

the northern front against Croats, and the fact that Muslims manage the city's three largest enterprises, an example of inter-ethnic peace that is said to have no parallel in today's Bosnia, as evidence of their loyalty and integration.<sup>27</sup> This prime case against Arkan thus may not stand close scrutiny. On the other hand, even if it did, it most certainly would not be easy to tie this to Milosevic and/or the Belgrade government. Arkan has expressed contempt towards both Milosevic and the Yugoslav army; there has been tactical coordination, as noted above, yet his overall record rebuts assertions that he either could be or is controlled by either. Certainly, the contrary case will not be easy to make in a court that is remotely neutral in its deliberations.

This is *not* to say that Arkan's *Tigers* and other irregulars/regulars, like the Serb *Chetniks*, Krijina's *Wolves*, and Croatia's *Ustasha* are not guilty of crimes. Civil wars are not for the squeamish. They spawn hatred, and hatred begets hatred. But well-documented cases, such as that against the *Ustasha* in Vukovar, are rare. Others are going to be far more difficult to prosecute. Certainly, a proper War Crimes Commission will need *far more* resources, in investigative personnel and money, than is presently envisaged. If not done properly, its legacy will itself be a prescription for war—not peace, and certainly not justice. If it cannot be done properly, it best be aborted, now.

### Conclusion

But, finally, if a solution is to be lasting, it must rectify the precipitating tragedy of Western recognition of borders that reflected Nazi and Tito will, not natural or any other kind of justice. The mistake was to recognize the right to independence of one nation within Croat and Bosnian borders with no account of the presence also of others. To expect Croat Serbs to accept Croatia authority was indeed akin to asking Warsaw Ghetto survivors to accept the German flag; it guaranteed conflagration. So also in Bosnia. This was always Serb territory (as recognized by Nazi Germany in the 1941 decree that annexed it to Croatia); even after the war-time decimation, and as late as the 1971 census, Serbs remained Bosnia's largest ethnic group. Titoist relocations and higher Muslim birth rates subsequently brought Muslims to their current position as the numerically somewhat larger ethnic minority, with Croats in third place, at about 17%. Nevertheless, as noted, the remaining Serb population retains title to about 65% of the land, reflecting Muslim urban concentration. If "peace disinherits too many, and/or leaves them in unconnected cantons likely to breed insecurity and paranoia, then it will not last. Terms perceived as punitive and unjust will not last; sooner or later, they provide the banner for the next war.

<sup>27</sup> Bijeljina Interviews; Committee archives.

## Some Unlikely Forerunners of the Greek Revolution\*

NOMIKOS MICHAEL VAPORIS

THE MILITARY EXPLOITS OF SOME OF THE WORTHIES OF THE Greek Revolution such as Karaiskakes, Botsares, Papaphlessas, Kolo-kotrones, Bouboulina, and others have annually been narrated, as have the contributions of notable intellectual and ideological mentors of the Greek people such as Regas Pheraios, Adamantios Koraes, and others like them. Their importance and place in the history of Hellenism are well known and have had a very generous press over the past one hundred and seventy-two odd years.

However, there is an equally important and significant chapter of Greek history and tradition which has been largely neglected or if noted has had a bad press — in part through both ignorance and/or distorted historical perspective.

I refer to the religious forerunners of the Greek Revolution. And for the purpose of this paper to the Hieromonks: Nektarios Terpos,<sup>1</sup> Kosmas Aitolos,<sup>2</sup> and Nikodemos Hagiorites.<sup>3</sup> None of these *kalogeroi*

\* This paper is a revised version of a paper read on the 25th of March at Assumption Church at St. Clair Shores, Michigan, and Hellenic College, and is dedicated to the VERY REV. ILIA KATRE, pastor of St. John the Baptist, Las Vegas, Nevada.

<sup>1</sup> The important study is by George Valetas, *Ὁ ἀρματομένος λόγος. Οἱ ἀντιστατικές διδαχές τοῦ Νεκταρίου Τέρπου βγαλμένες στὰ 1730. Εἰσαγωγή—Ἐκλογές. Μνημεῖα τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς λογοτεχνίας* (Athens, 1971); see also Eulogios Kourilas, "Τρηγόριος Ἀργυροκαστρίτης," *Theologia* 2 (1933) 45-56; and Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ*, 5 vols. (Thessalonike, 1961-1980), 4, 296-302. In English see, N. Michael Vapouris, "A Defender of the Faith: Nektarios Terpos, a Case Study," in Demetrios J. Constantelos (ed.), *Orthodox Theology and Diakonia, Trends and Prospects: Essays in Honor of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Brookline, 1981), pp. 145-54.

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography on Kosmas Aitolos in Greek numbers over two thousand items. The more important studies are: Markos A. Gkiokas, *Ὁ Κοσμάς Αἰτολὸς καὶ ἡ ἐποχὴ του* (Athens, 1972); Sophronios Papakyriakos, *Κοσμάς τοῦ Αἰτολοῦ, ἱερομάρτυρος καὶ ἱσαποστόλου, διδασχά, ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ μαρτύριον* (Athens, 1953); Phanes Michalopoulos, *Κοσμάς ὁ Αἰτολός*

fought in the Greek Revolution, none of them even preached revolution per se, openly or clandestinely as far as we know, nor were they directly connected or associated with those who were to rise up and strike out for the freedom of the Orthodox Christian people. In fact they lived and worked in the previous century. Only the last—Nikodemos the Hagiorites—survived into the nineteenth century, having died in 1809 some twelve years before that fateful year of 1821.

Nonetheless, their contributions were, I believe, as responsible—some would say—for the freedom of the Greek *Genos* as any other contributor or group of contributors to the “Sacred Struggle.” Why I believe this to be so, is the primary subject of my paper.

The eighteenth century was a period filled with rising expectations for the Greek Orthodox people and at the same time one fraught with significant dangers.

The Greeks, because of skills they possessed which the Ottomans lacked or refused to acquire, had infiltrated the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire by gaining entrance to such important positions as Dragoman’s of the Porte (officially, interpreters of the Sultan but actually Under-Secretaries of State), Dragomans of the Fleet, and Rulers of the Romanian Provinces, in addition to many other lesser posts.<sup>4</sup>

(Athens, 1940); Augoustinos K. Kantiotes, *Κοσμάς ὁ Αἰτολός, διδασχὰ καὶ ἀκολουθίαι* (3rd ed., Athens, 1966); and John Menounos, *Κοσμά τοῦ Αἰτολοῦ, διδασχὰ καὶ βιογραφία* (Athens, 1980).

In English, there is: N. M. Vapori, *Father Kosmas the Apostle to the Poor. The Life of St. Kosmas Aitolos, Together with an English Translation of His Teaching and Letters*. Illustrated by Vasilis Laskaris (Brookline, 1977); and Constantine Cavarinos, *St. Cosmas Aitolos* (Belmont, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> On Nikodemos, see Nikodemos Bilalis, *Πρωτότυπος βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου* (5th ed., Athens, 1985); Theokletos Dionysiatis, *Ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης: ὁ βίος καὶ τὰ ἔργα του* (Athens, 1959).

In English, there is *Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain: A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel*. Translation and Foreword by Peter A. Chamberas, Introduction by George S. Bebis, and Preface by Stanley S. Harakas (New York, 1989); N. M. Vapori, “The Price of Faith: Some Reflections on Nikodemos Hagiorites and His Struggle against Islam, Together with a Translation of the ‘Introduction’ to His ‘New Martyrologion,’” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978) 185-215; George S. Bebis, “St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite,” in Nomikos Michael Vapori (ed.), *Post-Byzantine Ecclesiastical Personalities* (Brookline, 1978), pp. 1-17; Constantine Cavarinos, *St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite* (Belmont, 1974). See also Louis Bouyer, *Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality* (New York, 1969), pp. 39-44.

<sup>4</sup> For the history of the Greeks in the Ottoman period, see the masterful work of Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ*. 5 volumes (Thessalonike, 1961-1980). The first two volumes have been translated into English as *Origins of the Greek Nation. The Byzantine Period 1204-1461* (New Brunswick, 1970) and *The Greek Nation 1453-1669. The Cultural and Economic Background of Modern Greek Society* (New Brunswick, 1976); Vasilios Stephanides, *Εκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία* (Athens, 1948).

In English, there is Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge,

As the century progressed a major portion of the commercial and economic activity of the Empire came into Christian and Greek hands. With greater economic resources existing Greek schools were strengthened, new ones were founded, and books doubled in production from the previous century.

At the same time, however, Ottoman losses on the battlefield at the hands of Western powers such as Venice, Poland, Russia, and the Hapsburgs made life increasingly intolerable for Christians within the Empire. The distinction made in previous centuries between “our Christians” and those “foreign devils” ceased to be made. Muslims, especially those who were expelled from former Ottoman territories, were especially hostile to Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire.

The eighteenth century also saw a decrease in the effectiveness of the central Ottoman authority and an increase in the independence and intolerance of the local pasha, *sipahi* (military land owner), *kadi* (or judge), and other Ottoman officials.

Very often we have mass forced conversions immediately following major military confrontations, whether successful or not, on the part of the Ottoman forces. That is, either because of jubilation over some victory or despair because of some defeat, Orthodox Christians were often forced to abandon Christianity for Islam.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted and remembered that no one lost to Orthodox Christianity was ever saved for Hellenism. On the contrary many who lost their Hellenism—that is, for all practical purposes—but retained their Orthodox Christianity were able later to rejoin Hellenism. Hence the importance of the three monks cited earlier as true forerunners of the Greek Revolution.

More important, however, than even the isolated mass conversions—not all, of course, a result of Muslim intolerance, but some even

1968); D. A. Zakynthinos, *The Making of Modern Greece: From Byzantium to Independence*. Trans. K. R. Johnstone (Totowa, 1976); Timothy Ware, *Eustratios Argentis* (Oxford, 1964); Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle, 1977); H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowey, *Islamic Society and the West* (1 vol., 2 parts; London, 1960). See especially Part 2, pp. 207-61; Theodore Papadopoulos, *The History of the Greek People under the Turkish Domination* (Brussels, 1952); and *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* (2 vols., New York/London, 1982), see especially pp. 127-207.

<sup>5</sup> See Vakalopoulos, *Ἱστορία*, pp. 87-92; Ioannes Anastasiou, “Σχεδιάσμα περὶ Νεομαρτύρων,” *Μνήμη 1821* (Thessalonike, 1971), pp. 7-61; Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 50-55. For earlier centuries, see especially Speros Vryonis, “Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans, 14th-16th Centuries,” in H. Birbaum and S. Vryonis (eds.), *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change* (The Hague and Paris, 1972), pp. 151-76; and Halil Inalcik, “The Ottoman Decline and Its Effects Upon the Raya,” *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change*, pp. 345-71.

due to the intolerance and narrow vision of lay leaders and clerics of the Church—were the subtle, sustained, and ever-present social and economic pressures which often led to conversions.

By law Christians were permitted freedom of worship as long as this worship was carried out inoffensively and in a somewhat low-key fashion. By tradition, the only time Christians were permitted “to blow off steam,” as it were, was during a three-day period beginning with Easter when Christians were not locked in by the closing of the city gates and were free to do pretty much as they pleased (within limits, of course). This, by the way, is the origin of the shooting of fireworks and commotion one witnesses in Greece at the moment of the Resurrection.

However, as is well known, there is often quite a difference between freedom permitted by law—on paper—and its actual exercise. A quick look at the former Soviet and Turkish constitutions, and their actual implementation as they relate to the religious freedom of Orthodox people in those lands, is sufficient to illustrate this point.

Muslims considered it an act of great merit and piety to affect a conversion, particularly of someone of outstanding physical and mental characteristics. The joy was even greater if the proselyte was especially gifted or a clergyman. Hence the continuous pressure for conversion. The greatest pressure however was due to the everyday living conditions, in the struggle engaged in by most rural folk to survive not only the uncertainties of weather, the greed of the landowner, but also the discrimination which was exercised regularly and consistently by the onerous taxes required of Christians because they *were* Christians.

This was very clearly perceived by all of our Forerunners. In fact, Nektarios Terpos characterizes it as satanic and diabolical and relates a story which he believes explained the origin of this policy of indirect harassment and continuous pressures for conversion to Islam. The devil, he says, was lamenting over the fact that he had not been very successful in his efforts to draw people away from Christ. So he wondered what to do.

At that moment he was approached by Satan, who after finding out what the trouble was, said to the devil: “Stop, brother, don’t lament, for in heaven they rejoice over our bitterness. I know a way and a method which has not appeared since the creation of heaven and earth.”<sup>6</sup>

Anxious to be enlightened, the devil inquired: “Tell me how, O most-evil brother.”<sup>7</sup>

Satan then proceeded to tell him of a man named Mohammed who lived in Arabia—a person filled with diabolical craftiness who would become the perfect instrument for the deception of Christians.

<sup>6</sup> Valetas. p. 104.

Grateful for the solution to his problem, the devil immediately took off for Arabia and entered into the mind of Mohammed—whom Nektarios considers, together with Ali, Mohammed’s son-in-law, the Anti-Christ.

And so the devil said to Mohammed:

My most genuine son, Mohammed, govern yourself and your people with great knowledge and craftiness so that you can deceive the Christians and bring them to your will. But don’t do it like other rulers, that is, convert Christians by force because these Christians are well attached to Christ. . . . Let them have their churches, their patriarchs, metropolitans (bishops), abbots, and elders. Let them chant as they please.

Except, do what I am going to tell you. Cause them to fall into debt and pay you taxes from month to month and year to year. Because of their love for Christ they will give you all of their money. Later they will sell their silver and brass. In the end, having nothing else, they will sell their fields and vineyards and they will become destitute. Then, nilly willy, they will themselves deny Christ, become Turks [Muslims] and join your religion, and come into our service. In this way we can both have glory and honor.<sup>8</sup>

The story is obviously apocryphal but the reality it represents was not.

The task before the three Forerunners then was how to stem the tide of conversions; how to safeguard the Christian Orthodox flock; how to keep people from being lost to Christianity, people who in so many areas were under continuous pressures to do so. Each of the Forerunners confronted the situation in his own way.

Chronologically the story begins with Nektarios Terpos who was born in Moschopolis (Voskopoj, Albania), a once flourishing center of Hellenism. We know neither the year of his birth nor that of his death. We do, however, know that he was active in the first part of the eighteenth century, for his book entitled *Faith* was first published in 1732 in Venice after he left the Ottoman Empire. This book went through at least nine editions in the seven years preceding the outbreak of the Greek Revolution. It was a text, then, that was read widely, for it was a revolutionary text, one calling for open resistance to the claims, attractions, and pressures of Islam.

Before being written, however, Terpos preached much of its contents to public audiences in churches—as well as in private. He personally gives us the reason for writing his book, which also sums up the purpose of his entire ministry.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp. 104-05.



I did not write this small book called *Faith* for the wise and educated people but for the uneducated and the villagers. Because in these parts of Turkey there are Christians, many of whom have been misled and are being misled because of some financial need and the poll-tax. And they, alas, deny Christ and surrender themselves into the hands of the devil.<sup>9</sup>

Terpos' method is to openly attack the Muslim religion at its very source—the Prophet Mohammed. He is, according to Terpos, the Anti-Christ, a liar, a deceiver, and a fraud.

Basing himself on the Scriptures, he preached the divinity of Jesus Christ whose word and life produced, and in his day continued to produce, a host of witnesses to that truth. Nektarios recalled an army of new martyrs—men and women, who voluntarily exchanged their earthly life, fully confident in the promises of Christ. He then contrasted this with Mohammed's earthly origin and the result of Mohammed's preaching: murder and killings, gluttony and sexual license, a preacher of transitory ideals in contrast to Christ's eternal spiritual virtues.

"Who in all the world," he rhetorically asks, "ever heard of a Saint with sword in hand forcing people to accept his teaching?"<sup>10</sup>

He criticized the double standard among Muslims which did not permit women to even attend the mosques; the Muslim practice of complete abstinence during the day during Ramadan and the total license exercised at night, and their use and misuse of women in the exercise of polygamous practices.

Islam, then, was to be rejected as a false religion, based on a deceiver whose message spelled spiritual death. On the contrary, only the Orthodox Christian faith was true. "Therefore," he goes on to say, "I beg you, fellow Christians, to believe in Christ with a pure heart, without any doubt whatsoever, as the holy Fathers of our Church teach."<sup>11</sup>

But the Muslim Turks are not the only ones who were applying pressure and had to be dealt with. Nektarios bitterly reproved wives who were in his words "thrice-accursed and anathematized" who say to their husbands: "Husband, become a Turk for we can't pay the poll tax."

And there were aunts and nieces of the devil, who said, "Give the child a Turkish name so that he won't pay the poll tax, for we can't continue to feed the Turks."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 54; see also p. 37.

Nektarios responded by shouting vehemently, "Don't be deceived for two silver coins. O daughter of Satan, why do you damn yourself together with your children? Don't do it, and you will have the blessings of Christ and the Virgin Mary."<sup>13</sup>

The threat of conversion was to be met by steadfastness and open confession. Terpos found no merit in Crypto-Christianity, that is, in the practice adopted by some Christians of appearing to be Muslims in public and Christians in private.

These people would often give their children two names: a Christian and a Muslim one. They would attend the mosque in the daytime and arrange for private Christian services at night. They would be buried according to Muslim ritual, then would be dug up secretly and be brought to church to have a Christian burial service read.

Terpos insisted that this was unacceptable and in this, history has proven him absolutely correct. He knew that in the end, with time and because of social pressures, Christianity would lose out among Crypto-Christians. Therefore, this double life led to losses and destruction of the Orthodox Christian community and was contrary to the Gospel where Christ says, "Whoever will deny me before men, I also will deny."<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that Nektarios Terpos was not an arm-chair general. He openly preached his defiance and paid for it dearly. He recounts one incident when he paid dearly for opposition to conversion to Islam.

Last year, on December 25, 1724, I went to the village of Tragoti in the province of Elbasan. Entering the church of Christ, I found the priest with a congregation of about one hundred and twenty women and fifteen men. I had asked earlier and I was told that the remaining men (alas!) had all become Muslims. I preached to them whatever God inspired me.

Later two Muslim brothers, who were policemen, learned that I preached, confessing Christ as true God, the Theotokos as mother and virgin, and Mohammed as liar, deceiver, and the first disciple of the Anti-Christ. They came and found me at the house of the priest. Each of them had a short stick and hit me with it mercilessly. . . . They hit all parts of my body. Some places became red but in most places I became black and blue. By applying cupping

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 54-55.

<sup>14</sup> See Stavro Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity among the Balkan People under the Ottomans," *Actes du Premier Congrès International des Études Balkaniques et Sud-Est Européennes* 3 (1969) 563-65 and "Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans," *Slavic Review* 26 (1967) 227-46; Eleutherios Nikolaides, *Oi Kruptoxristianoï tēs Endathēs* (Ioannina, 1979).

glasses (*ventouzes*), poultrices, and by the grace of Christ, I was healed. But my left arm remained damaged, and I can never rest on that side.<sup>15</sup>

The beating was done in public and though, as he says, the deacon of the church Nikephoros wished to come to his aid, but the deacon's wife and some of the other women prevented him. The deacon was forced to stand at a distance where we wept. Terpos thought the women did right because their action prevented further trouble.

"I don't relate this," he went on to say, "to praise myself, but so some others will gain courage and patience in sorrow. Many friends of mine, lovers of Christ, asked to take revenge on them, but I refused so I would gain some spiritual merit."<sup>16</sup>

Nektarios believed that Christians, who were finding it difficult to pay their taxes and therefore were tempted to convert, could ease their anguish and pain by practicing a little frugality.

"I shall show you," he said, "a way to pay your poll tax with ease and not become a Turk, an apostate from God, and a foreigner to Christ's holy Church. 'First,' he counsels: 'work harder and earn more. Second, cut down on your consumption of food and drink. Third, do with less expensive clothing and cut out frills which serve no purpose.'"<sup>17</sup>

He went on to advise them to prefer exile to apostasy, poverty to Islam—to be patient and endure, for in the end they would be rewarded, they would hear the words of Christ saying: "He who believes in me will live though he die."<sup>18</sup>

"So leave, man," he advises, "as far as your eyes take you. Cross the wide sea, go to foreign lands and other kingdoms, but don't become a Turk. Stand bravely in the faith of Christ regardless of what befalls you, or what tortures or losses you incur, or whether they strip you of your possessions, or torture you for some small reason. Shout with a great voice—like Paul: 'Who can separate me from the love of Christ?' "<sup>19</sup>

Love of Christ and love of God are two of the major themes in the preaching of our next Forerunner, Saint Kosmas Aitolos, also called a "Teacher of the Greek Nation" (*Didaskolos tou Genous*), "Equal to the Apostles," and simply "Father Kosmas, the Apostle of the Poor,"

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. p. 58.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. pp. 49-50.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. p. 51.

which I have adopted for my book on this most extraordinary monk.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Nektarios Terpos about whom we know very little concerning his person, life and appearance—perhaps because he left the scene of his work after a relatively short time, and only permitted his book *Faith* to speak for him, we happily know much more about Father Kosmas.

As his name indicates, Kosmas was born in Aitolia in a village called Mega Dendro in 1714 of parents who hailed from Epeiros. He received little or no formal education until age twenty when he was captivated by the beauty and the call of the Gospel, which he could not understand well. He spent the next fifteen years studying, teaching, and preaching as a layman, finally ending up in the Theological Academy founded on Mount Athos in the monastery of the Great Laura.

When that very promising but short-lived school closed, Kostas, as he was then called, chose to remain and become a monk, and later a priest. Much later, he received what he considered to be another calling. He felt the very strong need to leave the quiet of the monastery and enter the "world" and serve his fellow Orthodox Christians.

"Studying the holy and sacred Gospel," he said, "I found in it many and different teachings which are all pearls, diamonds, treasures, riches, joy, gladness—eternal life. Among the other things I also found this teaching which Christ says to us: 'No Christian, man or woman, should be concerned only with himself, how he can be saved, but must be concerned also with his brethren so that they may not fall into sin.' "<sup>21</sup>

After receiving official permission from Patriarch Sophronios II (1775-1780), Father Kosmas spent the next nineteen years wandering about a significant part of the Ottoman Empire in Europe—covering much the same ground that Nektarios Terpos did—but going far beyond. He traveled from central Albania down to the Gulf of Patras, from the Ionian Islands to Constantinople, and from there south to the islands of the Aegean in three truly "apostolic" journeys.

In some places Kosmas' coming was looked upon as the dawn of a new age. In a book written almost one hundred years ago (*Historia tes nesou Kephallenias*),<sup>22</sup> Kostas Loverdos gives us an account of one of his visitations:

The Anchorite and hieromonk Kosmas arrived in Kephallenia in 1777. Initially, he preached in the rural areas and then in the city, being followed by thousands of inhabitants of every class and sex.

<sup>20</sup>(Brookline, 1977).

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. pp. 15-16.

<sup>22</sup>(Kephallenia, 1888).



The austerity of his character, the evangelical simplicity of his words, and the power of his arguments brought about such a transformation of life that families that were enemies were seen living together as brothers, having exchanged the kiss of peace and asking forgiveness of each other. Men who had committed serious crimes were seen crying bitterly over their sins. Broken marriages of long standing were restored again. Prostitutes abandoned their shameful work and returned filled with repentance and prudence. Rich upper-class young ladies gave away their valuable jewelry to the poor or to churches. Court trials ceased. Stolen articles were returned. Insults were forgiven. Depraved men took up the monastic habit and followed the preacher. In a few words: the appearance of the island was transformed.<sup>23</sup>

Father Kosmas made two great sacrifices. The greatest took place on 24 August 1779, when he was hanged by the Ottoman authorities, being falsely accused of being among other things, a Russian spy. In reality he had gotten too many people nervous and angry: the Turks, because of the enormous crowds that followed him which might, they thought, be incited to revolution (this was within the decade of the so-called Orlov Rising in the Peloponnesos); some members of the Greek establishment, because he insisted on fair taxation, fair weights, and in general, honesty in all commercial transactions; and some Jews who felt threatened by Father Kosmas because he insisted that bazaars not be held on the Christian Sabbath, but on Saturdays.

Kosmas' other sacrifice lay in that he did what he believed was wrong for himself and contrary to his vocation. He strongly believed a monk could only be saved personally if he remained in a monastery.

A monk, he said, can't be saved in any other way except to escape far from the world. But you may say, you, too, are a monk. Why are you involved in the world?

I, too, my brethren, [he replied to his own question] do wrong. But because our race (*genos*) has fallen into ignorance, I said to myself, 'Let Christ lose me, one sheep, and let him win the others.' Perhaps God's compassion and your prayers will save me too.<sup>24</sup>

Saint Kosmas also believed education was the indispensable prerequisite for every Orthodox Christian. Education enabled him first to be a human being (*anthropos*), then to become a knowledgeable

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. pp. 171-72.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. p. 111.

Christian and thus better able to cope with "the Anti-Christ who stands over our heads"; this is how he often refers to the Turks.<sup>25</sup>

Though he considered the Turks enemies of the Christian people, there was no hate in Father Kosmas' heart. Instead he said, and I quote again, "It is sad for me to say this to you but the Anti-Christ (the other he considered to be the Pope of Rome) are lost as they stand now. We fast, they indulge in gluttony; we practice virginity, they fornicate; we are just, they are unjust."<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, he said, in a different context: "Brethren, whoever has wronged any Christian, Jew, or Turk, return what you have taken unjustly because it is cursed and you will never get ahead."<sup>27</sup>

One of Father Kosmas' greatest contributions was in the area of education. He personally was responsible for establishing ten Greek or high schools, in addition to two hundred grammar schools, because as he says, "our faith wasn't established by ignorant saints, but by wise and educated saints who interpreted the holy scriptures accurately and who enlightened us sufficiently by inspired teachings."<sup>28</sup>

The Christian nation (*Genos*) could only be saved through enlightenment: "Schools enlighten people. They open the eyes of the pious and Orthodox Christians to learn the sacraments. . . . Schools lead to the monastery [that is], to educated monks who become teachers of the people."<sup>29</sup>

It was Father Kosmas' belief that schools where the Orthodox faith would be taught would be able to stem the tide toward Islam. "So my children," he advised the people of the town of Parga, "safeguard your faith and the freedom of your homeland. Take care to establish without fail a Greek School."<sup>30</sup>

In another place Kosmas said, "My beloved children, bravely and fearlessly preserve our holy faith and language of our Fathers because both of these characterize our most beloved homeland, and without them our nation is destroyed."<sup>31</sup>

The romance between Father Kosmas and the people he served did not end with his martyrdom. It continued after his death, for thousands of people were convinced that he was a saint and honored him as such. The romance continues to this day.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. pp. 71, 77, 92, 113, 126.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. p. 126.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. p. 63.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. p. 145; cf. p. 126.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. p. 91.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>32</sup>Interestingly the first church built commemorating Kosmas was ordered to be built

Unlike Terpos and Kosmas, Nikodemos Hagiorites did not suffer martyrdom nor any serious physical discomfort for his teaching of the Faith, although he was forced to leave Mount Athos. But this was due to the so-called Kollyvades controversy, a controversy basically over the direction and orientation of Orthodoxy.<sup>33</sup> But his mental and spiritual anguish was great, for he perceived that unless Orthodox Christians became knowledgeable about their faith, unless they knew its history—not only its past history—but especially its contemporary history, they would be lost in large numbers to Islam.

Nikodemos thus set out to be, and indeed he became, one of the most prolific of all Orthodox writers, producing some twenty-six major works plus eighty-two briefer treatises.<sup>34</sup> In addition, he led the way to the revival of the Hesychast tradition, of the practice of the Jesus Prayer, and in general of the need to go back to the spiritual Fathers of the Orthodox Church, whose message, because it is based on the Scriptures, was timeless and applicable in every age and generation.

Nikodemos was born in 1749 on the island of Naxos. He studied locally under his brother Chrysanthos, an eminent teacher in his own right, then in Smyrna at the Evangelike School, and finally on Mount Athos where he put in practice all that he had learned. Later, although much later, he, too, was placed among the saints of our Church (1953).

One of Nikodemos' first major works was his book entitled *Neo Martyrologion*, that is, his volume on the lives of the New Martyrs.<sup>35</sup>

Nikodemos, unlike Terpos, did not devote much time in attacking Islam, but like Kosmas his message was almost totally in positive terms.

Stand fast, be patient, take courage, learn the treasures of our Faith. You not only have a Counselor, but so many living contemporary examples of how to endure are Nikodemos' main emphases.

Quoting from the Prophet Sirach, Nikodemos proclaimed:

Woe to them who have lost patience. Because, let us inform you, brethren, that they [that is, the Turks] oppress you with heavy taxation and other evils for no other reason except to cause you to give up and to lose your patience, and in this way to deny your

by Ali Pasha of Ioannina, a Muslim, who believed in Kosmas' holiness. The latter had predicted Ali's rise to high office; See Gkiolas, *Kosmas*, pp. 249-52.

<sup>33</sup>On this issue, see Charilaos Tzogas, *Ἡ περὶ μνημοσύνης ἐρις ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὄρει κατὰ τοῦ Ἡ. αἰῶνα* (Thessalonike, 1969); Konstantinos Papouledes, *Τὸ Κίνημα τῶν Κολλυβάδων* (Athens, 1971). See also my extensive comments and review of Tsongas and Papouledes in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 19 (1972), pp. 203-08.

<sup>34</sup>For a listing of Nikodemos' most important works with extensive comments in George Bebisi's "Introduction," pp. 17-52, in *Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain*.

<sup>35</sup>First published in Venice in 1794 followed by Athens in 1856 and 1861. More recently it has been published under the editorship of P. V. Paschos, Athens, 1961.

own faith and accept theirs. Therefore, my dear brethren, knowing their purpose protect yourselves. Protect yourselves for the love of God and the salvation of your souls. Do not allow them to steal from you the treasures of your holy Faith of which the entire world, with all of its glory, comfort, and kingdoms is not worthy."<sup>36</sup>

Nikodemos was aware of the common complaints, "things are tough now; conditions are different today than they were in the early centuries of the Church." The saints and martyrs in those days were supermen and women.

This type of reasoning is rejected by Nikodemos out of hand. He will parade before his readers an entire army of ordinary men and women, clergymen and laity, most of them in the most common occupations (sailors, gardeners, jewelers, barbers, bread sellers, tailors, etc.) who willingly gave up their lives confessing their Orthodox faith rather than save it by denying it and becoming Muslims. He did this for a number of reasons which I summarize, for he believed that God condescended for these New Martyrs to appear:

- 1) For the renewal of the entire Orthodox Faith;
- 2) so that those who are without faith will have no defense claiming they had no examples before them;
- 3) so that the New Martyrs will be the glory and pride of the Eastern Church and the shame of the heterodox;
- 4) so that the New Martyrs will be an example of patience for all Orthodox Christians being tyrannized under the heavy yoke of enslavement;
- 5) and last, so that the New Martyrs will be the personification of courage and exhortation in order that their martyred end will be imitated by deeds by all Christians who might be forced by circumstances to suffer martyrdom, and especially and particularly by those who earlier came to deny the Orthodox Faith.<sup>37</sup>

The stories of these ordinary folk that Saint Nikodemos narrated are not people who lived once upon a time—but contemporaries of those he was addressing.

Many [he said], present-day Christians number the New Martyrs as friends. They have often eaten and drunk with them, and were present at their martyrdoms. They have divided among themselves

<sup>36</sup>Nikodemos, *Νέον Μαρτυρολόγιον*, p. 15; Vaporis, "Introduction," p. 202.

<sup>37</sup>Nikodemos, *Νέον Μαρτυρολόγιον*, p. 10; Vaporis, "Introduction," p. 134.



their blood-soaked clothes for their sanctification, and continue to hold on to them to the present day as talismans (*phylakta*). Moreover, they have buried their holy relics with their very own hands.<sup>38</sup>

Nikodemos tried to convince his readers that what was required for witnessing the Orthodox faith was not supermen, but only ordinary human beings who, however, had absolute faith in Jesus Christ. With this in hand, ordinary folk could and did endure, and even surpass the old martyrs, for because of Christ they became supermen.

It is true [he says, remembering with Saint Paul], that we Christians were given the grace not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for Christ. Do you see, my beloved [he went on] that the beatings, the imprisonments, the chains, the injuries, the dishonor, the persecutions, the exiles, the plundering of your belongings, and all the other evils which you suffer, are not due to any fault of yours, but only for the faith and name of Christ. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Christians, therefore, must be prepared to suffer anything rather than betray their faith in Christ. Everyone must be ready to become a martyr if the necessity presented itself.

And so [and here I am quoting from Nikodemos again] if sometime the unbelievers envy you, or they slander you, or they force you, or in one way or another they try to induce you to deny Christ and accept their religion, guard yourselves, for the love of Christ who redeemed you with his own blood. Guard yourselves for the most precious salvation of your souls. We say it louder, *guard* yourselves so that you will not deny your Orthodox faith!<sup>40</sup>

Do not allow the efforts and the love of your parents, brethren, relatives, wife, children, and belongings to defeat you. Do not allow the love of mercy, glory, and pleasure of this world to prevent you from walking the blessed road of martyrdom, even for the love of your life. For if you wish to save your life, you will lose it, but if you lose your life for Christ, then you will find it.<sup>41</sup>

The preservation of the religious identity of the Orthodox people

made possible the preservation of their ethnic heritage as well. The Orthodox who were converted to Islam were lost not only to Orthodox Christianity, but to Hellenism as well. Consequently, I believe that these three monks, two of whom are now Saints of the Church: Kosmas Aitolos (August 24), Nikodemos Hagiorites (July 14), and Nektarios Terpos were true Forerunners of the Greek Revolution. Hence it is not strange that Greek Orthodox Christians have combined two annunciations: the "Good News" announced to the Virgin Mary and the "Good News" of the Greek Revolution—the rising for the freedom of an Orthodox Christian people. Moreover, the juxtaposition of two events—the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary and the Greek Revolution, given the above, is more than coincidental. It is well known that the Revolution did not actually begin on the twenty-fifth of March—although very close to it—yet those responsible for initiating its annual commemoration thought it very fitting, indeed, that the new *Evangelismos*, derived in large measure from the first "Good News," should be celebrated on the feast day of the original *Evangelismos*.

<sup>38</sup>Nikodemos, *Néon Marturologíon*, p. 11; Vaporis, "Introduction," p. 195.

<sup>39</sup>Nikodemos, *Néon Marturologíon*, p. 16; Vaporis, "Introduction," p. 203.

<sup>40</sup>Nikodemos, *Néon Marturologíon*, p. 17; Vaporis, "Introduction," p. 205.

<sup>41</sup>Nikodemos, *Néon Marturologíon*, pp. 19-20; Vaporis, "Introduction," p. 208.