

**BYZANTINE RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES WITH MUSLIMS
IN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES**

by

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Abstract

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the declining Byzantine Empire was finally superseded by the new sociopolitical system devised by the Ottomans, increase of encounters and intensification of communications between Byzantine and Muslim intellectuals gave an impetus to the composition of 'dialogues with Muslims on religious issues' by several Byzantine literati. The present dissertation analysed three of these dialogical works based on real discussions with Muslims in which the authors (Manuel II Palaiologos, George Amiroutzes, Gennadios Scholarios) participated, with special attention to the communicational medium used to discuss religious topics with 'infidels' and the ideals about the relationship between the Byzantine intellectuals and Muslims represented by the authors via a variety of images of the Byzantine and Muslim interlocutors in the works. As the result of this analysis, it became clear that the authors valued 'philosophical and rational arguments' to smooth the communication with those not having Christian faith, and that the final objectives intended by adopting these arguments varied according to the authors, reflecting the change of the sociopolitical environment under which they composed the works: while Manuel used

them to reinforce the Byzantine imperial ideology, Amiroutzes and Scholarios employed them to secure their status in the Ottoman regime.

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Introduction

After the appearance of Islam in the seventh century, Greek-speaking writers began, inside and outside the confines of the Byzantine Empire, to make mentions and remarks about this new 'sect'. These were, in the long time span to the period of the Ottoman rule, a number of writings classified into various genres such as reports or articles in historical narratives or heresiological writings, theological works specifically aiming at refuting Islam, letters and dialogues.¹ These writings, often deeply connected with one another by imitation or 'collage', developed formulaic arguments to criticise Islam by comparing it with Christianity. They can be divided into three categories: criticism on Muhammad, criticism on the Quran and criticism on doctrines of Islam. These criticisms are: Muhammad is a false prophet because he lacks predictive descriptions about him in the previous Scripture, supernatural signs to confirm his divine mission and moral behaviours to show his dignity; the Quran is a false scripture because it is full of errors, distortions and inventions; the doctrines of Islam are not right because they do not lead mankind to the divine salvation but to violence and

¹ For general information about respective anti-Islam polemical works, and their relations of influence with each other, see E. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos, Dialoge mit einem "Perser"* (Vienna, 1966) pp. 13-48.

sensuality.²

This dissertation treats ‘religious dialogues with Muslims’ written by Byzantine writers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the long history of interaction between Byzantine Greeks and Muslims finally shifted into a new phase in which the former were, without ‘their own’ nation, placed in an inferior status to the latter. The dialogical works in Byzantium have their history which should not be overlooked. Inheriting literary heritage and formal models from the previous ages, they continued to be composed in different forms and for different purposes, such as philosophical dialogues to pursue certain topics, satirical dialogues to illustrate aspects of the societies in which the authors lived, didactic dialogues to teach students a set of knowledge in certain fields and polemical or apologetic dialogues to maintain the authors’ stances in controversial issues.³ Here, to encompass the totality of this genre in Byzantium with such a great variety, I define the ‘dialogues’ as the writings in which two or more interlocutors converse, exchange information, express their opinions, or discuss and debate.

The dialogical works falling under this definition are not necessarily what

² See Th. Khoury. *Polémique byzantine contre l’Islam* (Leiden, 1972) pp. 11-17.

³ For the categorisation of the dialogical works and examples in each category, see A. Ieraci Bio ‘Il dialogo nella letteratura tardoantica e bizantina’ in Garzya (ed.) *Spirito e forme nella letteratura bizantina* (Naples, 2006) pp. 21-45.

someone deems to be the 'ideal dialogues' in which they think that this literary form can maximise its merits: the dialectical development of a thesis or polyphony by interlocutors, none of whom is destined to be overwhelmed by the arguments of others, for instance. Indeed, many of the Byzantine dialogues are 'monologic' in that one of the interlocutors as the avatar of the author in these works is designed as having such intellectual superiority as to defeat the others (polemical dialogues) or rule them by his intellectual hegemony (didactic dialogues). Still, such a prescriptive definition of the dialogue is useful only as an ideal type which hardly can be found in actual writings produced in any age⁴ and is less practical for the analysis of the dialogical works in Byzantium because it often results in their general devaluation in comparison with the works written in the ancient or modern world. Rather, it would be more profitable to see traces of 'the voices of Others' betraying the authors' experiences of real communications with them in the 'monologic' structures of the writings, especially in cases where the dialogical works derive from specific and actual debates. Also, it is important to investigate the interplay in the texts between the fictional ideals by which the self-consciousness of the authors was sustained and the realities represented as otherness for the purpose of shedding light on fluctuations of identities of the Byzantine

⁴ Cameron is also sceptical about the application of the definition of the dialogue invested with ahistorical ideas such as 'open-ended' or 'democratic'. See A. Cameron, *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity* (Washington D.C., 2014) pp. 7-13.

authors and images of the Others.

This is the reason why I focused on the polemical dialogues about Islam and Christianity based on the authors' real discussions with Muslims in the late and post-Byzantine period: in addition to the fact that the dialogical form permits us to find self-images of the Byzantine intellectuals and those of Muslims quite distinctly, the referentiality of the dialogues to the actual discussions and the political and social situations surrounding them makes it easier for us to be more sensitive to the distinction between the reality and the fictionality included in these dialogical works and to observe conflicts and negotiations between those two agents lurking in the structures of the dialogues and representations of the interlocutors. Through analysis of the images of the Byzantine intellectuals and the Muslims in the texts and the representations of relations between them as the mixture of the realities in the critical age and the authors' ideals, we can approach their changing identities and relationship.

The dialogical works treated in this dissertation are those written by Manuel II Palaiologos, George Amiroutzes and Gennadios Scholarios. All of them were prominent intellectuals and writers at that time and each dialogue is based on an actual discussion with Muslims on religious topics in which the author participated in person in an interesting situation from the viewpoint of the relations between Byzantine Greek

literati and Ottomans. These instances of direct intellectual communications with Muslims are novel in the history of the anti-Islam polemics produced within the territory of the Byzantine Empire. In addition, there is another original trait common to the dialogues in question: they present an emphasis on arguments based on knowledge of Greek secular philosophy. In view of the fact that another dialogical work supporting these philosophical or rational arguments was composed by Theodore Abu Qurra, an Orthodox theologian living in northern Mesopotamia in the eighth and ninth centuries⁵ (although he wrote in Syriac and Arabic and some of his works were translated into Greek), there seems to be a correlation between the direct communications with Muslims and the emphasis on the philosophical arguments. In this respect, it seems a good strategy to regard them as a focus of the negotiations between the authors' ideals and the realities of the actual discussions which they experienced and to pay particular attention to how these arguments are used in the dialogues, particularly seeing that the other anti-Islam or apologetic arguments are often covered by a thick layer of the established formulaic arguments inherited from previous writings as a result of the refinement of each topic caused by the progress of 'technologisation' of the genre of the

⁵ A. Argyriou & G. Lagarrigue, "Georges Amitoutzès et son "dialogue sur la foi au Christ tenu avec le sultan des Turcs"", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 11 (1987) pp. 56-57.

polemic and apologetic dialogue.⁶

Consequently, in the following chapters, I will investigate the dialogues of the above-mentioned three Byzantine intellectuals in chronological order, with special attention to the status of the philosophical or rational arguments and the represented images of the interlocutors in each work. This will allow us to see how the authors attempted to represent themselves and the Muslims and how what they considered to be a desirable relationship between themselves and the Muslims was transformed over a period of time when Byzantium was disappearing as a political entity.

⁶ Cameron, 2014: pp. 33-38.

Chapter 1

Manuel II Palaiologos: *Dialogues with a Persian*

This chapter treats the first dialogical work in the late Byzantine period with themes of Christianity and Islam based on a real discussion with a Muslim: *Dialogues with a Persian* by Manuel II Palaiologos. By analysing the function of ‘rational arguments’ in the writing, we will see how the author tried to present ideal representations of the Byzantine emperor and the Muslim and a relationship between them which the author thought was desirable.

Manuel Palaiologos was the second son of the emperor John V Palaiologos born in the mid-fourteenth century, when the Byzantine Empire had shrunk to a small state barely including Eastern Thrace, Thessaloniki, southern Peloponnese and some islands in the Aegean Sea. The empire kept declining as he grew up, and even before he had to govern as an emperor this last remnant of the Roman Empire had sunk into a politically and economically desperate situation. He was involved in strife with his elder brother

and nephew, struggled in vain to save Thessaloniki from the Ottoman siege, and was forced to perform a humiliating duty as a vassal of the sultan Bayazid I: the subjugation of Philadelphia, the last Byzantine city in Asia Minor, to Ottoman rule.⁷

On the arrival of the news of the death of John V, he secretly escaped from the sultan's entourage and in Constantinople acceded to the imperial throne in the spring of 1391. The prestige emanating from this title, however, did not help him to be exempt from the vassalage which compelled him to participate in the campaign in Asia Minor which began in the summer of the same year. It seems to have been during the sojourn of the troops at Ankara during a severe winter⁸ that he had a disputation with a Muslim scholar (Mouteritzes: the Greek transliteration of 'Müderris') on religious issues of Islam and Christianity. This experience inspired the emperor to compose a dialogical work titled 'Dialogues with a Persian', the redaction of which was presumably completed by 1399 when he sailed to Western Europe for military aid to save Constantinople from the Ottomans' years-long siege.

⁷ For biographical information about Manuel II Palaiologos before he became an emperor, see J. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, 1969) pp. 1-83.

⁸ It is thought that the stay in Ankara to avoid the cold was from November to December in 1391. See Barker, 1969: pp. 97-99; E. Trapp. *Manuel II. Palaiologos, Dialoge mit einem "Perser"* (Vienna, 1966) p.54. In addition, a letter from Manuel to Demetrios Kydones proves his stay at Ankara. See E. Legrand, *Lettres de l'empereur Manuel Paléologue : publiées d'après trois manuscrits* (Amsterdam, 1962) pp. 30-31.

According to the text, Manuel and the Mouteritzes held an approximately twenty-day discussion which was triggered by the deep curiosity of the Mouteritzes about Christian doctrines. It began with some doctrines and legends of Islam such as paradise, polygamy and Muhammad's ascension into heaven. It progressed to the subject of the legitimacy of Islam and Muhammad in comparison with the other divine laws (the Mosaic law and Christianity), followed by Manuel's lengthy apologetic for Christian doctrines (e.g. the Trinity, the Incarnation, the veneration of icons). Finally, this dialogical work reaches its climax when, persuaded, the Mouteritzes declares that he will convert to the Christian faith and go to Constantinople to pursue the study of it.

This storyline of Manuel's work which is divided into 26 'dialogues', as scholars who have edited and studied it point out, is not deemed to be the same as the actual progression of the discussion with the Mouteritzes. This supposition can be corroborated by the author's ideological and intellectual backgrounds. Firstly, Manuel was above all the 'emperor of the Christian world', however limited his actual power was with the decline of the empire. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine that ideological necessity made him represent himself as the triumphant emperor in his work, surpassing a Muslim scholar in intellect by concluding the Dialogues with an ideal but implausible

end.⁹ In addition, Manuel was well educated by Demetrios Kydones and deeply imbued with classical Greek literature and philosophy. His study in these fields made him not only a quite prolific writer but also a loyal follower of the literary and rhetorical conventions of Byzantium.¹⁰ It is thus quite reasonable to assume that the author modelled the Dialogues on the Plato's works, given that stylistically the work imitates Attic Greek and, in many instances, the Socratic dialogues to drive the Mouteritzes into aporia. Both features of the Dialogues are too artificial to think that they reflect what was spoken in the real discussion.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, these ideological restrictions and literary refinements do not seem to have effaced the reality of the actual discussion from the Manuel's work. This 'reality' is of interest to us for exploring what the emperor experienced on the occasion. In addition, detecting the reality in the whole text will effectively shed light on fictional parts which are subject to author's intention or bias as well as to commonplace assumptions or 'prejudices' of the contemporary intellectual milieu in Byzantium.

The degree to which the scholars working on the Manuel's work recognise reality

⁹ Reinert argues that the conversion of the Mouteritzes is indicative of the political interpretation of conversion in the imperial ideology: the ability to convert infidels and assimilate them with Rhomaioi symbolises the power of Byzantine emperors. See S. Reinert, 'Manuel II and His Mūderris' (1991): p. 47.

¹⁰ For the education and literary activity of Manuel Palaiologos, see Barker, 1969: pp. 395-439.

and fictionality in it varies among them. For example, Khoury argues that the real discussion was not rearranged much and the author made an effort to be loyal as much as possible and report exactly the tenor of the interlocutor.¹¹ Förstel emphasises its fictional characteristics based on the author resorting to arguments given by previous Byzantine polemical works against Islam and his alleged misunderstanding of Islamic doctrines as well as the aforementioned storyline leading to the Mouteritzes' conversion,¹² and concludes that all the conversations in Dialogues 11 - 17 and 21 - 26 are fictional.¹³ Here I will address this issue by reinvestigating the following points which are partly similar to those presented by Förstel: 1. the problem regarding dialogical structure of the work; 2. the reliance on John VI Kantakouzenos' apologetic and polemical works; 3. the incomplete correspondence between the sections of dialogues and the number of days which passed during the discussion; and 4. the mentions by the Mouteritzes of 'unorthodox' doctrines and legends of Islam.

Apart from the obvious fictionality of the final conversion of the Mouteritzes, there are other seemingly fictional traits in favour of the Emperor in the Dialogues. One of them is the imbalance of the volume of speech allotted to the Emperor and the

¹¹ Th. Khoury, *Manuel Paléologue / Entretiens avec un Musulman, 7e Controverse* (Paris, 1966) pp. 18-19.

¹² K. Förstel, *Manuel II. Palaiologos / Dialoge mit einem Muslim* (Würzburg 1993, 1995) vol. 1, pp. XX-XXII, XXVI-XXXI, vol. 2, pp. XV-XVII.

¹³ Förstel, 1996: vol. 3, p. XVIII.

Mouteritzes. Throughout the work, the Emperor's arguments and explanations often extend to multiple pages in every edition, while the Mouteritzes' speeches seldom exceed one page; many of them are brief replies either simply agreeing with the Emperor's opinions or constituting parts of leading questions (often *reductio ad absurdum*) set by the Emperor, or a proposal to change topics by which the Mouteritzes seems to conceal his inability to refute the Emperor's arguments. Under such circumstances, we could not expect much room for the Mouteritzes to object to the Emperor effectively and expound his views sufficiently. It is difficult to suppose that in fact the Mouteritzes always let Manuel take the initiative in the discussion in this manner.

Secondly, Manuel, as he states in the preface, knew that there had already been some anti-Islamic polemical works. In addition, Trapp and Förstel state that a large part of Manuel's arguments were taken from other previous works, especially from the writings of his grandfather John VI Kantakouzenos (*Four Apologies* and *Four Logoi* (treatises) based on Ricoldo da Monte Croce's 'Contra legem Sarracenorum' translated by Demetrios Kydones).¹⁴ Manuel's reliance on Ricoldo and Kantakouzenos has been meticulously studied by Förstel and he concludes that Manuel rarely introduced new

¹⁴ For example, the arguments about the criticism of the Islamic interpretation of paradise and lust, and almost all the apologetic topics. See Förstel, 1993: vol. 1, pp. XX-XXII; Trapp, 1966: p. 86.

topics to his work. Actually, one can find that many detailed topics, for example on specific verses of the Quran, treated in Kantakouzenos' works, are omitted from the Dialogues.¹⁵ As Förstel maintains, Manuel's originality perhaps may primarily lie in the selection and extension of fundamental topics in a refined style and with the help of rhetorical devices.¹⁶ From the deep reliance on the previous writings as well, it is evident that the Dialogues are structured to provide ideal settings to demonstrate the triumph of Christian truth through the Emperor's intellectual victory against Mouteritzes, rather than to record faithfully what was really spoken in the discussion.

These fictional alterations to meet the author's ideal also seem to have left traces in the work as structural inconsistencies: the sections of the dialogues and the days which passed during the discussion fail to correspond. Until Dialogue 20, each Dialogue approximately corresponds to the passage of one day, usually from morning to night, and this chronological order is easily recognised through description of situations by the author or mention of time passage by the protagonists, both placed at the beginnings and the ends of the Dialogues. This principle is not observed from Dialogue 21 on and the last 4 Dialogues do not give us any sign that they are held on more than one day.¹⁷

¹⁵ See the lists of topics treated in the four *logoi*: K. Förstel. *Johannes Kantakouzenos / Christentum und Islam, Apologetische und polemische Schriften* (Altenberge, 2005) pp. 236-243.

¹⁶ See Förstel, 1993: vol. 1, pp. XXIV-XXV.

¹⁷ Although Trapp argues that the word *protrita* (= three days ago) in the 24th Dialogue

The reason for this change is not clear, but it would have been difficult for such a thing to happen if the Dialogues were either completely fictional or non-fictional because in the former case the author would have made the correspondence complete and in the latter case the inconsistency would not have occurred. Rather, it is suggested that this is an incidental consequence of the process of the composition process of the work: perhaps the author made use of the original time structure of the discussion along with the situational information recorded in his notes, and developed the chosen topics on this structure in a prearranged order to culminate in the Mouteritzes' conversion. Whether, toward the end of the work, Manuel may have made the text longer to dramatise the discussion or simply noticed that there were not enough 'days' left for treating all the selected topics, he would have had to make some sections of the Dialogues outside the chronology in view of the volume of the texts.

This fictional handling by Manuel in the composition of the Dialogues, on the other hand, probably contains indications of the reality of the discussion which Manuel had in Ankara. Even if someone took a stance that the very discussion with a Muslim scholar in the winter of 1391 is fictional on the ground that there is no allusion to it in any source apart from the Dialogues in question, it would not matter so much for our

indicates the discussion about the Incarnation in the 23rd Dialogue, this discussion begins in the 22nd Dialogue. See Manuel, XXIV, 3.2; Trapp, 1966: p. 55.

purpose because we can say that the text contains elements which would otherwise be derived from Manuel's experience of some kind of actual communication with one or more Muslim intellectuals. However, this sceptical assumption seems unnecessary in view of the above-mentioned structural inconsistencies which seem to confirm the actuality of the situational information provided in the Dialogues.

Despite the prevailing fictionality of the Dialogues, Manuel declares in the preface that this work was written to provide a practical way to respond well to Muslims,¹⁸ which would have been impossible if the work were totally fictional. In fact, there is more persuasive and discernible evidence of the reality included in the Dialogues: some 'unorthodox' doctrines or legends of Islam presented by the Mouteritzes, such stories as Muhammad's intercession to Jesus for condemned sinners,¹⁹ Muhammad as Paraclete,²⁰ and the Second Coming of Jesus as the judge.²¹

The first two stories do not derive from Katakouzenos' writings, and according to Trapp, there is no clear evidence for other previous anti-Islamic polemical works which

¹⁸ Förstel, 1993: vol. 1. pp. 8-10 (= Preface, section 10 of Manuel's Dialogues, according to division of sections by Förstel. Hereafter, cited or mentioned texts of Manuel's work are referred to in footnotes simply as 'Manuel', followed by the numbers of the section and optionally subsections).

¹⁹ Manuel, II, 3.4-5. Criticism on Muhammad's intercession is found in earlier writers. See Förstel, 1993: vol. 1, p. XXI.

²⁰ Manuel, VIII, 1. This constitutes one of the Islamic traditions. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed., 1960-2005) 'Aḥmad (vol. 1, p. 267)'.

²¹ Manuel, II, 3.2.

Manuel would have consulted in composing the Dialogues.²² With respect to the third story, although Jesus' living ascension to heaven and his second arrival on earth for forty days followed by his death in the Islamic tradition are found in Kantakouzenos,²³ the story of Jesus as judge seems actually to have been told to Manuel by the Mouteritzes. The story was mentioned by Gregory Palamas in his letter to his own diocese in Thessaloniki while relating his experience when he was captured by Ottoman Turks and staying in their territory.²⁴ Förstel regards it as fictional on the basis of its unorthodoxy,²⁵ but it is a discourse advocated by Ibn Arabi,²⁶ and influence of such a mystic tradition should not be underestimated, especially in the syncretic environment of medieval Anatolia.²⁷ As evident from these examples, even if Manuel's work is largely fictional, it is reasonable to suppose that some arguments presented by the Mouteritzes (and in some cases Manuel's responses to them) reflect the real discussion, especially when they show no trace of deriving from previous works or in cases where there was no necessity to integrate them into the work in view of the author's intended

²² Trapp, 1966: p.86. This is based on the fact that no clear instance of 'reuse' of topics and discourses of previous anti-Islam polemicists is found except for John Kantakouzenos' works.

²³ Förstel, 2005: *Logos* III, 7.

²⁴ D. Sahas, 1980 'Captivity and Dialogue: Gregory Palamas (1296-1360) and the Muslims' *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25, pp. 414, 422.

²⁵ Förstel, 1995: vol. 2, p. XVII.

²⁶ *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed. 1960-2005) '(Īsā (vol. 4, pp. 81-86, especially p. 85)'.

²⁷ See E. Zachariadou, 'Religious dialogue between Byzantines and Turks during the Ottoman expansion' in Eadem, *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (Aldershot, 2007) pp. 289-304.

ideal.

In the remarks of the Mouteritzes which seem to have been made in the real discussion, what is most interesting when we see the representation of the relationship of the Emperor and the Mouteritzes is his desire for discussion on a rational basis and his request for explanation using rational arguments. In these requests and the Emperor's responses to them, we can observe traces of the author's struggle to integrate the experience which he obtained from the discussion with the Mouteritzes into the plan of the work demonstrating the victory of Christianity.

The word 'rational argument' comes from Förstel's 'Vernunftargument' which is the translation of '*logismos*' in the Manuel's work, and its concept is also based on 'raisonnement' proposed by Khoury who argued that it is one of the novel traits of Manuel's Dialogues in the history of the Byzantine anti-Islam polemical works.²⁸ Although he does not present its clear definition, it is considered to be a sort of analogy for explaining theological matters and is constructed on knowledge about the things which are perceptible through human senses such as (natural) philosophy and general exemplifications rather than scriptural tradition and metaphysical reasoning.

²⁸ Khoury, 1966: p. 18.

The Mouteritzes, not satisfied with the Emperor's explanation of Christian doctrines, often asks him for rational arguments and the latter answers the former's requests. For example, when the Emperor argues for the limit of human perception and the importance of faith to support both the apophatic and cataphatic aspects of the Orthodox theology, he uses as an example the difficulty of classification in zoology:

We know much about things that they exist accidentally, sometimes beautiful or ugly, and it is possible to think philosophically about their greatness and faculties, but from there we can reach neither exact understanding of them, nor about the properties of the things living by the senses and appearing to eyes. [...] In those living by senses there are land-animals, aquatic animals and winged animals. [...] The land-animals are prevented from being called viviparous because all turtles and serpents and some other things are oviparous. If someone would like to call the aquatic and winged animals oviparous, he states nothing exact, because you would see viviparous animals even in the aquatic ones and an animal that suckles in the winged animals (it is called a bat, I think) and some fish fly (whose name is flying-fish), [...] Thus, it is in general less difficult to say if something exists and I think that it is

rather difficult to say what it is and how it is and why it is and it is not always possible. God created everything through the Word and knows everything about them in advance, but He did not allow us to have this power.²⁹

The attitude of the Emperor and author Manuel toward these rational arguments is ambivalent. Manuel is less inclined to rely on them than on argumentation based on the Scripture when he can use the descriptions in it, and in almost all cases it is only after the Mouteritzes asks for the rational arguments that he develops them.³⁰ For example, when both protagonists discuss the veracity and the significance of the Passion and the Resurrection, the Mouteritzes demands:

First, do me a favour, that is, combine rational arguments with what is stated in the Bible on the Passion of the unaffected and the death of Life (I am already about to utter your phrases), and then give me testimonies from the Bible on the

²⁹ Manuel, IX, 4.3-5. Note that all translations of the works written in Greek or Latin treated in the dissertation are made by its author.

³⁰ Based on the analysis of arguments of both interlocutors, Demetracopoulos argues that the Mouteritzes likes 'rational' argumentation more than the more revelational emperor Manuel. See J. Demetracopoulos, 2008 'Pope Benedict XVI's Use of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos' Dialogue with a Muslim Muterizes: The Scholarly Background' *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 14, 2008. 279-304.

Resurrection. You must be eager [to do so], because when what you said about the Passion and the death was shown as good, it would be easier for you to persuade by delivering the remark on the Resurrection. Since I am unsatisfied with Jesus' death, how would it be easy that I believe in the Resurrection?³¹

Indeed, Manuel declares in the preface that rational arguments will be used as a tool to persuade the Mouteritzes by adapting theological truth to his level of comprehension, even if he risks debasing it:

Therefore, he [= the Mouteritzes] had such reason as cannot well appropriately reach the hidden divine meaning in the Scripture. Hence we held converse not as it should be, but so that he can receive what was said....Consequently, in not a few things which required the ally of the Bible, I was forced to fight stripped, so to speak, of the weight of the [biblical] words and weapons from there and instead usually conversed using reasoning (*logismos*) and examples, which were also appropriate to the capacity of the listeners.³²

³¹ Manuel, XIII, 4.1.

³² Manuel, Preface, 12-13

In the course of the discussion also, the Emperor says that analogical methods of explanation using temporal things and knowledge are not sufficient to reveal transcendent properties of God.

But remember that I was always demonstrating that this mystery is not subject to knowledge, words or reasoning: the [human] reason should not be superior to the divine nature, just as it should not with regard to how the divine word was incarnated.³³ (XVI, 1.2)

However, the Mouteritzes' intellectual insufficiency is not the only reason why the Emperor often ends up accepting the Mouteritzes' demands: the persuasiveness of the Scripture as evidence is largely curtailed by controversy over whether it is genuine or forged. Consequently, the Emperor makes a concession about the way of argumentation:

If you, not believing in corrupted words [=Islam], did not say that the holy Bible was destroyed by us, it would be easier for me to have the power to disperse the cloud of your unbelief....Now that I am deprived of the ally which no one can

³³ Manuel, XVI, 1.2.

resist, hereafter I will try to show you by rational arguments what surpasses reason, words and sounds...(X, 4-2)

Nevertheless, the Emperor, even after having recognised these difficulties, continues to rely on scriptural citations. In the following 11th Dialogue whose main topic is Christology, we can find approximately 60 citations and mentions of Scripture. This fact indicates that the Emperor prefers discussion founded on Scripture and the discussion on the basis of rational arguments is a practical expedient due to the communication with the Muslim intellectual. The preference of the Emperor in the text is evidently common to that of the author himself. Since the rational arguments were no more than the second best way to explain Christian doctrines, the author would not have resorted to the rational arguments and included them in his work unless the Mouteritzes had asked for them in the real discussion. Of course it can be thought that his original requests may have been different from those appearing in the Dialogues and perhaps they went through some refinement in the process of composition in order to enable the interlocutors to hold a more 'philosophical' discussion suitable to the author's literary ideal. Still, Manuel's ambivalent evaluation and reluctant attitude to the rational arguments also suggests the existence of real communication which was

crystallised in the fictive dialogues.

Faced with the unexpected intellectual challenge by a Muslim scholar, Manuel was forced to compromise on the manner of argumentation in discussing religious matters by using rational arguments. To control this element which is potentially subversive of what he considered as ideal disclosure of Christian truth, he confirms in the Dialogues two kinds of victories of Christianity: the victory of divine revelation over human reasoning based on perceptible things, and the victory of the Christian Emperor in the realm of natural philosophy. The way in which the relationship of both protagonists is represented in Manuel's work also plays an important role that contributes to these victories.

The author's intention to submit human reasoning to faith based on religious revelation is obvious. In Dialogues 8 and 9, the Emperor argues for the superiority of religious belief revealed by God over scepticism or agnosticism which results from a thorough application of the apophatic view about the God without supposing the presence of the divine grace illuminating the human reason. In response to the Mouteritzes' remark that commitment to the faith of an existent religion does not

impart to human beings the capacity to grasp the divine truth by reasoning, the Emperor maintains that once they have the right faith as the prerequisite for sound reasoning, they are able to distinguish the divine truth from falsehood and this is the only way to attain the former:

Mousteritzes 'Who knows all things, even if he follows completely the right and truest thinking and mistakes nothing, believing in God, as everyone simply does, but in God whom he has never seen and known exactly? How would we know clearly the one beyond any comprehension, how would the limited reason comprehend the unlimited? So it is good not to rush into having reasoning, but to be calm and wait for that inextinguishable and unceasing light, which will make clear to everyone's eyes what is now doubtful, so better and clearer than it seems to us now that the immortal world must be superior to the mortal one'³⁴

Emperor 'It is impossible that the things which have nothing harmonious with each other coincide. What would doubt and faith have in common, just as light and darkness or truth and falsehood? One should not betray himself and say

³⁴ Manuel, VIII, 5.9.

that he is pious, unless he is steadfast, firm, unbent, unshaken and concisely speaking remaining the same about the faith in God in any time and situation, and should not think that the others suffer from the same thing as he suffers on the basis of the fact that he lives in darkness. Rather, he should go out to the light and then he will know well how the darkness is not obscure in the light. If one does not benefit from the light, he will not know what lies at his feet at all and at the same time, quite reasonably, imagine that everyone feels the same as him. For the one who was born and brought up in the darkness has never experienced the light will not believe in those who tells him about anything about the light'³⁵

Both protagonists agree in that they do not acknowledge the unlimited faculty of the human intellect and reasoning without divine help. What makes the Mouteritzes different from the Emperor in this regard is the denial of the link between a right faith being possible to exist in the age and the world in which he lived and the ability of faith to supplement human reason with the divine illumination in order to reach the full cognition of God. This denial caused the Mouteritzes to have a relativistic view about

³⁵ Manuel, IX, 5.22-23.

religions and prevent him from having what he considers to be an excessive reasoning in search for the truth which is essentially agnostic for humanity due to its nature transcending the concepts formed on the basis of perceptible things. It is quite natural and logical, on the other hand, that his stance is recognised by the Emperor as something that should be surmounted by the emphasis on the superiority of faith because, from the Emperor's perspective, it is the very opinion of the Mouteritzes that can be interpreted as a result of an uncontrolled practice of human reasoning without the guidance of the divine revelation: it can be said that his principle of prudence formed as relativism and scepticism is not completely applied for the process of thinking which forms such ideas.

Now that the efficacy of human reasoning that solely relies on temporal and perceptible things is limited in comparison with revelation of the faith, the above argument of the Emperor can also be seen as a proof that he puts no greater value on rational arguments than as a way to facilitate the Mouteritzes' understanding, and explains why he needed to add a great number of apologetic arguments relying on scriptural citation. In the fifth Dialogue he employs the theory of *Tychē* to express an apparently agnostic view that one cannot deduce the legitimacy of a religion from prosperity of its believers and vice versa because prosperity solely depends on the will of

God regardless of the virtues of a nation.³⁶ This remark, however, can be understood better when we think that it derives from his understanding of the apophatic aspect of divine nature rather than agnosticism as a result of reasoning based on secular philosophy. The victory of divine belief over human logic is one of the most fundamental leitmotifs throughout his work, and for that reason the author attempted to structure the work so that the reality which he experienced can be subject to his ideal.

Although the rational arguments for explaining Christian doctrines are given subordinate status to those based on the Scriptures, this does not mean the Emperor does not respect philosophical knowledge. He employs some philosophical discourses mainly in introductory parts of the work that come before the apologetic topics.³⁷ For example, faced with the Mouteritzes' contention that 'many of our people renowned for their wisdom think that all animals are rational',³⁸ the Emperor clarifies the distinction between human beings bestowed with reason and thus free will and animals or plants having only 'nature (*physis*)' which organises body functions and passions:

³⁶ Manuel, V. 4.5-21. Reinert argues that the Emperor's use of *Tychē* is a circumlocution by which he refrains from declaring his belief that it is determined by the will of God that the hegemony of Islam will decline and that of Byzantium will rise again. Reinert, 1991: pp. 48-51.

³⁷ For the instances of philosophical discourses, see Förstel, 1993: vol.1, pp. XVII-XVIII.

³⁸ Manuel, III, 6.8.

While the properties of nature are thus evident, those of reason are also clear, which you can find in mankind among all the animals. A fruit of reason is to act voluntarily even if nature does not often assist it at all, but counteracts it by all means. It is only mankind who accomplishes it.³⁹

So such is our situation, but that of the animals differs from this. [...] All the four-legged animals, birds and sea animals [...] act, suffer, avoid and pursue the same things eternally, and their behaviour is utterly without reason. Their movement of birth, growth or decline is subject to neither free will nor reason. How can they do so lacking these, when even we living by reason and free will cannot? Neither what gives birth gives birth voluntarily nor what is born is born voluntarily, and it is possible to give birth to a mixed animal in an unnatural way, but what gives birth cannot give birth to something other than what it is according to the nature.⁴⁰

The Emperor's argument based on this philosophical knowledge seems to have been recognised as convincing by the Mouteritzes, because he responds: 'I would like to hear

³⁹ Manuel, IV, 2.3.

⁴⁰ Manuel, IV, 2.8-9.

such evident demonstrations about all the other things, for you have persuaded me about these things'⁴¹ On the other hand, the Mouteritzes also has recourse to a philosophical discourse when he argues that Islam is the best religion due to its golden mean in comparison with incomplete Judaism and Christianity, whose precepts are too severe to be observed. He says:

The Law of Muhammad proceeds on the middle way, brings practical, truly gentle and philanthropic precepts and wins against all the other Laws in all respects by being moderate. [...] You know well that virtues always avoid excesses and hold the middle exactly, and this is what is and is called a virtue. [...] This has been taught by all the ancients.⁴²

Therefore, the Mouteritzes in the text is represented as having philosophical knowledge at least to a certain degree, and the philosophical discourses by the Emperor are presented as being comprehensible to the Mouteritzes. Although neither the author nor the Emperor makes a remark about the value or significance of Greek philosophy and the Emperor's rational arguments are also used as a mere practical tool for the

⁴¹ Manuel, IV, 3.1.

⁴² Manuel, VII, 2.2-3.

explanation to the Mouteritzes, the Dialogues have some room for the arena of philosophical discussion, in which the Emperor demonstrates his superiority to the Mouteritzes in this field, in addition to his excellence symbolised by the triumph of the religious revelation over the human reasoning.

For the purpose of supporting the above two kinds of victories, Manuel utilises a variety of images of the Emperor and the Mouteritzes, all of which contribute to constructing the representation of the relationship between both interlocutors as that of an ideal teacher and student. By investigating how both the protagonists behave in the Dialogues and then analysing their images extracted from their modes of behaviour, we can trace the author's strategy in the relational representation between them so as to confirm the intellectual superiority of the Emperor.

As stated above, the Mouteritzes is represented as a 'good student', who is usually obedient to his teacher. In the discussion, the Mouteritzes' fierce responses to the Emperor are quite rare. An exception is his reaction which is triggered by the Emperor's harsh criticism of the life of Muhammad when requirements to be a prophet are discussed:

Mouteritzes ‘On what ground do you think that the life of that man [=Muhammad] is not good?’

Emperor ‘On what ground is it not far from any goodness? Is it not full of greed, blood and extreme depravity? Did it not experience every licentiousness? Did it reach the acme of injustice?’

The elder [=Mouteritzes] got angry at this, like all the people with him (many of his acquaintances, townspeople or foreigners, were present, who were spending the whole day comfortably, filled with the zeal for listening to me)... and they asked me to use milder words for this man: they cried that it is not suitable to commit an outrage to such an old man.⁴³

Yet, he accepts in general the criticism against Islam by the Emperor. Faced with condemnation of the polygamy of Islam, for instance, the Mouteritzes, after blushing without saying a word for a while but seemingly delighted with his knowing what he wanted to know, states that the doctrine of Islam about women seems vain and unsound.⁴⁴ Furthermore, he is sometimes quite patient in trying to accept the Emperor’s stances even if he is not totally persuaded by his arguments, as we can see in

⁴³ Manuel, VI, 4.5.

⁴⁴ Manuel, III, 4.12.

the way in which the Mouteritzes responds to the Emperor's counterargument to agnosticism:

Mouteritzes 'To tell the truth, I glorify my religion as being better than any religion, but cannot have an utterly certain opinion [about it]. Still, I think that you are in the same situation as me, for I can conjecture well, I think, another's situation from my own. Such is my logic and I would not be able to be easily persuaded by your arguments, even after it seemed to me that they were very strong, while, if you are steadfast, rigid, unbent and unshaken about your religion, probably you understand your arguments, because I think that what you have argued was really good and would not have wanted to try to refute it.'⁴⁵

This reaction of the Mouteritzes is ambivalent in that it can be seen as an evasion to interrupt the discussion on the present topic and also as his attempt to be persistent in his relativistic stance by being tolerant of the Emperor's argument. Still, it is regarded as being well indicative of his gentle and polite attitude toward his teacher.

To be a good student one is required, of course, not only to be obedient to one's

⁴⁵ Manuel, IX, 6.3.

teacher, but also to be eager to study what is taught. The Mouteritzes satisfies well this condition, for he is well-motivated to know the 'truth' from the Emperor as evident from the beginning part of the first Dialogue, where the Mutertzes tells the Emperor the reason why he asked for the discussion on religious issues:

I have had an enduring desire to meet a man who teaches me your religion. But I have never encountered Christians who are wise and adept in it to such a degree that they can tell me something clear and as I would want... If what you will say seems to be true, probably my words will seem to be otherwise, and who is so irrational as to prefer untruth to truth? This [= the fact that I pursue truth] is clearly demonstrated from this: it is not permitted for us to have a dialogue with the Christians who are said to have much persuasiveness. If I were not an ardent lover of truth, I would not neglect the order hindering us from doing it [= dialogue] and otherwise never join in such a game [= discussion].⁴⁶

Another example demonstrating the Mouteritzes' love for truth is that he is sometimes so eager to continue discussion that he does not care about the passage of

⁴⁶ Manuel, I, 1.2-4.

time and exhaustion of the audience: When the discussion on the veneration of the icons terminated, the Emperor managed to send home the Mouteritzes who, despite a crow of a rooster, denied that the dawn was coming soon and insistently asked the Emperor to give him a discourse on the Incarnation.⁴⁷

In addition to these sincere attitudes of the Mouteritzes toward the discussion which represent him as a good student, he has another trait by which to render himself more ideal or controllable for the Emperor: the intellectual competency of the Mouteritzes is lowered so as not to be a threat to the structure of the Dialogues which leads him to the conversion in the end. He is not able to refute the Emperor's arguments, and is inclined to, especially at the ends of the respective dialogues, interrupt discussion without a counterargument to escape his impasse. When the Emperor argues that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are not creatures, the Mouteritzes proposes that 'since we have got tired and your body also has been exhausted by hunting [sc. in which he had joined as one of the retinue of the sultan], we should drive the discussion just as a ship to a harbour of silence and next morning to the sea of the dialogue again, and then accomplish the journey with good fortune', which are referred to by the Emperor as 'his [=Mouteritzes'] accustomed evasion'.⁴⁸ A clearer criticism by the Emperor of the

⁴⁷ Manuel, XX, 4.1-5.

⁴⁸ Manuel, XV, 6.

Mouteritzes' digression can be seen in a part of the eighth Dialogue, when the latter, after listening to the former's explanation on what the Paraclete is, told his sons that 'it seems to me good that we should allow the many circumlocutions [sc. by the Emperor] and not intend to dispute about them. Let this man show us that the Word of God is truly God as he insisted, and this would suffice'⁴⁹, to which the Emperor replies:

This is not about allowing circumlocutions, but about asking for them and finding out refuges. Your most swift leap to another topic after what you had brought to the discussion has been judged as not progressing as it seemed to you, but is simply an act of those who escape and go forward into the labyrinth.⁵⁰

Such digressions and evasions are surely what the Emperor complains about, but the Mouteritzes' inability to present effective counterarguments results in ceding the initiative of discussion to the Emperor to make it easier for the author of the Dialogues to arrange the topics which he wished to develop.

The Mouteritzes' intellectual inferiority in the text is further emphasised by the fact that he plays the role of confirming the Emperor's arguments by simply agreeing

⁴⁹ Manuel, VIII, 4.1.

⁵⁰ Manuel, VIII, 4.2.

with them and falling prey to his leading questions. Below is one of the most salient examples in which the Emperor refutes by *reductio ad absurdum* the Mouteritzes' argument that Muhammad was the Paraclete, because such an argument necessarily implies that the Paraclete is just one of the creatures and not consubstantial with God:

[Emperor] 'Tell me, is God not spiritual?'

[Mouteritzes] 'Yes.'

[Emperor] 'Is He not the truth itself?'

[Mouteritzes] 'Who thinks that He is not?'

[Emperor] 'Then what is the Paraclete? Not the spirit of the truth? You would not deny it: for it is what you have just said, rather, it is the words which you have brought for yourself.'

[Mouteritzes] 'It is as you say.'

[Emperor] 'Then does this Paraclete proceed from the Father or is anyone willing to deny it?'

The sons of the Mouteritzes said to him: 'we could never deny what is clear, for the Word who sent the Paraclete said quite clearly that it was a spirit and

proceeded from the Father.’

I, favorably receiving their understanding and memory about what is needed [for the discussion], said:

‘Look, my friends, how the Paraclete is God: for what springs from something naturally just as from a fountain or a root is akin to and of the same nature as what brought forth it.’

[Mouteritzes] ‘What you said seems probable, but although I could say something about it, I put it aside for the present. For I dare not join in this dispute.’⁵¹

Quite naturally, this evasion induces an ironic remark by the Emperor that actually the Mouteritzes’ incapacity to counter-argue forces him to escape from the discussion in which he might have been compelled to explain his stance more. Indeed, the employment of this Socratic dialogue is not so effective as it looks in logical terms because it simply presents the common properties of God and the Paraclete and refers to their relation that the latter proceeded from the former: The common properties, that both are spiritual and true, do not necessarily support their identity with one another

⁵¹ Manuel, VIII, 3.2-3.

and this identity depends on the mode of the relationship between them. Therefore, the validity of the Emperor's argument is less based on the logical construction of the Socratic dialogue than the definition of the verb 'proceed (*ekporeuein*)' being decisive in the consubstantiality between the father God and the Paraclete, on which here both the interlocutors fortunately seem to agree. Still, the impression of the Socratic dialogue is quite vivid from a rhetorical point of view, and the author succeeds in having the Mouteritzes' answer to the Emperor's sarcasm by a sort of sour grapes in which he, though not persuaded, admits the Emperor's intellectual victory.⁵²

As a result of the analysis of many aspects of the Mouteritzes' behaviour, it is now clear that the author represents him as an ideal student for his politeness, obedience and ardour, but this ideal image, especially with respect to his intellectual faculty, is carefully controlled so as not to be a potential threat to the intellectual superiority of the Emperor. In accordance with this representation of the Mouteritzes, the Emperor is also represented as a gentle and tolerant teacher. He is very persistent throughout the Dialogues in explaining the Christian doctrines at length and answering the Mouteritzes' questions and demands for rational arguments despite the latter's inclination to change the topics in a seemingly abrupt and capricious way. He does not

⁵² See Manuel, VIII, 3.3-4.

make an ad hominem attack on the Mouteritzes when criticising the doctrines of Islam, and occasionally he praises the Mouteritzes' knowledge and brightness: when the Mouteritzes argues that Christianity is too strict for human beings to observe by enumerating a variety of its doctrines, the Emperor, although ironic about the audacity of the Mouteritzes, says:

I was caught by surprise that you are a man with reason, respected as being in the greatest status of the teachers in your [country], adorned with deep knowledge in your [civilisation], having good behaviour and estimating everything as less valuable than truth.⁵³

Whether the representations of the Mouteritzes and the Emperor reflect well how they behaved in the real discussion or not, it is important to note that in the Manuel's work the relationship between both the protagonists is represented as that of the ideal teacher similar to a philosopher king and ardent student, between whom freedom of speech (*parrhēsia*) is secured. When, at the end of the second Dialogue, the Mouteritzes worried that his lengthy response to the Emperor would wear him out, the Emperor

⁵³ Manuel, VII, 3.2.

decides to encourage his explication by an attentive attitude, after having thought that:

One should not care about such a thing... and should speak with nothing hidden. And he [=Mouteritzes] also should do the same and continue to do so while holding the dialogue. And seeing that he thinks that I make profession of *parrhēsia* as well and inquires about it but does not ask for it, it would be right for me as well to keep what has been promised and not to be annoyed at a courageous response. This is the very thing which I promised to give to that man who had proclaimed it [= *parrhēsia*].⁵⁴

The Emperor's effort to form the relationship in which the freedom of speech is mutually ensured for both the interlocutors seems to be indicative of the author's idea that intellectual persuasion is superior to enforcement by violence, which is attributed by Manuel as one of the most important characteristics of Islam, as he expounded in the seventh Dialogue.⁵⁵ Therefore, the ideal of *parrhēsia* is also deeply rooted in the relational representation of the Mouteritzes and the Emperor in which the author pursued an ideal relationship between them. However, this relationship enabling

⁵⁴ Manuel, II, 7.2.

⁵⁵ Manuel, VII, 1.6-7.

'discussion without any coercion' is carefully constructed by controlling the behaviours of both protagonists in the text so as to contribute to the triumph of the Emperor and Christianity. It should be noted again that the rational arguments which can be common to both interlocutors regardless of the difference of their religions are kept within the status of a mere utilitarian tool for explanation. Rather, it was the victory of Christian revelation against the (secular) logic of the Muslim scholar that Manuel wanted to demonstrate fictionally in order to enhance his prestige as the Christian emperor experienced in philosophy as well as that of his people, in response to his experience of the real discussion with the Mouteritzes.

In *Dialogues with a Persian*, the author Manuel succeeded for the most part in integrating the impact stemming from his discussion with the Mouteritzes into his plan to show the victory of the Christian faith. Although under the restriction caused by the author's literary and religious ideals, this process of integration made Manuel devise the rational arguments on religious issues as a novel medium to facilitate communication and discussion with an intellectual differing in religion from him. One can suppose that the genre of the elaborated fictional dialogue probably modelled after the ancient one was also introduced to anti-Islam polemical works to include the rational arguments in the work: the validity of using them would not have been so

evident without the existence of an interlocutor of a different religion.

In accordance with the author's plan the work ends with the conversion of the Mouteritzes, but there the Emperor expresses a little 'mysterious' apprehension: he thinks that Mouteritzes would not actually come to Constantinople to study Christian doctrines, and even doubts his pretext that it is difficult for him to go there because he has a family to sustain in Ankara.⁵⁶ Why did Manuel add this part which has a deconstructive effect on his triumphant plan? Probably the main reason is that he wanted to make the story more plausible and reliable, and this means that the fictionality of his work was obvious for Byzantine literati at that time. The work was supposed to be shown only to his brother Theodore as evident from the description of the addressee in the original unabbreviated title,⁵⁷ and this intimate readership may have enabled him to add this part. Manuel fulfilled what he considered as his duty: to represent the image of the ideal Christian emperor, but he was not blind to the political reality of his time. This work itself was expressive of the declining empire fluctuating between the imperial ideal and the harsh political reality.

⁵⁶ Manuel, XXVI, 4.

⁵⁷ Förstel, 1993: vol. 1, p. 2.

Chapter 2

George Amiroutzes:

Dialogue with the Sultan of Turks on the Faith of Christ

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Byzantine intellectuals were forced to make a decision either to flee from their homeland in order to move to Western Europe or to Italian colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean, or to remain under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Among those who chose the latter, there were, for example, George Scholarios and Theodore Agallianos acting in the Patriarchate, and those who served for the sultan Mehmed II such as the historian Michael Kritoboulos and George Amiroutzes, on whose dialogical work the present chapter focuses to analyse what Greek philosophy meant for him in communicating with Muslims in the new political situation.

George Amiroutzes was born in about 1400 to a family of magnates in the Empire

of Trebizond,⁵⁸ and after he had grown up, he acted as an official of the empire, occupying important offices such as *logothetes* and *protovestiaros*. After he was taken to Constantinople by Mehmed II at the fall of Trebizond in 1461, he joined the entourage of the sultan, and probably died around 1470. He was renowned as a prominent philosopher, and in addition to philosophical treatises he wrote encomiastic poems for the sultan, the religious dialogue, and letters to Agallianos and Kritoboulos which have survived to our day.

There are some clues to his activity and influence in the Ottoman court. Firstly, according to the historian Kritoboulos, the knowledge of Amiroutzes amazed the sultan and they often had discussions on philosophical issues.⁵⁹ Secondly, if we can rely on Laonikos Chalkokondyles and a Greek narrative of the sixteenth century, it seems that he enjoyed the support from the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha, who was allegedly a cousin of Amiroutzes.⁶⁰ In addition, an Italian humanist, Francesco Filelefo, sent him a letter asking for his support in recommending an architect to the Ottoman court.⁶¹

Therefore, it can be said that he had a certain status at the court and could wield some

⁵⁸ For the most detailed and updated biographical information on George Amiroutzes, see J. Monfasani, *George Amiroutzes The Philosopher and His Tractates*. (Leuven, 2011) pp. 5-12.

⁵⁹ D. Reinsch, *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*. (Berlin-New York, 1983) IV, 9, 2-3.

⁶⁰ A. Kaldellis, *The Histories, Laonikos Chalkokondyles*, 2 vols. (Cambridge – London, 2014) IX, 74; S. Lampros, *Ecthesis Chronica and Chronicon Athenarum* (London, 1092) p. 26. For Mahmud Pasha, see Th. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vesirs. The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vesir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*. (Leiden, 2001).

⁶¹ E. Legrand, *Cent-dix lettres grecques des Francois Filelfe*. (Paris, 1892) pp. 120-121.

power through his connections.

Another aspect contributing to his power can be explained in terms of the presence of Greeks and the interest in Greek culture at the Ottoman court. At that time, there were many Greeks, including both Orthodox and Muslim converts, who were working on composing Greek firmans.⁶² In addition, they also edited manuscripts of Greek classical works. This activity was primarily motivated by the sultan's interest in the Greek culture: Mehmed visited an alleged ruin of Troy in an expedition,⁶³ learned the Greek language to a certain extent⁶⁴ and discussed with the patriarch Gennadios II the doctrine of the Orthodox Church.⁶⁵ Amiroutzes himself made a map based on Ptolemy in cooperation with his own son fluent in Turkish and dedicated it to the sultan. This cultural atmosphere allowed him to make best use of his intellectual talent for his personal gain, and caused him to hope that the sultan would receive his message regarding Greek culture in one of the encomiastic poems to him:

Do not be astonished, now listening to my voice,

⁶² For administrative and cultural activities in the Greek scriptorium during the reign of Mehmed II, see J. Raby, 'Mehmed the conqueror's Greek scriptorium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37, (1983) pp. 20-26. Specifically for Greek powerful officials in that period, see Zachariadou, E. 1998. 'Les notables laïques et le patriarcat œcuménique après la chute de Constantinople', *Turcica* 30, pp. 119-33.

⁶³ Reinsch (1983) IV, 11, 5.

⁶⁴ Raby (1980) pp. 23-24.

⁶⁵ Reinsch (1983) II, 2, 1.

For I [=Muse] am not alien to you, even if many think so,

But I am the one who am always with you.

(...)

You also have become the emperor of Greeks as a man of valour.

So how are your own things foreign, how are your things alien?

Likewise, putting an end to the yoke of slavery,

My Alexander made a decision as my son,

And made good things of Persians his own possession.

Then rejoice, emperor and Achilles with weapons,

May you become the heir to the rule and the fortune in it.⁶⁶

This poem in which the Muse as a symbol of Greek arts and culture legitimises Mehmed II as a successor of the empire of Greeks certainly reflects Amiroutzes' *modus vivendi* which may be deemed to be sycophantic. The more important point for us is the rhetoric used to persuade the sultan to receive Greek culture: its familiarity with the Orient is supported by the episode that Alexander the Great, obedient to the Muse in the poem, took cultural heritage from Persians in the conquest. It was this cultural

⁶⁶ B. Janssens & P. Van Deun, 'George Amiroutzes and his Poetical Oeuvre' in: B. Janssen et al. (eds.) 2004. *Philomathestatos*. Leuven, p. 314.

heritage which was inherited by the present Greeks. On these grounds, it is justified that the sultan receives the Greek arts, whose culturally privileged status is secured by the Muse, and Amiroutzes seems to suggest that the succession of the world empire is confirmed by that of the Greek culture, which of course includes philosophy for the philosopher Amiroutzes. His idea about the significance of Greek culture for the sultan is primarily aimed at enhancing or sustaining his own position and that of his Greek colleagues at the Ottoman court. It also seems to influence the way in which Greek philosophy contributed to construct the image of an ideal sultan in his dialogical work as we will see below.

Amiroutzes' religious dialogue entitled 'Dialogue with the Sultan of Turks on the faith of Christ' has the structure in which two personages, the "Sultan" and the "Christian Philosopher" appear and discussion proceeds by the former's questions on the Christian doctrine and the latter's responses. It has been thought that this work, probably completed at the end of the 1460s,⁶⁷ has survived only in a Latin translation in the sixteenth century,⁶⁸ and thus only this version has been published.⁶⁹ Although

⁶⁷ See A. Argyriou & G. Lagarrigue, "Georges Amitoutzès et son "dialogue sur la foi au Chirist tenu avec le sultan des Turcs", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 11 (1987) pp. 51-52.

⁶⁸ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 49.

⁶⁹ Monfasani found the original Greek text in MS Toledo, Biblioteca Capitulare, 96-37 and plans to publish it. See Monfasani (2011) p. 9 (note 23).

Kritoboulos' mention of Amiroutzes' discussion with Mehmed II refers to those of a philosophical nature, it is not difficult to think that the dialogue was composed on the basis of several real dialogues with Mehmed II. Of course this does not exclude the fictionality of the work which can reflect the author's intention to compose the text. The topics treated in this work are: truth of the Incarnation, necessity of the Incarnation, anticipation of Christ by the prophets, the Holy Trinity and unity of God, and the resurrection of bodies of the dead.

The issue as to for whom and for what purpose the dialogue was written has not been settled. Argyriou and Lagarrigue, the editors, argue that it was addressed to Latins on the grounds that Amiroutzes mentions in the prologue the decline of the intellectual level of the Greeks in the Ottoman territory which made impossible the comprehension of his work,⁷⁰ as the citation below from the introduction of the dialogue shows:

Since few is the remainder of those chased from that previous felicity [=Greeks],
who judge that it is rather convenient for them to lament on their own misfortune,
you would present this literary work to others in vain:they would not understand

⁷⁰ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 50.

what you say and would not have leisure to listen to speeches.⁷¹

In addition, negative expressions about Ottoman rule such as ‘All the Greeks were already subjugated, my fatherland was led into captivity, and I also became a slave of that man, who is now oppressing Roman citizens and Greek people in his dominion’,⁷² imply that he did not intend the dialogue to be translated into Turkish and read by Turks. In my opinion, this work was addressed to a Greek Orthodox outside Ottoman territory, because Amirutzes says that his intention in composing the work was to present a practical case study which will contribute to future actual discussions with Muslims:

Many have already written against their [=Turks] religion so accurately that we should not add something. However, in order to refute what they are now bringing against our dogma, none of us has never argued by demonstrating something, and begun [discussion] from the principles which are appropriate: one who disputes should not demonstrate against opponents of our faith by the same presupposition as [he demonstrates by it] against those who opine [dogmatically] similarly to us.

⁷¹ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 62.

⁷² Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 64.

Rather it is necessary for the man who demonstrates suitably to provide grounds from what each [interlocutor] thinks and feels respectively and separately. Thus I composed this work, sometimes presenting the grounds which he [=the Sultan] brought relying on his proper strength, sometimes, on the other hand, [the grounds] which I provided against those ones.⁷³

Thus, it can be said that Amiroutzes, while lamenting the miserable state of the Greeks under the Ottoman rules, completed the dialogue in the hope that a Greek in the future would be able to study his work and put it into practical use.

The present analysis of the dialogue focuses not on the details of the theological discussions, but in the manner in which the dialogue proceeds and the way in which the interlocutors are represented. With respect to these points what should be noted is the function of philosophy or rational arguments in the dialogue. For example, an important feature of the discussion in the dialogue is the stress on ‘common notions’ (in Latin, *communes notiones*):

(...) and he often talked with me not only on philosophical issues but also the

⁷³ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 66.

difference of the dogmas of both nations, on which occasion he would question if our faith of Christians fits with common notions, but it was not permitted that any mention was made of his religion and faith.⁷⁴

‘Common notions’ can be considered to mean concepts or argumentations of secular philosophy which are not based on theological knowledge. Probably the original Greek word is ‘*koinai ennoiai*’, which was, according to Monfasani, granted ‘axiomatic force in establishing truth’ by the Hellenistic philosophical school and has fundamental importance in some of philosophical treatises of Amiroutzes.⁷⁵ As shown in the above citation, since the topics of the dialogue were about the validity of the Christian faith seen from the common notions rather than its comparison with doctrines of Islam which might result in mentions and criticisms of its doctrines, the reliance on the common notions results from the limitation of the topics of discussion set by the Sultan on the one hand. However, this reliance can also be explained by the decision made by Amiroutzes. For example, a Greek scholar Michael Apostoles in a letter to Amiroutzes speaks positively of his avoidance of risky apologetic and theological argumentation:

⁷⁴ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 64.

⁷⁵ Monfasani (2011) pp. 28-29.

If this thing is reproachable for many people due to the fear of God, still for a few people it is not worthy of accusation due to the reason they have... You believe in the immortal God... and did the best things not by any method which many people have practised and are practising, but due to necessity worthy of pardon and in a divine way and by reasoning...⁷⁶

Therefore, the discussion based on common notions was also convenient for Amiroutzes in that he could avoid the possibility of criticizing Islam using theological argumentation.

So, how are the interlocutors, the Sultan and the Philosopher, represented in this dialogue in which common notions constitute the basis for the discussion? Firstly, throughout the dialogue, we can see an image of the Sultan as a kind of philosopher ruler who converses rationally with a Christian relying on his knowledge of philosophy, and not as a violent or foolish tyrant. Firstly, we can observe his mention of the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle to initiate his interrogation to Amiroutzes at the very beginning of the dialogue session.⁷⁷ A more salient example is that, against the Philosopher's resort to the 71th Psalm as a proof of the prediction of the advent of

⁷⁶ H. Noiret, *Lettres inédites de Michel Apostolis*. (Paris, 1889) pp. 83-84.

⁷⁷ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) 66.

Christ, the Sultan argues, using philosophical vocabulary such as 'form' and 'matter', that the verses refer to the souls of just men:

The words which you really believe, namely 'He will remain with the Sun and before the Moon for generations of generations', do not correspond with what you consider as mysteries. And likewise that 'And his name remains before the Sun' does not show necessarily that Christ is God. All these can fit with every righteous person as well, because the soul of anyone of them is immortal and remains with God eternally. There is no need to prove that a soul is immortal, leads an eternal life, and not only do we exist depending on it because it is a form and separable, but also any of human beings is driven by it: All [of us] acknowledge it everywhere. Thus, it remains to prove that the soul has existed prior to the Sun and the Moon, from which you think you have obtained for yourself a valid argument for proving the eternal divinity of Christ. For a double reason it is possible that the soul exists prior to the Sun and the Moon: [firstly] because every soul endowed with reason was produced prior to not only the Sun and the Moon but also all the world which we perceive by sense: it is necessary that separate substances have been produced simultaneously so that they can

share the same class, and have subsisted without needing any matter. In such a way angels were also created before the creation of the sky... The things proper to matter must not happen to what lacks matter [= natural and temporal progress toward perfection]. Therefore, it is necessary that the angels and the universal intellectual world have existed before the perceptible world is born.⁷⁸

Such a philosophical argument developed in a meticulous and organised form suggests the author's intervention or refinement of what Mehmed II said in the real sessions to make his image conform to Amiroutzes' ideal in this dialogue with a fictional character. In addition, the Sultan in the work is imbued with philosophy in terms of his view of the priority of the criteria for judging what is truthful as well as the method by which he constructs his arguments:

If the [miracles] of your nation and things similar to them are demonstrated not by widely recognised principles, but by respectively presupposed particularities, on what agreement do we know that they are true or fictive: for pagans, Jews, Christians and Arabs can respectively demonstrate what they admit according to

⁷⁸ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) pp. 168-170.

the belief of their religions, based on the things which they once presupposed for them? In this manner it could come about that all opinions of every sect are true⁷⁹

In this remark, not only does the Sultan avoid explaining miracles relying on Allah for example, but also he seems to value the discussion on a philosophical basis as more preferable than the discussion based on theological argumentations.

In concert with this image of the Sultan, the Christian philosopher in the dialogue agrees to use philosophical arguments in the discussion. In discussing the Holy Trinity, for example, at the beginning he reluctantly admits the necessity to resort to ‘common principles’, but maintains the stance that they are insufficient to reveal the transcendent nature of God.

Since we are accused of serious crimes in this name of the Trinity, we say that it is necessary for us to address the problem from natural reason firstly, because we do not have other common principles which we could utilise. Yet any natural reason is not the one which would be convenient for this [= divine] matter and could reach it: nature is placed far below and the remotest from the divine essence, and reason

⁷⁹ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 100.

derived from this nature cannot attain to such a sublime vertex.⁸⁰

However, he ends up explaining the Trinity by analogy with a human soul and making an excuse for that:

This is the Trinity in which we believe. And these three persons are one God, because their substance is one in number. We call those properties three not according to the essence but those bringing forth the nature of the very thing. It is not surprising if these things are demonstrated by physical reasons as well. In everything there is a sort of simulacrum of the first principle, some of which are greater while others are smaller. Thus, there is nothing in which some similarity to the Trinity is not distinguished.⁸¹

Here the philosopher seems to concede to the other interlocutor who has a different religious background by choosing the explanation using common notions over theologically accurate explication.

The features of the religious dialogue of Amiroutzes can be seen as a mixture of

⁸⁰ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 194.

⁸¹ Argyriou & Lagarrigue (1987) p. 210.

reflection of his own experience in the actual discussions with Mehmed II and his ideal of a dialogue with a Muslim ruler, who is a philosopher ruler not relying on religious dogma but rather on the principles of philosophy. What can be concluded from the analysis of this dialogical work is that Amiroutzes recognised the value of Greek culture which not only equipped him with a cultural prestige but also gave him the means for asserting his own religious position to Muslims without danger. Although he expressed in the prologue the fear that the Greeks will cease to be Greeks after losing their culture, he still tried to show Greek intellectuals the importance of preserving the significance of Greek culture as a tool for smoothing communication with Muslims.

When we compare Amiroutzes' dialogue with Manuel Palaiologos' Dialogues treated in the previous chapter, it can be said that both works have a common trait in that they adopted rational argumentation as a utilitarian tool for communication with Muslims. However, they differ in the final objectives of its use. In Manuel's work, it was used to persuade the Mouteritzes to convert to Christianity and the superiority of faith to rational arguments was steadfastly maintained. On the other hand, Amiroutzes' work uses Greek philosophy to avoid the danger of criticising Islam and to defend the stance of Christians in the religious discussion with Muslims. Surely, this change in the ideals of desirable relationships with Muslims which can be seen in the use of the

philosophical arguments reflects the difference of the periods and the situations under which the authors lived.

Chapter 3

Gennadios Scholarios:

Questions and Answers about the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ

Gennadios Scholarios, toward the end of his career, left a short record of his dialogue with Muslim local elites on Christianity, which is entitled ‘Questions and answers about the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ’. Although it is difficult to trace how images of the interlocutors are represented in this *erotapokrisis* in which each question and answer has a more or less synoptic character, still through this work we can catch a glimpse of his stance with regard to the discussion with Muslims and the use of philosophical knowledge for the discussion.

Gennadios Scholarios, the first patriarch of Constantinople after the conquest of the city by the Ottomans, was born by the name of George in Constantinople around 1400.⁸² He studied under scholars who were renowned at that time and his acquisition

⁸² For biographical information on Gennadios Scholarios, see: C. Turner ‘The Career of

of Latin resulted in his devotion to the study of Latin theologians such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, whose works he later translated into Greek and annotated.

Around 1430 he opened a private school in Constantinople where it is said that he taught grammar, rhetoric, logic, philosophy and Latin, while fulfilling his duty as a judge of the imperial capital. He accompanied the emperor John VIII as a lay counsellor at the council of Ferrara – Florence in 1438-9 and supported the union between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church. After returning to Constantinople, he seems to have become gradually inclined to the stance of anti-union, which was made evident when he succeeded to the role of the leader of the anti-unionists taking over from Mark Eugenikos on his deathbed. George Scholarios, after having retired from all offices following the death of John VIII (1448), became a monk and took the name of Gennadios.

At the fall of Constantinople, Gennadios was captured and then taken to Edirne. He was soon liberated, probably by the aid of Greek officials or merchants⁸³ and acceded to the patriarchal throne at the beginning of the next year. During his

George-Gennadius Scholarius' *Byzantion* 39 (1969) pp420-55; M. Blanchet, *Geroges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400- vers 1472)* (Paris, 2008) especially pp.15-16.

⁸³ A letter written by Nikolas Isidoros, a 'krites' of the sultan suggests that he financially supported a monastery in Constantinople where Gennadios was staying after his return to the city in the latter half of 1453. See: J. Darrouzès, 'Lettres de 1453' *Revue des études byzantines* 22 (1964) pp. 100-102, 121-123; Blanchet, 2008: pp. 74-75.

patriarchate which lasted about two years, he discussed Christianity with the sultan Mehmed II and this event caused him to compose some apologetic works explaining Christian doctrines. After the retirement from the patriarchate, he mainly lived in the John Prodromos monastery at the Mount Menoikeion in Macedonia, occasionally visiting Mount Athos and Constantinople when he was summoned to settle turmoil in the Patriarchate.⁸⁴ The date of his death is unknown, but probably not long after 1472.

According to Gennadios' writing which we treat in this chapter, the dialogue, or rather, question and answer session was triggered by an abrupt visit of a soldier with a written order to his cell: Gennadios was taken by him to Serres at first, then to a residence where two Muslim local elites were waiting for him to ask about the issue of the divinity of Christ in the Christian faith. He seems to have responded well to their questions, and finally was freed from this session, the record of which he wrote probably a few months later⁸⁵ in a simple form of alternating their questions and his answers

⁸⁴ It has been said that Gennadios became the patriarch of Constantinople three times, on the basis of his notes on margins of his manuscripts, but Blanchet denies it by arguing that what is meant by the word 'anodos' in these notes is not 'ascension to the patriarchal throne' but merely 'journey to the imperial city'. See: M. Blanchet 'Georges Gennadios Scholarios: A-t-il été trois fois Patriarche de Constantinople?' *Byzantion* 71 (2001) pp60-72; Blanchet, 2008: pp. 212-215.

⁸⁵ From the introduction to the text, it is known that the question-answer session took

with a brief explanation of the situation of the session at the beginning of the text. This discussion is thought to have taken place in 1470 on the basis of the indiction added to the margins of the extant manuscripts and mention in the work to his previous anti-Judaic work known to have been composed in the mid- 1460s.⁸⁶ The concrete information on when, where and how the discussion happened provided by the text as well as the aforementioned form of the work as an *erotapokrisis* strongly suggest that the work is a memorandum of the actual discussion rather than a fictional dialogue aiming at literary elaboration and meticulous treatment of topics.

In addressing the issue of interreligious discussion appearing in Gennadios' work, the first point which we should bear in mind is that the author certainly recognised that discussion with non-Christians on the Christian doctrines requires a way of explanation which is from that used in the discussion among Christians. He thought that this was possible through logical explanations of them:

When we look at ourselves or discuss God with coreligionists, we do not have any need of logic and proofs about the divinity of Christ and this is a presupposition for

place in May and the text was composed at the end of the same indiction. See: L. Petit, X. Sideridès, M. Jugie (eds.) *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios* (Paris, 1928, 1935, 1936) (hereafter abbreviated as 'Scholarios'), vol. 3, p. 458.

⁸⁶ Scholarios, vol. 3, pp. 458, 470.

us as the truest doctrine... To those who have opposite doctrines and therefore dispute with us, we can respond by the power of truth and give the logic and causes of this doctrine.⁸⁷

His consciousness of the difference in the appropriate manner of the explanation for Christianity according to the religions in which the interlocutors believe seems to be confirmed by his thanks to Christ inserted at the end of the work:

In this way I was liberated by the mercy of our Lord Christ who enlightened my heart so that I can state more divine and elevated things to those in the family of the faith and bring what is simpler and easier to accept to those yet uninitiated.⁸⁸

Judging from the above two citations, it is implied that the explanation for non-Christians using the 'logic and causes' is possibly regarded as less elevated than the explanation based on the shared faith. Indeed, Gennadios places the basis of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ on belief, especially the belief in the apostles or saints

⁸⁷ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 459.

⁸⁸ Scholarios, vol. 3 p. 475.

to whom the divine mystery was exclusively revealed, because the observation of phenomenal things is not reliable and divine matters are beyond human reason and logic:

And no matter how many of phenomenal and perceptible things we can approach, when we think that we possess truth about them only by [our] senses, we are deceived. By believing wise people teaching us, we can know the truth hidden by them [= senses]. While many judge by [their] senses that the Sun is a foot long, those trusting wise people believe that it is equal to or several times larger than the Earth... Then belief is even more necessary for divine things, not only is it unnoticed by the senses but also transcends human reason and logic, ...and those made wise by divine wisdom knew the truth about divine things, as much as it could be known then. God revealed it to them because of the excellent virtue and piety in them... The true doctrines about God and divine things prevailed and increased through true belief in teachers by sensible listeners, and the belief in such people was truly the belief in God: for they did not find [the truth] originally,

but taught and legislated inspired by God, and they were worth trusting because of their genuine virtue and great piety.⁸⁹

Certainly Gennadios' statement above does not mean that he renounces logical or philosophical arguments in explaining Christian faith. The above argument itself may be seen as a logical one in which the author tried to clarify the reason inherent in the matter 'transcending human reason and logic' as much as he could toward the non-Christians. Gennadios develops a more detailed and philosophical discussion with 'the younger and more learned'⁹⁰ of the two Muslim local elites when he interrupted the conversation between Gennadios and the other older Muslim who had been asking more general questions such as: 'In the true Gospel being unforged as you say, where is it written that Christ is the Son of God? And where God?';⁹¹ 'Why do you not value the prophecy of Moses? ...You say that Christ is God, but Moses says he will come as a prophet, neither as the Son of God or God':⁹²

⁸⁹ Scholarios, vol. 3, pp. 459-461.

⁹⁰ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 458.

⁹¹ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 461.

⁹² Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 468.

The younger Muslim: 'How can you say that God is infinite? Infinity is quantitative. And quantity is accidental. But God is not accidental'

Gennadios: 'Certainly God is precisely infinite, while quantity is not precisely so.

For the quantity is said to be infinite only according to potentiality, which can be increased to infinity like a number and divided into infinity such as a continuum, namely so that it has potential to be increased or divided to infinity, even if none can increase the number or divide the continuum to infinity according to actuality.

God is, on the other hand, infinite by actuality, so to speak, by essence, presence and power'⁹³

The distinction between 'potentiality' and 'actuality' is Aristotelian, and more directly seems to derive from the Scholastic tradition which Gennadios learned in his youth. In the discussion with this Muslim intellectual, in response to his argument denying the compatibility of the two natures of Christ he supports the co-existence of the divinity and the humanity in Christ by making an analogy to the relationship between a soul and a body for a human being:

⁹³ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 471.

You endanger an issue of human beings by your brightness. It is clear that a man consists of a soul and a body. The soul is immaterial, incorporeal, simple and rational, and thus separate from the body and immortal. The body, on the other hand, is complex and material and thus mortal. So the soul is transformed into the body or the body into the soul, or both fuse with one another. However, this is obviously impossible... the soul and the body are united in a person and the one person consists of both. And such union is called hypostatic or individual: the soul and the body are combined to be one hypostasis and one individual without transformation, and the soul has command of the body as a form and a mover while the body has relationship with the soul as a matter and an organ. Then why should a contradiction arise about our Lord Christ, in which the divine nature and the human nature were united...?⁹⁴

This way of explaining a divine matter by the analogy of a temporal phenomenon can be recognised as adopting an argument using ‘what is simpler and easier to accept to those yet uninitiated’ in the aforementioned citation. Although the scholastic argumentation is not exclusively for the persuasion of infidels but an important road

⁹⁴ Scholarios, vol. 3, pp. 472-3.

through reason to the truth for Christians as well, the text shows that the arguments using philosophical concepts were actually useful for smoother and more constructive discussion with Muslims on the condition that they were equipped with such knowledge. Indeed, the communication with the younger interlocutor was more successful at least for the modern reader's eye in comparison with that with the older Muslim, whom Gennadios attempted to overwhelm by a plethora of biblical citations and historical proofs supporting his arguments.⁹⁵

From the present concise record of the dialogue, it is not easy to draw the exact attitude of Gennadios toward arguments using philosophical knowledge. As mentioned above, Gennadios keeps the stance that the best way to attain the truth of Christianity is faith, and explanations resorting to philosophical argumentation (especially analogy to temporal phenomena) are used for the comprehension of non-Christians. Yet one may be able to surmise that the use of philosophy is not a mere second best way to persuade non-Christians, for Gennadios mentions ancient Greeks and Romans in the writing. He says that 'whereas [the advent of Christ as the Son of God] was clarified to Jews who had been pious until then through divine and holy prophecies, it was clarified to polytheists all over the world and especially Greeks and Romans who exceeded all the

⁹⁵ For example, see Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 462 and pp. 464-7.

others in wisdom and other power through oracles⁹⁶ and ‘on behalf of Jews, polytheists and idolaters everywhere received the preaching of the truth, and the wiser people of the polytheists all over the world were the first who joined the preaching’.⁹⁷ According to this perspective, the ancient Greeks and Romans were given as positive and important a role as Hebrews in the divine plan of salvation because the former contributed to the initial phase of the expansion of Christianity by their wisdom. In this respect, ancient philosophy as the symbol of their intellectual excellence is not completely alien to the truth revealed by God.⁹⁸ Therefore, it can be suggested that Gennadios considered philosophical arguments not simply as a practical but inferior way to facilitate communication with Muslim intellectuals when discussing the doctrines of Christianity, but as a desirable manner to reveal religious truth to the infidels whom Christians needed to persuade by ‘logic and causes’.

As for the mode of relationship between Gennadios and the Muslim local elites in the text, the following two points can be pointed out. Firstly, Gennadios does not avoid the declaration that the discourses about Christ in Islam are inferior to those in

⁹⁶ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 467.

⁹⁷ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 465.

⁹⁸ Gennadios’ more evident opinions in the same vein can be found in ‘the unique road to salvation’, an apologetic work which he composed during a series of discussions with the sultan Mehmed II on Christianity. In this work, he argues that not only did more rational people than Jews contribute to the first phase of expansion of Christianity, but also ancient Greeks had a sort of prototype of the doctrine of the Trinity, and Greek philosophy stemmed from the Law of Moses. See Scholarios, vol. 3, pp. 440, 443, 450.

Christianity, although this blunt tone is attenuated by the additional remark that Muslims have some good notions about Christ and in this respect they are superior to Judaic people.⁹⁹ Secondly, he mentions seemingly with pride his experience of a series of discussions about Christian doctrines held at the Ottoman court in which he satisfied the audience by his extensive explanations¹⁰⁰ and this reference finally resulted in his liberation on the condition that he will send to the Muslim interlocutors the apologetic work which he composed on the occasion of the dialogue at the court. Probably Gennadios knew the effect of mentioning his ‘prestigious’ achievement, and his experience of getting through the previous dialogue seems to have made him somewhat assertive in the present question and answer session. The fact that Gennadios could take advantage of the authority emanating from the Ottoman sultan in communication with the Muslims can be interpreted as a symptom of the process in which the status of ex-Byzantines including intellectuals was, however second-rate, being stabilised and integrated into the social hierarchy of the Ottoman Empire.

⁹⁹ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 461.

¹⁰⁰ Scholarios, vol. 3, p. 468, 475.

Conclusion

This dissertation has analysed three religious dialogues with Muslims written by Byzantine literati who had actual intellectual communications with Muslims in the critical socio-political environment in which the declining Byzantine Empire was finally superseded by the rule of the Ottomans. In response to the new experience of communicating with Muslim intellectuals invested with an air of rising civilisation, the authors attempted to seek an ideal form of relationship between Byzantine and Muslim intellectuals in their writings. As a corollary of religious discussions between those who did not share a common faith and scripture, an important foundation for their communication and relationship was the use of argumentation based on knowledge of secular philosophy or analogy using perceptible things. Although the authors expressed some reluctance to resort to philosophical and rational arguments to explain supernatural concepts and phenomena regarding divinity, they surely recognised the value of such arguments in the discussion with Muslims.

The reason for employing philosophical and rational arguments in religious dialogue varied according to the authors. While the Emperor in the work of Manuel II

Palaiologos uses them to persuade the Muslim interlocutor to accept Christianity, George Amiroutzes and Gennadios Scholarios adopt them to facilitate the understanding of the Muslims about their religious stance. This difference in the purpose influenced the images of the Muslims which the authors represented in the texts. Whereas Manuel represented the Mouteritzes as a studious but intellectually inferior student educated by the Emperor, the Sultan in Amiroutzes' work is represented as a tolerant and intellectual ruler who listens to the opinions of his subject having a different religious background from his. In addition, it should be noted that, in the case of the *erotapokrisis* of Gennadios, the Muslim local elites paid due respect to the author after they realised that he succeeded in the previous discussion about Christianity at the Ottoman court: an effective explanation of the faith of the Byzantine Greeks contributed to securing their status in the Ottoman society.

The change in purpose of using the philosophical and rational arguments partly reflects the fact that Manuel was a Byzantine emperor one of whose missions was to propagate Christianity through his virtues and the other authors were not. Still, this change certainly indicates the demise of the political ideology of Byzantium, without which the ex-Byzantine intellectuals were forced to search for a new ideal with respect to how to communicate and coexist with the Others.

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