolitan furnished Byron with important letters of recommendation when the latter decided to leave for Greece, and was instrumental in inspiring in him confidence in the leadership abilities of Alexander Mavrocordatos (who had been in Pisa while Byron and the Shelleys were there) and the brave Suliote chieftain Markos Botsaris. On the other hand, Ignatius emphasised the significance of Byron's mission to revolutionary Greece in his letters to Count John Kapodistrias (17 January 1824), to Prince Mavrocordatos (16 February 1824), to Andreas Louriotis (1 March 1824) and to several others, on various occasions. Ignatius's recommendation of Lord Byron was not unqualified, however. Knowing of his love affairs and scandalous ways of life, the Prelate considered the Poet capable "of unthoughtful behaviour" that could possibly harm the Greek cause. Thus, he cautioned the responsible Greek leaders to treat Byron with great care and to avoid displeasing him and possibly turning him into an enemy.

When he heard of the Turkish Government's protest to Strangford, the

18. See, Emmanuel G. Protopsaltis, *Ἰγνάτιος Μητροπολίτης Οὐγγροβλαχίας* (Ἀθήναι: Ἀκαδημία, 1961), 4 volumes, *passim* and IV, 279-81. Also, Protopsaltis, *Ἀλέξανδρος Μανροκορδάτος* (Ἀθήναι: Σ.Ω.Β., 1982), p. 99.

19. *Byron*, III, 1091-2; also, *LJ*, XI, 23n.

British Ambassador in Constantinople, about a British Lord's involvement in the Greek insurrection, the sagacious and diplomatic Metropolitan hastened to send Byron a letter in French, defending the Poet's moral right to become involved in the Greek Revolution and to continue championing it despite the wrath of the infidel Monarch and the Porte's remonstrances with the Ambassador. A classic example of the rhetoric and argumentation of the times, this letter has become available to us thanks to the diligence of Professor Protopsaltis<sup>20</sup>:

Pise le 1 Mars 1824

Milord,

Je viens de recevoir la lettre ci-incluse dans une enveloppe et je m'empresse de l'expédier à votre Seigneurie par mer pour éviter les chances des postes.

On dit, que le Grand Seigneur [the Sultan] vous a excommunié, et c'est probablement après la reponse de votre ambassadeur à Constantinople, qui ne peut que méconnaître tous les Anglais, qui embrassent la cause des Grecs. Mais ce patriarche du despotisme, ainsi que son mesquin prophète, que peuvent-ils faire a un homme tel que vous, Milord, qu'Apollon et les Muses protègent, et qui a fait tant de sacrifices pour rétablir leurs anciens temples dans le Parnasse? que le Grand Turc condamne, tout ce qui est noble et genereux, Europe a approuvé votre resolution avec applaudissement et vous souhaite l'heureux succès; j'en réunis aussi mes voeux, et je vous pris d'agréer l'assurance de la haute estime, et de la consideration la plus distinguée avec lesquelles j'ai l'honneur d'être, Milord, tout à vous.

le Metropolitain Ignace

à Sa Seigneurie

le noble Lord Byron ec., ec.

When Ignatius heard of Byron's death at Missolonghi he was genuinely sorry. Diplomatic and public-minded as he was, however, the Metropolitan tried to console his fellow Greeks who should not become discouraged by this great and tragic loss. So he wrote *Orlandos* and *Louriotis*, then both in London, on 2 May 1824 (all translations are mine):

20. Protopsaltis, *Ἰγνατίος*, IV, 190.

The illustrious Lord Byron is no more; a seven-day illness seized him and deprived Greece of a zealous protector, England of an illustrious man, and literature of a close friend of the Muses and of Apollo.

If that was good enough for the morale of the two Greek deputies in London, more was necessary to strengthen the heart of the hard-pressed leaders in belligerent Greece. Accordingly, Ignatius was more specific, more pragmatic and less rhetorical in his letter to President George Koundouriotis (7 May 1824):

The death of the illustrious Lord Byron filled me with sorrow, just as the betrayal at Anatolikon and Missolonghi; but we are often sorry out of ignorance, when what confronts us is a cause for joy rather than sorrow. The noble Englishman was good and showed zeal in our affairs, but, at the same time, he was as unthoughtful as a poet, and it would not have been improbable for him to become displeased, to depart, and, writing against the Greeks, to cause more damage than he ever did good...

This candor shows that Ignatius knew his difficult compatriots much better than he knew the Poet. His suspicion was, undoubtedly, unwarranted in view of the existential determination of Byron and of his unbroken record as the champion of liberal causes in Italy, England, and elsewhere. But Ignatius was a Prelate of a conservative and tradition-bound Church. Despite his political sophistication and numerous contacts with social paragons he could not help retaining some of the prejudices pertaining to his ecclesiastical status as arbiter of morality and upholder of the Commandments. Now, his unfairness to Byron's character and feeling, if it was deliberate in his epistle to the President, must be attributed to Ignatius's desire to lessen the impact of the bad news on the determination of the Greeks to persist in their struggle. Anyway, several Greek intellectuals vigorously protested his unfortunate characterisation of Byron as unthoughtful and potentially dangerous, the English-speaking poet Alexander Pallis being the most vociferous among them<sup>21</sup>.

The Metropolitan Ignatius survived Byron by four years. He lived to drink the bitter cup of the loss of Missolonghi (1826); but the decisive naval victory of Greece's protectors at Navarino (Pylos), one year later, must have prepared Ignatius to meet his Maker in full expectation of Greek freedom's final success.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

The other Greek Prelate Byron met in person and became his friend was Joseph (1776-1826), the Bishop of Kozyli and Rogon, who followed the Metropolitan of Arta, Porphyrius, to Missolonghi and remained there actively involved in its administration and war effort till his heroic death, after Porphyrius's departure from the embattled town<sup>22</sup>. Byron never mentioned Joseph by his name in his letters or other documents. However, in his letter to Charles Hancock (5 February 1824), from Missolonghi, he wrote:

By the way—I met with the said Archbishop of Anatoliko (where I went by invitation of the Primates a few days ago —and was received with a heavier cannonade than the Turks probably) for the *second time*—(I had known him here before) and he and Prince Mavrocordato—and the chiefs and Primates & I all dined together—and I thought the Metropolitan the merriest of the party—and a very good Christian for all that.—

Byron was inaccurate in the title "Archbishop of Anatoliko" on two counts, since Anatolikó (or Aetolicó) was too small a town to have a bishop, let alone an archbishop. The Poet was obviously confused by the title "Metropolitan" (i.e., bishop of one of the original dioceses of the early Church) which, being higher than that of bishop (Ἐπίσκοπος) Byron had assumed to mean archbishop. He was right, however, in mentioning that he had met this Prelate "here before", because Joseph was present along with Mavrocordatos and many military leaders when Byron was first welcomed at Missolonghi. Apart from written evidence to that effect, we also have the famous painting by Theodore Vryzakis, "The Arrival of Lord Byron at Missolonghi", which unmistakably depicts Joseph in his mitre and ceremonial robes blessing the arriving young saviour from Old Albion. The politically astute and energetic Porphyrius had stayed in Arta, and his militant and patriotic assistant, Joseph, had replaced him in the Metropolis of Missolonghi acting as Metropolitan of Aetolia and Acarnania; this accounts for Byron's mistaken appellation of "Archbishop of Anatoliko", for he simply confused the name of the province, Aetolia, with the name of the small (but heroic) village Aetolico (in the vernacular, Anatoliko).

E. P. Photiadis and others state that Joseph, "Byron's friend"—remember his afore-mentioned letter to Hancock—officiated at Byron's funeral in April 1824 at Missolonghi. Professor Protopsaltis and some others, though, in a

22. See, E. P. Photiadis's Greek article "Joseph Bishop of Rogon" in *ΘΗΕ* VII, 130-1; also, F. A. Vitalis's "Porphyrius" in *ΘΗΕ* X, 555.

more recent study, mention the Metropolitan Porphyrius in that capacity<sup>23</sup>. Having examined most archives personally I discovered that a Greek teacher of French and disciple of Adamantios Koraes in Paris, Constantine Nicolopoulos of Smyrna, had written a thirty-seven line poem in French titled "L'évêque de Missolonghi près du cercueil de Lord Byron", in which "Porphyre" is mentioned by name as the inspiring speaker addressing those gathered there. This text was later sent to the Archives of the Historical and Ethnological Society in Athens by the famous scholar Emile Legrand<sup>24</sup>. I am therefore inclined to believe that since Joseph could not have possibly refrained from such a solemn duty—since Byron and Joseph had been on excellent terms ever since they met—he must have been the one who conducted the service, whereas his superior, Porphyrius, delivered the funeral eulogy. After all, we know that both of them had celebrated the funeral of the hero Markos Botsaris (Bozzari) not long before Byron's arrival in their province. Porphyrius, who had been a Metropolitan since 1806, survived all personages in Byron's drama. King Othon of free Greece appointed him Metropolitan of his liberated province in 1833, and the old and diligent Prelate died in 1838.

The brave and hope-and-faith-inspiring acting Metropolitan Joseph survived Byron only by two years. At the age of fifty he took part in the desperate sally of the Missolonghiots to break through the combined Turco-Egyptian forces that besieged the heroic town—it had repelled two previous attacks in three years—trying to find safety among their brethren on the coast or the mountains not far from the reduced Missolonghi. When the enemy repelled most of the sallying fighters and the civilians following in their wake, Bishop Joseph retreated to the town and organised the defence of the Windmill island (Ἀνεμόμυλος) with a handful of warriors. Fighting desperately, Joseph and his men held out for two days. When the furiously attacking Moslems were about to take them alive, the still-resisting Joseph set fire to the gun powder in the Windmill blowing himself and his remaining comrades up. Ironically, the brave Prelate emerged mortally wounded but still breathing. He was beheaded by the Turks on the smoking ruins of his last bastion<sup>25</sup>. Thus Lord

23. "Byron and Greece", in Paul G. Trueblood, ed., *Byron's Political and Cultural Influence in Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Symposium* (London: John Murray, 1981), p. 104.

24. See, Ἑστία Περιοδικὸν Σύγγραμμα, τόμος 28, τεύχος 633 (Ἰανουάριος-Ἰούνιος 1888), 110-11.

25. See E. P. Photiadis's article (Note 22) and Nicholas A. Afendakis's book, Ὁ Πωγῶν τῶν Ἑλευθέρων Πολιορκημένων, For American poems on Markos Botsaris, by Fitz-Greene Halleck, James G. Brooks, John Latrobe, and L. S. Ward see, M. B. Raizis, ed., *Greek Revolution and the American Muse: A Collection of Philhellenic Poetry, 1821-1828* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1973), *passim*.

Byron's friend, "the merriest of the party", met with a fitly Byronic death in the bitter Spring of 1826. Today we can see his bust in the Garden of the Heroes at Missolonghi, a few paces past the marble statue of Byron on the same hallowed ground.

This is my brief account of Lord Byron's contacts with persons, works, and facts of the Greek Orthodox Church and faith. Most were of a strictly cultural nature. A few were casual or peripheral to his interests and activities. His contacts with the two Greek Metropolitans, however, were of dramatic significance to the cause for which the noble Englishman offered his fortune and his life.

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