

Western Religious Practices in Byzantine Letters: Demetrios Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos, Azymes and Papal Primacy

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1. Introduction; 2. Epistolarity in Byzantium: a very short introduction; 3. Demetrios Chomatenos, metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist; 4. Ioannes Apokaukos, another metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist; 5. Azymes; 6. Papal primacy; 7. Conclusion

I. Introduction

The events of the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204) led to profound changes in the Balkans and Asia Minor. The disintegration of the Byzantine Empire and the establishment of the Latin Empire and Byzantine successor-states created a radically different situation for the Byzantine Church, which, among other challenges, faced Catholic domination and pressure for integration into the Catholic Church in the Latin Empire. The new circumstances fostered animosity against Roman Catholicism in the ranks of the Orthodox clergy, both in the Byzantine successor-states and the Latin Empire.

The spread of attitudes that were strongly hostile to the Catholic faith caused the entrenchment of the division between the two churches and a rise in anti-Catholic polemics. This study will analyse five letters of two influential Byzantine metropolitan archbishops of the early 13th century, Demetrios Chomatenos and Ioannes Apokaukos, on two points of controversy between Catholic and Orthodox theologians of the time. These are the practice of azymes, that is, the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist and the concept

of papal primacy, both of which were accepted by Catholic theology and were fiercely condemned by Orthodox theology then. Following a short introduction to the main characteristics of Byzantine epistolography and a summary of the lives and works of Chomatenos and Apokaukos, the study will discuss two of letters of Chomatenos and one of Apokaukos on azymes, then it will analyse two other ones in which Chomatenos dealt with the subject of papal primacy. Finally, a conclusion will close the analysis.

2. *Epistolarity in Byzantium: a very short introduction*

Epistolography was a peculiar genre of Byzantine literature with strong roots in Classical Antiquity. Gregorios Nazianzenos (ca. 329–390), one of the so-called Cappadocian Fathers proved to be perhaps its most influential theoretician. Gregorios provided a brief and easily understandable guide to letter-writing, aptly doing that in a letter, written with the intent of giving advice to his grand-nephew, Nikoboulos. Gregorios expounded that a letter-writer must keep three very important rules: συντομία (brevity/conciseness), σαφήνεια (clarity), and χάρις (grace).¹ These guidelines proved to be remarkably persistent in their effect: they determined Byzantine letter-writing until the very fall of the Empire and even beyond.²

1 S. *Gregoire de Nazianze. Lettres*, vol 1, P. Galloway (ed.), Budé, Paris 1964-1967, 66-68; see also H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner I. Philosophie–Rhetorik–Epistolographie–Geschichtsschreibung–Geographie*, C. H. Beck, München 1978, 199-200.

2 G.T. Dennis, *The Byzantines as Revealed in Their Letters*, in J. Duffy–J. Peradotto (eds.), *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*. Buffalo, New York, Arethousa 1988, 155-165, esp. 156-159; A. Rhoby, *Aspekte des Fortlebens von Gregory von Nazianz in byzantinischer und postbyzantinischer Zeit*, in M. Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2007, 409-418.

Byzantine epistolography was also characterised by the relative publicity with which letters were created; authors very often wrote their works keeping in mind that their writings had an audience beyond the addressee, both in their own times and in their posteriority, as it was also common in pre-Christian Greco-Roman and early Christian letter-writing.³ It was due to this characteristic that Anthony Littlewood, a scholar of Byzantine epistolography, stressed the nature of Byzantine letters as artistic products, which thereby could be, and should be, examined as literary works. Demonstrations of the erudition of the author in Byzantine letters,⁴ and the representations of the personality of the authors within them proved fruitful paths of research indeed,⁵ just like the research of networks and the representations of friendship,⁶ the patronage networks working behind certain authors,⁷ and the use

- 3 See, for instance R. Gibson, "On the Nature of Ancient Letter Collections", in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 102 (2012), 56-78, 70-77 and L. Hartman, "On Reading Others' Letters", in *Harvard Theological Review* 79/1-3 (1986), 137-146, 137 and 144-145.
- 4 A. Littlewood, *A Statistical Survey of the Incidence of Repeated Quotations in Selected Byzantine Letter-writers*, in J. Duffy – J. Peradotto (eds.), *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*. Arethousa, Buffalo, New York 1988, 137-154.
- 5 A. Littlewood, "An 'Ikon of the Soul': the Byzantine Letter", in *Visible Language* 10 (1976), 197-226.
- 6 M. Mullett, *The Detection of Relationship in Middle Byzantine Literary Texts: The Case of Letters and Letter-Networks*, in Paolo Odorico (ed.), *Épistolographie et la Poésie Épigrammatique. Actes de la 16e Table ronde du XX Congrès international des Études Byzantines. Paris 2001*, Centre d'Études Byzantines, Néo-helléniques et Sud-est Européennes, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris 2003, 63-74; M. Mullett, *Friendship in Byzantium: Genre, Topos and Network*, in J. Haseldine (ed.), *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, Sutton Publishing Limited, Phoenix Mill 1999, 166-184.
- 7 M. Mullett, *Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople*, in M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries. Papers of the Sixteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies (Edinburg, March 1982)*. BAR, Oxford 1984, 173-201.

of traditional literary elements.⁸ These aspects are all intertwined with the distinctively performative nature of Byzantine epistolography⁹, very often counting with an audience considerably wider than the exact addressee, which aspect should be kept in mind when reading Byzantine epistolography.

3. *Demetrios Chomatenos, metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist*

Demetrios Chomatenos was born into a wealthy Byzantine family, date and place unknown. He began an ecclesiastical career early on and was already the *apokrisiarios*¹⁰ delegated by the archbishopric of Ochrid to the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the end of the 12th century. He also held the office of *chartophylax*¹¹ at Ochrid, and, in 1216/17, he was appointed metropolitan archbishop of Ochrid by Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230), the ruler of Epiros.

As the archbishop of this autocephalous see, he was also the head of the Bulgarian Church. As the highest-ranking Orthodox cleric in the State of Epiros, he crowned Theodoros I emperor, which action can

8 M. Mullett, *The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter*, in M. Mullett – R. Scott (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, Centre of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, Birmingham 1979, 75–93.

9 M. Mullett, *Rhetoric, Theory and the Imperative of Performance: Byzantium and Now*, in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium. Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College (University of Oxford, March 2001)*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2003, 151–170.

10 The *apokrisiarios* was the official messenger of a bishop or metropolitan archbishop, applied in the communication of the see with higher authorities. P. Magdalino, *Apokrisiarios*, in A. Kazhdan – A. M. Talbot (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, 136.

11 The *cartophylax* was a Byzantine ecclesiastical official from the 6th century, with important archival and notarial duties. R.J. Macrides, *Cartophylax*, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 415–416.

be dated to 29th May 1227, underlining his ‘quasi-patriarchal’ status in Epiros. After the defeat of Theodoros I in the battle of Klokotnitsa against the Bulgarians in 1230, which resulted in his blinding and dethronement, and in grave territorial losses for Epiros, Chomatenos kept his position, although his influence was diminished. He died in 1236.

Besides his involvement in politics and ecclesiastical governance, Chomatenos was a renowned Orthodox canon jurist of his era. He created a collection of 152 advisory letters, all dealing with the proper solutions of actual cases according to the canon law, known as the *Ponemata diaphora* (including the two letters concerning papal primacy, which are discussed in this study).¹² He was also an author of further letters (including the two letters on *azymes* analysed in this study)¹³ and other minor writings advising others regarding Orthodox canon law and a *vita* of Saint Kliment of Ochrid. These writings, especially the *Ponemata diaphora*, remained influential in the Orthodox Church long after the demise of their author.¹⁴

12 For the analysis of these two letters, the exemplary edition of Prinzing: *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, G. Prinzing (ed.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2002 (Henceforth Prinzing, 2002) was used.

13 Unfortunately, these two letters do not have a modern critical edition. The newest edition of these texts is the one edited by Cardinal Pitra: J. Pitra (ed.), *Analecta sacra e classica spicilegio Solesmensi parata VI, Juris ecclesiastici graecorum*, Paris 1891, 625-630 (Henceforth Pitra, 1891), which was published posthumously, and has its limitations. In this situation, the edition of Cardinal Pitra was used for the aims of this study.

14 On the life and works of Demetrios Chomatenos, see Prinzing, 2002 1-45*; G. Prinzing, “A Quasi Patriarch in the State of Epiros: The Autocephalous Archbishop of „Boulgaria” (Ohrid): Demetrios Chomatenos”, in *Zbornik radova Vizantologog Instituta* 64 (2004), 165-182; A. Laiou, *Contribution à l'étude de l'institution familiale en Épire au XIII^e siècle*, Fontes Minores, Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte VI (1984), 275-323; Diether Simon, “Byzantinische Provinzialjustiz”, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 79 (1986), 310-343.

4. *Ioannes Apokaukos, another metropolitan archbishop and canon jurist*

Ioannes Apokaukos was born around 1155. He studied with the later patriarch of Constantinople in Nicaean exile, Manuel I Sarantenos (1216–1222), then began his ecclesiastic career as a deacon of the metropolitan archbishop of Naupaktos, thus working under his uncle, Konstantinos Manasses. In 1186, he appears as a notary at the side of Patriarch Niketas II Mountanes (1186–1189) and is also mentioned as a notary at the Patriarchate in 1193. He became metropolitan archbishop of Naupaktos around 1199/1200. Under Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas, he was also one of the leading policymakers of the State of Epiros. As 1230 saw the defeat and blinding of his ruler and patron, Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas in the battle of Klokotnica, the influence of Apokaukos waned and in 1232 he retired to become a monk. He died the next year at Kozyle. His legal opinions are considered indispensable sources of law and family in the Byzantine world of his times. He was well-known for his anti-Latin sentiment.¹⁵

5. *Azymes*

The first of the Catholic religious practices mentioned in the letters of Chomatenos analysed by this study is the use of unleavened bread, that is, *azymes*, in the Eucharist. Chomatenos comments on this Catholic practice in his letter addressed to Konstantinos Kabasilas,

15 Ruth J. Macrides, John Apokaukos, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 135; M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, 213-231, 419-425 (Henceforth Angold, 1995); D.M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epirus*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1957, 217-221 (Henceforth Nicol, 1957).

the metropolitan of Dyrrachium (nowadays Durrës, Albania).¹⁶ The opinion of Chomatenos on the validity of the use of azymes is rather clear:

The 70th canon of the Holy Apostles, the 37th and the 38th canon of the Council of Laodicea¹⁷ and the 60th canon of the Council of Carthage¹⁸ remember the Jewish and festive azyma, sent to the believers by heretics and dissuade from the taking of these and from the believers celebrating together with those [the heretics]. Not any canon remembers the Latin azyma anywhere, like the ones above, so it seems that the practice of the azyma has entered the Church of the Romans later.¹⁹

However, he also states that

if somebody claims that the azyma of the Latins are not profane and we [the Orthodox] will not be punished [by God] if we adapt this practice, it will be heard that, as it was told above, that the habit connected to the azyma, came into the Western Churches in conjunction with other

16 Kabasilas was archbishop of Strumica until 1235, when he became metropolitan of Dyrrhachion. He was imprisoned (the exact date of which event is unknown) by Theodoros II Laskaris (1254–1258) because his brother, Ioannes, was a member of the government of the Epirot ruler, Michael II Angelos Komnenos Doukas (1237–1266), and their brother, Theodoros, was a known supporter of Michael II. In 1259, Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–1282) set him free and Kabasilas returned to his metropolitan see of Ochrid, which suggests that he became metropolitan of Ochrid before his imprisonment. E. Trapp – W. Rainer – V. Beyer (eds.), *Prosopographisches Lexikon Der Palaiologenzeit*. CD-ROM Version, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 2001, voice 10097.

17 A. D. 363–364.

18 A. D. 419.

19 “Ο μέν ὁ τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων κανὼν ὁ ὀλζ΄ καὶ ὀλη΄ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ συνόδου, καὶ ὁ ξ΄ τῆς ἐν Καρθαγένῃ, ἀζύμων μέμνηται τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν καὶ ἐορταστικῶν, πεμπομένων τοῖς πιστοῖς παρὰ τῶν αἰρετικῶν καὶ ἀποτρέπουσι καὶ τὸ λαμβάνειν ταῦτα, καὶ τὸ συνεορτάζειν αὐτοῖς τοὺς πιστοῦς. Λατινικῶν δὲ ἀζύμων οὐδεὶς οὐδαμοῦ κανὼν μέμνηται, οἷα ὕστερον, ὡς ἔοικε, τοῦ τῶν ἀζύμων ἔθους ἐν τῇ τῶν Ρωμαίων Ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐπεισκωμάσαντος” Pitra, 1891, 625.

ones [habits], just as the application and worship of the *enzyma* [came into the Church] by us, the transgression of the ancestral habits will be impossible for both sides.²⁰

Chomatenos argues that the use of *azymes* has to be a later development in the Western Churches, as the ancient canons do not mention it as a Christian practice at all but identify it with Judaism. It implicitly suggests that the Orthodox practice is the Ancient Christian and therefore the ‘authentic’ one, while the Catholic practice emulates a Judaist one, constituting an, in fact, heretic behaviour. This establishes a hierarchy between the Catholic and the Orthodox liturgy, clearly favouring the latter. But it also creates a hierarchy between Latins and Byzantines, as the Byzantines are logically adherents of the ‘authentic’, ‘valid’ and ‘truly Christian’ liturgical practice, while the Latins follow an ‘inauthentic’, ‘wrong’ and ‘heretic’ one. These rather clear implications had to be reassuring in the eyes of a theologically literate Byzantine audience.

This part of the representation also shows the influence of Orthodox tradition. Many Orthodox clerics, supposedly including a strong majority of the lower clergy, understood *azymes* as a heresy even before 1204.²¹ It is also important, that the Orthodox Church had a clear tendency to brand any non-Orthodox Christian practice not only a heresy, but also ‘Judaism’, using both terms as tools to invalidate it.²²

20 “Εἰ δέ τις ἐρεῖ, ὡς εἶπερ κοινὰ τὰ τῶν Λατίνων ἀζύμα οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐ προκριματιθσόμεθα καὶ ἡμεῖς τούτων μεταλαμβάνοντες ἀλλ’ ἀκούσεται ὡς ἐπειδὴ, καθὼς ἄνωθεν εἴρηται, μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ταῖς δυτικαῖς Ἐκκλησίαις καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀζύμοις ἔθος ἐμπέπηκται, καθὰ καὶ ἡμῖν τὸ προσφέρειν καὶ ἱερουργεῖν ἐνζυμα, ἀδύνατος ἐφ’ ἐκάτεροις ἔσται ἢ τῶν οἰκείων ἐθῶν παράβασις” Pitra, 1891, 629-630.

21 Ch. Schabel, *The Quarrel over Unleavened Bread in Western Theology 1234-1439*, in M. Hirtenberger – Ch. Schabel (eds.), *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204-1500*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2011, 85-127, 91.

22 S. B. Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium 1204-1453*, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa 1985, 29-30.

As the Catholic practice of using azymes in the Eucharist was clearly rooted in the Old Testament, the 'Judaising' argument was one of the most important Orthodox arguments against it, often accompanied by harshly Antisemitic language.²³

Nevertheless, there are certain problems about the argumentation of Chomatenos. The texts of the sources which he refers to, without citing their respective texts, do not exactly contain what he claims they do. The *Apostolic Canons* (Κανόνες τῶν Ἀποστόλων) consist of 85 canons, forming an appendix of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Διαταγαὶ τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων διὰ Κλήμεντος). The first 50 canons were translated to Latin by Dionysius Exiguus around the end of the fifth century, as part of a collection of translations of Greek canons. This collection was later included into the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals and excerpts of the *Canons* even entered the Decretum of Gratian. As a result of these developments, the Catholic Church accepted the first 50 canons as authentic sources, but not the other 35.

However, the Orthodox Church regards all of them as authentic canons since the Council of Trullo (691), their importance mirrored by the fact that they were mentioned before the canons of the Council of Nicaea (325) in the list of authorities.²⁴ Therefore, canon 70 failed to serve as a common authority for the two churches. It is similarly important, that even this canon does not condemn *azymes* explicitly, nor its use in the Eucharist. It merely forbids Christians to fast with

23 Y.G. Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens. Die lateinische Theologie des Hochmittelalters in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Ritus der Ostkirche*, Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie 47, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2002, 103-107 (Henceforth Avvakumov, 2002).

24 H. Ohme, *Sources of the Greek Canon Law to the Quinisext Council (691/2): Councils and Church Fathers*, in W. Hartmann – K. Pennington (eds.), *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 2012. Accessed March 2, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt28524j.6. 24-114, 33 (Henceforth Ohme, 2012).

Jews, participate their festivals or accept gifts from Jewish feasts, like *azymes*.²⁵

The other sources referred by the metropolitan archbishop similarly do not forbid the use of *azymes* in the Eucharist, even less condemning it in general. Canon 37 of the Council of Laodicea only forbids accepting portions from the feasts of either Jews or heretics just like feasting together with them,²⁶ while canon 38 of the very same council forbids accepting *azymes* from Jews or taking part in their alleged ‘impiety’.²⁷ Talking about these two canons of the Council of Laodicea, it is also worth to mention that probably they were the sources of canon 71 of the Apostles,²⁸ explaining their similar ordinations.

Continuing with canon 60 of the Council of Carthage (419), it does not contain any reference to the *azymes* but merely condemns ‘heathen’ feasts being hold in cities and certain other places where Christians could take part in them, also claiming that they were forced to do so during persecutions and bans these feasts from the mentioned

25 “If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any one of the list of clergy, keeps fast or festival with the Jews, or receives from them any of the gifts of their feasts, as unleavened bread, any such things, let him be deposed. If he be a layman, let him be excommunicated.” H. Percival (transl.), *Canons of the Apostles*, in Ph. Schaff – H. Wace (eds.), *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Second Series 14, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1900. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm>>.

26 “It is not lawful to receive portions sent from the feasts of Jews or heretics, nor to feast together with them.”, H. Percival (transl.), *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*, in Ph. Schaff – H. Wace (eds.), *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series 14, Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY 1900. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3806.htm>>.

27 “It is not lawful to receive unleavened bread from the Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety”. H. Percival (transl.), *Canons of the Council of Laodicea*.

28 Ohme, 2012, 29-30

places.²⁹ Therefore, the authoritative texts which Chomatenos refers to do not support his arguments. Regarding his reputation as a canon jurist, that is hardly the consequence of him knowing the canons wrong but suggests a conscious distortion on his part.

Nonetheless, his relatively tolerant approach towards the Latin practice is more surprising than these inconsistencies. Unlike most Orthodox theologians after the Schism of 1054, when he mentions the possible opinion of the *azyma* of the Latins not being profane, he does not dismiss it as a false idea. Instead, he states that eliminating this liturgical difference would be impossible for both sides, as many other habits are connected to it both in the Catholic and in the Orthodox Church.

Chomatenos applies an authoritative approach here, appealing to the authority of earlier pious Christians. Ancestral habits of both sides are treated as valid reasons for not changing their respective liturgical practices and even preventing such a change on either side. This presentation suggests that the theological difference regarding azymes is important, yet not tantamount to a validation of confrontation between Orthodox and Catholic believers. Acceptance of the other

29 “This also must be sought, that (since contrary to the divine precepts feasts are held in many places, which have been induced by the heathen error, so that now Christians are forced to celebrate these by heathens, from which state of things it happens that in the times of the Christian Emperors a new persecution seems to have secretly arisen) they order such things to be forbidden and prohibit them from cities and possessions under pain of punishment; especially should this be done since they do not fear to commit such iniquities in some cities even upon the natal days of the most blessed martyrs, and in the very sacred places themselves. For upon these days, shame to say, they perform the most wicked leaping throughout the fields and open places, so that matronal honour and the modesty of innumerable women who have come out of devotion for the most holy day are assaulted by lascivious injuries, so that all approach to holy religion itself is almost fled from.” H. Percival (transl.): *Canons of the Council of Carthage*.

type of the Eucharist for either side is made impossible by the fact that other important habits are intimately connected to it. The logical conclusion is the need for a level of toleration in this respect. This opinion was a surprisingly open-minded one considering other extant Medieval Orthodox sources for the *azymes*-debate, which tended to be condemning.³⁰

This is not the only letter by Chomatenos to Konstantinos Kabasilas, which discusses the Latin practice of *azymes*. In another letter to him, the metropolitan archbishop draws an interesting inference about certain Latin behaviours. Chomatenos invoked the question of Mark, patriarch of Alexandria, ‘whose memory is holy’ (τοῦ τῆς ὁσίας μνήμης). The question was originally addressed to Theodoros Balsamon, ‘the blessed’ (τοῦ μακαρίτου) patriarch of Antioch:

To which [other questions] was added a question concerning Latin mercenaries [in Egypt], whether they should be accepted manifestly favourably [by the Orthodox clergy of the Patriarchate of Alexandria] when they come into the Catholic churches and seek to receive the divine sacraments.³¹

The context is important to understand the opinion voiced by the author. He expresses this view commenting on a case that occurred in 1190. Mark III (1180–1209), patriarch of Alexandria, addressed 66 questions to Theodoros IV Balsamon (1185–1199), patriarch of Antioch. Among these he asked whether his Church could allow any further for Catholics in Egypt to receive Orthodox Eucharists. The answer of Theodoros IV Balsamon was fiercely rejective, but Mark III refused to follow his verdict. The disobedient behaviour of Mark III led to strictures on the Church of Alexandria, but he proved adamant,

30 Anvakumov, 2002, 114–116.

31 “αἷς συντεταγμένη ἦν καὶ περὶ Λατίνων αἰχμαλώτων ἐρώτησις, εἰ χρὴ δηλαδὴ τούτους προσδέχσθαι παρουσιάζοντας εἰς τὰς καθολικὰς ἐκκλησίας καὶ ζητοῦντας μεταλαμβάνειν τῶν θεῶν ἁγιασμάτων.” Pitra, 1891, 729–730.

and maintained relationships with the Papacy until his death in 1209.³² Furthermore the epithet ‘Catholic’ here refers to the Orthodox Church, as it regarded itself as the ‘universal’ (καθολικός) church.

As Chomatenos also states

And that exactly for this, the coming of the Latins to us [to the Orthodox clergy] and that [they] seek to receive the holy gift of the enzymes from us makes it evident that if they would not despise the azyma and if they would not set a high value on loving those [the enzyma], they would not come to the sacrifice of the holy mysteries, which happens at us.³³

Assessing the claims of the metropolitan archbishop, they prove to be an interesting reading. The practice of the *azymes* is implicitly presented as wrong, unlike the *enzymes*, which is considered valid. The resulting contrast between Catholicism and Orthodoxy also influences the image of the Byzantines, who are logically adherents of a ‘valid’ practice, and most of the Latins, who are adherents of an ‘invalid’ practice, favouring the Byzantines. However, this difference is not a simple matter of ethnicity, as there are Latins who want to participate in an Orthodox Eucharist. These Latins are also presented as people who reject the *azymes* and embrace the practice of *enzymes*.

There are certain problems with such a presentation of the behaviour of the Latins in question. The Catholic Church regarded Eucharists performed either with leavened or unleavened bread as valid, because the Bible only stated that Jesus used bread (ἄρτος) for the Last Supper,

32 S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism. A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches During the XIth and XIIth Centuries*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1955, 99.

33 “Καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ προσέρχεσθαι Λατίνους ἡμῖν, καὶ ζητεῖν τῆς ἐνζύμου μεταλαμβάνειν ἁγίας προσφορᾶς ἐξ ἡμῶν, δῆλον ποιεῖ ὡς εἰ μὴ περιεφρόνου τὰ ἄζυμα, καὶ ὡς οὐ περι πολλοῦ ποιοῦνται τὸ στέργειν αὐτοῖς, οὐκ ἂν προσήρχοντο τῇ παρ’ ἡμῶν γενομένῃ τῶν θείων μυστηρίων ἱερουργίᾳ.” Pitra, 1891, 729.

which could refer to both types of it.³⁴ So some Catholics could have regarded an Orthodox Eucharist as a perfectly acceptable sacrifice if a Catholic one was beyond their reach. Chomatenos, a renowned Orthodox canon jurist, had to be aware of this circumstance.

What could be then the reason behind the argumentation of the author? Latins attempting to receive Orthodox Eucharists was probably a phenomenon not unheard of in the early years of the Latin Empire, as the Catholic clergy was not present in every part of the officially Catholic state, which had a predominantly Orthodox population. Rejecting such Westerner requests could easily lead to clashes between the Byzantines and the Latins, probably causing unnecessary suffering for the local Byzantines.

Therefore, providing an explanation which allowed Latins to participate Orthodox Eucharists, yet comforted the Byzantines could seem a logical and valid application of *oikonomia*. This situation had to be rather similar to the one experienced by Mark III of Alexandria and his clergy in early Ayyubid Egypt, where ignoring the wishes of Latin mercenaries in service of the Muslim state could have had detrimental consequences for the Orthodox minority in Egypt.

And such examples of *oikonomia* regarding azymes would not be isolated ones. As Kolbaba pointed to it, following the conquest of large territories with sizeable Armenian and Syrian populations in the second half of the 10th and first half of the 11th centuries, Byzantium displayed a remarkable level of tolerance towards the practices of these Monophysite populations, including their use of *azymes* in the Eucharist, although their version of Christianity was considered a heretical one by the Orthodox Church.³⁵

³⁴ Avvakumov, 2002, 146-148.

³⁵ T.M. Kolbaba, *Byzantines, Armenians, and Latins: Unleavened Bread and Heresy in the Tenth Century*, in G.E. Demacopoulos – A. Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, Fordham University Press, New York 2013, 45-57, 51.

This tolerance only began to crumble soon after the 1045 capture of Ani, the last independent Armenian centre, by the armies of Konstantinos IX Monomakhos (1042–1055). In 1048, the emperor and patriarch Michael I Keroularios began a campaign to convert the Monophysite populace of their empire, and Orthodox polemics against *azymes* began to flourish. These changes of imperial policy demonstrated all too well that the earlier tolerance of the Byzantine authorities was merely *oikonomia* dictated by necessity, and not a result of a commitment to religious tolerance.³⁶

The limited mentions of *azymes* in the corpus of Chomatenos and the strongly representative role of Byzantine epistolography make the interpretation of his claims difficult and exclude absolute certainty. But, regarding that both of his letters discussed above present elements of rejection and tolerance, the fact that Byzantine letters were intended to reach a certain publicity and the circumstance that Chomatenos was a talented politician, make the explanations provided above possible. Given the religious and political conflicts between the two communities, the unpopularity of the Latins among Byzantines was understandable. However, they could still be seen as fellow Christians and openly confronting them could do more harm than good for those Byzantines risking it. As a result, it can be supposed that both letters present the reader with ‘balancing acts’ between these points of view.

A contemporary and close associate of Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos, archbishop of Naupaktos, also commented on *azymes* in a piece of his epistolary corpus. This letter was addressed to an Orthodox priest in Patras in the Peloponnese, and in it Apokaukos informs his addressee that “*nobody among the Fathers accepts either*

36 T.M. Kolbaba, *Byzantine Perceptions of Latin Religious “Errors”: Themes and Changes from 850 to 1350*, in A.E. Laiou – R. Parviz Mottahedeh, *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, 117–143, 122–123.

the religion or the sacrifice of the Latins”.³⁷ This statement proves to be concrete and elusive at the very same time. First of all, the author spares the reader from a definition of the term “Fathers”. It could refer either to the Church Fathers, or to the Orthodox Fathers or to the Latin Fathers.

As Apokaukos was an Orthodox metropolitan writing after 1204 and famous of his strong anti-Latin sentiment, the third option can be excluded. Continuing with the possibility of him referring to the Church Fathers, it may seem a convincing solution due to their immense authority, which could serve as a powerful support for the argument of the archbishop. Yet, as Byzantines showed a tendency to refer to all the respected Orthodox theologians as ‘Fathers’ Apokaukos most probably meant the Orthodox Fathers in this very broad meaning.³⁸

Continuing with this definition, Apokaukos envisions a strict border between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Respectable Christian theological authorities are understood as pillars of the former, having nothing to do with the latter. This circumstance in itself positions Orthodoxy highly above Catholicism. But the archbishop continues, seeing further differences between the two denominations. He discovers these differences in the fields of ‘religion’ (θρησκεία) and ‘sacrifice’ (θυσία). These two concepts are rather wide, but one can identify their probable meanings in this context.

37 “οὐδεὶς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων τὴν τῶν Λατίνων θρησκείαν ἢ τὴν θυσίαν ἀποδέχεται.” N. A. Bees (ed.), *Unedierte Schriftstücke aus der Kanzlei des Johannes Apokaukos des Metropoliten von Naupaktos (in Aetolien)*, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 21 (1971-1974), 57-160, 112.

38 A good example for this practice is the *Panoplia dogmatike* of Euthymios Zigabenos, in which he considers each Orthodox theologian invoked by him as a member of the group of the ‘fathers’. See M. Jugie, *La vie et les oeuvres d’Euthyme Zigabène*, in *Échos d’Orient*, tome 15, N°94 (1912), 215-225, esp. 218-223.

On the first hand, θρησκεία can not only mean ‘religion’, but ‘religious formalism’ and ‘superstition’ too, both in a pejorative sense.³⁹ All three would express serious criticism from the side of Apokaukos. Taking the meaning ‘religion’ would suggest that the faith of the Latins is so different from Christianity (understood as Orthodox Christianity), that it is tantamount to being another religion. The meaning ‘religious formalism’ would suggest that it is a spiritually empty obedience to ritual prescriptions. Finally, ‘superstition’ would simply dismiss it as a set of nonsensical, false beliefs.

On the other hand, θυσία with its core meaning ‘sacrifice’ can also mean ‘mode of sacrifice’.⁴⁰ Both meanings invoke the vehement Orthodox opposition to the Catholic use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, the infamous *azymes*-controversy. It is not possible to decide with certainty in either of the two cases, which meanings were used by Apokaukos. But Catholicism is presented as an ‘erroneous’ religion in at least two of its core aspects, while Orthodoxy as ‘the true’ one.

The characteristics and implied strict dichotomy of the two Christian denominations are extended by Apokaukos even to their adherents. As he writes not about Catholicism, but religion of the Latins, that is, Westerners, and the one of the Orthodox nations too, whose characteristics are supposedly resemble the ones of their respective faiths. As the text of the letter ends with this analysed cohort, all other details that were possibly added by Apokaukos are lost. Thus, the use of words with more possible meanings and the damaged condition of the text limits the possible results of the analysis. What is clear, is that the metropolitan archbishop expressed

39 See θρησκεία in H.G. Liddel – R. Scott – H.S. Jones – R. McKenzie (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon*, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, 806.

40 See θυσία in H.G. Liddel – R. Scott – H.S. Jones – R. McKenzie (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon*, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement, 812.

views in the extant part of his letter that fit well to his fiercely anti-Latin reputation, leaving little doubt in the reader about what a pious Orthodox should think about the Latins and their religion.

6. *Papal primacy*

Another crucial difference between Catholic and Orthodox teachings, the Catholic acceptance of papal primacy, is also discussed in the epistolary corpus of Chomatenos. Theodoros I Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230), the ruler of Epiros, reconquered considerable territories from the Bulgarians in the first years of his reign and Chomatenos, the archbishop of Ochrid appointed by Theodoros I and a key member of the Epirote ruling elite, was accepted as head of the Bulgarian Church. Between the Fall of Constantinople and the return of Macedonia and parts of Thrace under the jurisdiction of the autocephalous metropolitan see of Ochrid, independent Bulgarian ordinances of clergymen took place in these territories, which constituted a serious problem for the Epirote ecclesiastical authorities after their state took over these areas. The question was that whether these ordinances can be accepted as canonical by the Orthodox Church in Epiros?

Finally, an Epirote synod accepted most of these ordinances as if they were performed by a Byzantine-appointed bishop. The exceptions were the bishops of the reconquered areas, who were removed from their positions, while the lesser clergymen appointed by them were required to hold a four-month period of penitence.⁴¹ The date of this synod, of which the *actio synodica* was penned by Chomatenos himself, is uncertain. Earlier it was dated to 1219, but, regarding that a

41 D.M. Nicol, *Refugees, Mixed Populations and Local Patriotism in Epiros and Western Macedonia after the Fourth Crusade*, in *XVe congrès international d'études byzantines*, Athens 1976, 1-33, 22.

letter of Chomatenos to Basileios Pediadites, metropolitan archbishop of Kerkyra, discusses that very synod, and Pediadites passed away in 1218, Prinzing proposed that the synod must have taken place in 1217/1218.⁴²

The *actio synodica* penned by Chomatenos is interesting for the representation of Byzantine attitudes towards papal primacy, because the author mentions a rather important event tied to this Catholic teaching in the text:

Moreover, [The Bulgarian leaders] lead forward a certain priest (he was among the ordained), [installed] to the episcopal dignity by the hand of a Roman [Byzantine] archbishop, plainly the blessed one of Vidin, then, drawing the hand of the pope of the Old Rome from there [from Rome] through the dispatching of a cardinal, honouring this [priest] with patriarchal appellation through that [the hand of the pope].⁴³

It is important, that a cardinal legate of Innocent III (1198–1216) promoted the head of the newly established Bulgarian Church indeed, but he was consecrated to be a primate of his church and was not created a patriarch by any means.⁴⁴ It also has to be mentioned, that the person in question, archbishop Vasilij of Tirnovo, was not the only one elevated by Innocent III through his legate. Kalojan (1196–1207), the Bulgarian ruler, was officially made a king by the pope, which act is similarly overstated by Chomatenos, who claims that the Bulgarian ruler was made an emperor by the pope.⁴⁵

42 Prinzing, 2002, 262*.

43 “Καὶ τοῖνυν ἱερέα τινὰ (τῶν ἐννόμων δὲ οὗτος ἦν) εἰς ἐπισκοπικὸν ἀξίωμα διὰ χειρὸς Ῥωμαίου ἀρχιερέως, τοῦ μακαρίτου δηλονότι Βιδίνης, προαγαγόντες, ἔπειτα καὶ τὴν τοῦ πάππα τῆς πρεσβυτέρας Ῥώμης χεῖρα δι’ ἀποστολῆς καρδινάλιου ἐκείθεν ἐλκύσαντες, πατριαρχικῆ ἢ προσηγορίᾳ δι’ ἐκείνης τοῦτον ἐτίμησαν.” Prinzing, 2002, 424.

44 Angold, 1995, 534.

45 G. Prinzing, *Die Bedeutung Bulgariens und Serbiens in den Jahren 1204–1219 im Zusammenhang mit der Entstehung und Entwicklung der byzantinischen Teilstaaten nach der Einnahme Konstantinopels infolge des 4. Kreuzzuges*, in H.G.

But the key detail for the current analyse is the Bulgarian acceptance of papal primacy through their ask for a confirmation by the pope. Chomatenos mentions this case among the various ‘wrongdoings’ of the Bulgarian Church during its independence of the Byzantine Church, which makes it rather clear, how one should interpret his depiction of the events. The acceptance of papal primacy is one item in the list of numerous, theologically ‘questionable’ decisions of which the Bulgarian Church is accused. Furthermore, it does not require any further comment, being ‘obviously wrong’ for any faithful Orthodox reader.

However, as it becomes clear from the already mentioned letter of Chomatenos addressed to Basileios Padiadites, the Bulgarians were not seen as heretics, but as fully Orthodox by the Epirote synod, while their Union with Rome was understood as a mere church-political decision by the Bulgarian leaders of the time.⁴⁶ Maybe these are the reasons why Chomatenos does not comment on the subject in any further detail in the *actio synodica*.

The problem of papal primacy is elaborated in greater detail in another letter of Chomatenos, which considers the acceptability of

Beck (ed.), *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 12*, Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität, München 1972, 141 (Henceforth Prinzing, 1972).

⁴⁶ Prinzing, 1972, 143-144. The union was indeed mainly a political decision for the Bulgarian side. It is well-demonstrated by the circumstance that, following the battle of Klokotnitsa in 1230, which resulted in large conquests in Orthodox territories and heightened imperial ambitions for Bulgaria, the religious ties between Rome and the Bulgarian state soon began to loosen. Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologische Literatur des Mittelalters in Bulgarien und Serbien (865–1459)*, C. H. Beck, München 2000, 79. By 1235, Bulgaria has accepted the religious authority of the Constantinopolitan patriarch-in-exile of the Nicæan Empire. The price of this decision by the Bulgarians was that the ecumenical patriarchate recognised the see of Tirnovo as a patriarchate. A. Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy. The Church 1071–1453*, Crestwood, New York 1994, 215 (Henceforth Papadakis, 1994).

Western religious teachings when someone faces serious hardship.⁴⁷ The story he uses to examine this problem considers the behaviour of a group of early 13th-century monks of an Athonite monastery, which, as it is claimed to be inhabited by Greek and Georgian monks, can be identified with the famous Iviron Monastery.⁴⁸

As Chomatenos states,

Many violent acts were committed by the agents of the Italian Church to make all the priests and monks by us to come under the power of the Roman pope, and, consequently, to mention his name on the occasions, when the memory of the archbishops is used to be remembered at the altar, and to follow the habits of the Roman Church.⁴⁹

Chomatenos here accuses the representatives (most probably both secular and ecclesiastical ones) of the Holy See with an agenda to force the Orthodox priests and monks living in the Latin Empire to accept full communion with the Catholic Church. Furthermore, they are portrayed as ones willing to resort to violence to achieve their goal. It is also notable that the Catholic Church is designated by the author as the Italian Church (Ἰταλικὴ ἱερατεία).

This appellation denies the universalist claims of the Catholic Church, associating it closely with Westerners ('Italian' was a general term for Westerners in the contemporary Greek-speaking world). In sharp contrast with its self-definition, the Catholic Church is suggested to be nothing more than a particular church by Chomatenos, which is closely associated with certain ethnic groups and geographical

47 Περὶ τοῦ, εἰ χρὴ συγκοινωνεῖν τοῖς περιτραπεῖσιν ἐν καιρῷ δυσχερείας καὶ προσελθοῦσιν Λατίνοις καὶ τοῖς τούτων ἔθεσι κοινωνήσασιν. Prinzing, 2002, 198.

48 Nicol, 1957, 81.

49 “Πολλὴν μὲν γὰρ προέθεντο βίαν οἱ τῆς Ἰταλικῆς ἱερατείας προϊστάμενοι, ἵνα τὸ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἅπαν ἱερατικὸν τε καὶ τὸ μοναχικὸν ὑποκλίνωσι τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ πάππα τῆς Ῥώμης, ὥστε καὶ ἀναφέρειν ἐκεῖνον ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς, καθ’ οὓς εἰώθασι μνήμην τῶν ἀρχιερέων οἱ τοῦ βήματος τίθεσθαι, καὶ τοῖς ἔθεσι τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίας ἀκολουθεῖν.” Prinzing, 2002, 198.

regions, far from being universal and representing the sole valid form of Christianity. Logically, the own faith of the author, Orthodoxy is implicitly understood as the ‘valid’ form of the Christian faith.

It is also important to mention that this depiction echoes certain well-entrenched, traditional representations of the behaviours displayed by persecutors of ‘true’ Christianity in Byzantine literature. The persecutors are usually preoccupied with coercing true Christians into accepting false teachings and answering resistance with violence and treating the Orthodox clergy and monks as special targets.⁵⁰ It is also important, that this part of the source, just like its entire text, is concerned with one particular Catholic dogma, the primacy of the Pope, which is characteristic for this letter in general, and which teaching is intimately bound to religious power relations. Accepting papal primacy meant the acceptance of the supreme religious authority of the Roman Pope, while the Latin agents of the ‘Italian Church’ used their very real secular power over the Orthodox priests and monks to coerce them into the acceptance of this primacy.

As the author continues, coercion was not without results:

50 See, for instance, Paul J. Alexander, “Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Methods and Justifications”, in *Speculum* 52/2 (1977), 238-264, esp. 242-246, for depictions of Iconoclast persecutions of Iconophiles; Papadakis, 1994, 203-207, on the call for tolerance towards the conquered Orthodox of the Latin Empire by the 4th canon of the 4th Council of Lateran and the Byzantine depictions of actual intolerance and persecution; Martin Hinterberger, *A Neglected Tool of Orthodox Propaganda? The Image of The Latins in Byzantine Hagiography*, in M. Hinterberger – Ch. Schabel (eds.), *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204-1500*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2011, 129-149, esp. 138-148, on hagiographical stories of priests and monks martyred for their loyalty to the Orthodox faith by the Latins.

The Georgian monks did not withstand force, as due, but, caring little, disgracefully went to Thessalonica, to the cardinal⁵¹ of the Roman pope and subjected themselves to the will of the Pope, following the Latin habits. They immediately showed the sign of communion, voluntarily putting their hands into the hands of those ones [the Latins], thus blurring the common life with the Greek monks and making it turbid.⁵²

The narrative above echoes a clear disappointment about the behaviour of the Georgian Monks of Iviron. They did not resist the coercive measures of the Latins, but made communion with the Catholic Church, even visiting the cardinal legate of the pope in Thessalonica to accept papal primacy, which is defined as subjecting themselves to the will of the pope. This presentation suggests papal primacy to be not about the legitimate ecclesiastical authority of the see of Rome, but about obedience to the arbitrary will of the holder of that see, which undermines the legitimacy of the papal pretensions in a few words.

The gestures with which the Georgian monks expressed their submission also deserve interest, just like their evaluation by Chomatenos. These gestures are showing the sign of communion, putting their hands into the hands of the Latin clerics by their own free will. The claim of voluntary submission to the Holy See is an interesting claim, as it seems to be in clear contradiction with the earlier statement of Chomatenos, that is, that the Georgians ‘did not

51 The cardinal in question is most probably Benedict of S. Susanna, who participated in the debates about the Union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches that were held in the Latin Empire between 1205–1207 and visited Thessalonike in autumn 1205 and at the end of 1206. Prinzing, 2002, 134.

52 “Ἀλλ’ οἱ γε Ἱβηρες μοναχοί, τῇ βία μὴ ἀντιστάντες, ὡς θέμις, μηδὲ μικρόν τι μελήσαντες, εἷξαντες δὲ ἀγεννῶς τῷ τῶν Ἰταλῶν ἐπιτάγματι καὶ τῷ τοῦ πάππα καρδινάλιῳ προσελθόντες ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ διάγοντι, ὅλους ἑαυτοῦς τῷ θελήματι τοῦ πάππα παρέδωκαν καὶ τοῖς Λατινικοῖς ἠκολούθησαν ἔθεςιν· αὐτίκα δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς κοινωνίας σημεῖον ἔφηναν, τὴν τῶν χειρῶν ἑαυτῶν δηλαδὴ πρὸς τὰς ἐκείνων χεῖρας ἐκούσιον ἐμβολήν, καὶ οὕτω τὴν μετὰ τῶν Γραικῶν μοναχῶν διαγωγὴν συνέχεάν τε καὶ συνεθόλωσαν.” Prinzing, 2002, 199.

withstand force' (τῆ βία μὴ ἀντιστάντες), although it can be explained with the Georgian monks deciding with their own free will to allow to coercion and accept communion with the Catholic Church.

An even more negative light is cast on the deeds of the Georgian monks involved in the following part of the letter, as their behaviour is claimed to be in clear contrast with the behaviour of many persecuted Orthodox believers:

Persons blessed and worthy of numerous encomia did not obey the lawless violence of the Latin rule to change their holy habits. But, giving up their bodies to ill-treatment and spitting upon what was inflicted to them, to avoid becoming traitors of the habits of their fathers, [these] brilliant martyrs brilliantly shined with their preference. And, as we know it well, for the ones who fight in a way pleasing to God, for the ones who kept the faith, the wreath of righteousness will be weaved.⁵³

The description of the problem seemingly echoes a peculiar effect, that is, of Byzantine heresiology, which means that first a belief or practice is condemned by a source, after which its erroneousness is argued on the basis of arguments often based on authority.⁵⁴ Such an effect is also suggested by the background of Chomatenos as a canon jurist and the fact that he wanted to educate his audience with his text on a theological issue. It is also worth to notice how the physical suffering of the martyrs is tied with their spiritual integrity, while, from the point of view of Chomatenos, the opposite can be told about the Georgian monks who accepted papal primacy.

53 “Ὅθεν φαμέν, ὡς μακαριστοὶ καὶ πολλῶν ἄξιοι ἐγκωμίων, οἱ τῆ ἀθέσμφ βία τῆς Λατινικῆς ἐξουσίας εἰς γε τὴν μετάθεσιν τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἱερῶν ἐθῶν οὐδαμῶς ὑπετάγησαν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐαυτῶν προδόντες εἰς κάκωσιν σώματα καὶ τὰ αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχοντα διαπύσαντες, ἵνα τῶν πατρίων ἐθῶν προδοταὶ μὴ γένωνται, μάρτυρες τῆ προαιρέσει λαμπροὶ λαμπρῶς ἀνεφάνησαν, οἷς, εὖ οἶδαμεν, οὕτω θεαρέστως ἠγωνισμένοις καὶ τὴν πίστιν τετηρηκόσιν ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης πλακίσηται στέφανος.” Prinzing, 2002, 200.

54 A. Cameron, *How to Read Heresiology?*, in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33/3 (2003), 471-492.

The effect is made stronger by the solution of paraphrasing 2 Timothy at the end of the section in question.⁵⁵ The paraphrased part of the Biblical text presents a believer assessing his life facing death, and Chomatenos designates the Orthodox believers suffering for their faith as martyrs. These circumstances suggest the worst possible outcome for their resistance, that is, that they were murdered for it, which makes the dichotomy between them and the monks of Iviron even more pronounced. The reference to the Biblical text was most probably recognised by the audience of Chomatenos, supposedly consisting of relatively erudite Byzantines, pointing to a deliberate solution by him, probably with the aim of achieving the above-mentioned effect.

These circumstances make a harsh judgment understandable and even expected:

It is impossible for the Greek monks to commune in anything with the Georgian ones, and with all of those, who share their opinion, as they had intercourse with the Italian habits and dogmas, that were rejected by their Holy Church [the Orthodox one]. Except if once (as it has to be added due to the philanthropic habit of the Church) those who transgressed in this way [the Georgians] repent their sins with fasts and tears and the entreaties to the Divinity, rightly purifying themselves from the defilements thence [their communion with the Catholic Church] and excluding those from their hearts with whom they committed defilement, they go back to the habits and teachings of our Holy Church.⁵⁶

55 2Tim 4,6-8: “As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

56 “Καὶ τοίνυν ἀποφαινόμεθα, ὡς οὐκ ἐξόν ἐστιν ἐν οὐδενὶ κοινῶνεῖν τοὺς Γραικοὺς τοῖς Ἰβηρσι μοναχοῖς, καὶ ὅσοι τούτοις ὁμόφρονες, ὡς ἀναμαζαμένοις τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ἐθῶν τε καὶ θρησκευμάτων, ὅσα τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἀγίας ἐκκλησίας γεγόνασιν ἐκβληταῖ... εἰ μὴ ποτε (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο προσθεῖναι διὰ τὸ φιλόανθρωπον ἔθος τῆς

It is worth to mention that their acceptance of papal primacy is possibly not the only reason behind the severity of the verdict of Chomatenos delivered on the monks of Iviron.⁵⁷ In Byzantium, religious dissent and lack of loyalty to the Empire were traditionally understood as closely related. The case of the Georgian monks could easily be used as an example justifying this view. They accepted papal primacy, thus expressed their loyalty towards the Latin Empire instead of a successor-state of the Byzantine Empire, which could be interpreted as them becoming heterodox and politically disloyal at the same time. Their Georgian descent, although their home country was firmly Orthodox, could make this interpretation the easier for Byzantines, just like the fact that as monks they were expected to display an especially strong adherence to Orthodox dogmas and eminent morality in general.

The option of the Georgian monks receiving forgiveness as a result of their perfect repentance and the philanthropy of the Orthodox Church leaves less uncertainty. Medieval Orthodoxy preached that God felt pure love for mankind and all faithful Christians should try to imitate this love in their individual lives. Moreover, the Church itself had to display a strongly philanthropic attitude, which included it serving as a ‘hospital’ for human souls, offering remedies for every spiritual ailment. This function covered even heresy if its sin was confessed, and the needed repentance happened.⁵⁸

ἐκκλησίας) μετανοήσαντες οἱ οὕτω παρανομήσαντες καὶ νηστείας καὶ δάκρυσι καὶ ταῖς εἰς τὸ θεῖον δεήσεσι τῶν ἐκεῖθεν κηλίδων καλῶς καθιράμενοι καὶ οἷς ἐμολύνθησαν ἀπὸ καρδίας ἀποταξάμενοι, πρὸς τὰ ἔθη τε καὶ διδάγματα τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας παλινδρομήσουσιν.” Prinzing, 2002, 200-201.

57 P. Magdalino, *Orthodoxy and Byzantine Cultural Identity*, in A. Rigo – P. Ermilov (eds.), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Byzantium. The Definition and the Notion of Orthodoxy and Some Other Studies on the Heresies and the Non-Christian Religions*, Università degli Studia di Roma “Tor Vergata”, Roma 2010, 21-40, 29.

58 D.J. Constantelos, *Poverty, Society and Philanthropy in the Late Medieval Greek World*, A. D. Charatzas, New Rochelle 1992, 40.

It means that the chance of reacceptance into the Orthodox Church for the ‘apostate’ monks is not a special treatment of them. Contrariwise, it is an important tenet of the Orthodox faith in practice, as Chomatenos himself underlines that this is the standard practice of their Church. Such a gesture, combined with the atrocities attributed to Catholics by Chomatenos, produces an impression of Orthodoxy being morally superior to Catholicism, which was possibly an effect intended by the author.

The judgment given by Chomatenos may be a carefully elaborated one, but it had little practical effect in its own time. From the Latin conquest of the Chalkidike-peninsula to its Epirot reconquest, the monasteries of Athos were officially under the jurisdiction of a Catholic bishop, whose see can be identified as Samaria or Sebastia. Most of the Athonite monasteries rejected the jurisdiction of the bishop and the Catholic Church, but not Iviron, which accepted the new *status quo*.⁵⁹

7. Conclusion

The five letters from Chomatenos and Apokaukos analysed above prove to be educational readings. They mirror the expertise of their authors as Orthodox canon jurists and their original presentations of the rules of Orthodox canon law regarding *azymes* and papal primacy to their addressees and wider audiences. The letters penned by them display both a certain capacity for tolerance towards Catholics and a strongly critical attitude towards them, mirroring the hardening stance of the Orthodox Church towards Catholicism in the era of turmoil following the Fourth Crusade. In this respect, the analysed theological letters of Demetrios Chomatenos and Ioannes Apokaukos are original in their solutions and still very characteristic of their period at the same time.

59 John Fine Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1987, 79.

Abstract

Westliche religiöse Praktiken in byzantinischen Briefen: Demetrios Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos, Azymes und päpstliche Primat

Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit den Repräsentationen des Azymes, das heißt, ungesäuertes Brot in der Eucharist, und päpstliche Primat in ausgewählten Briefen von Demetrios Chomatenos, Erzbischof von Ochrid (1216/17–1236) und Ioannes Apokaukos, Erzbischof von Naupaktos (1199/1200–1232), zwei einflussreiche Kleriker des Staats von Epiros im 13en Jahrhundert. Chomatenos und Apokaukos benutzten verschiedene Verfahren in diesen Repräsentationen und haben Kapazität für Nuancierung in ihren Urteilen gezeigt, obwohl Verurteilungen ihre Narrativen dominierten.