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*The Apology of Demetrius Cydones:  
A Fourteenth-Century Autobiographical Source\**

Thanks to the efforts of a number of scholars, the ideas and activities of Demetrius Cydones are in the process of becoming better known. Most of his writings have now been edited and published in a variety of locations.<sup>1</sup> No complete and balanced biography of the man yet exists, however,<sup>2</sup> and the following brief sketch is intended not to fill that need, but simply to introduce the main concern of this paper, a discussion of his *Apology*.

Demetrius was born about 1324 in the city of Thessalonica and received his education there. Among his teachers were a number of people who were to have a continuing role in his life and who also were to have an influence on the course of Byzantine events. One such man was Nilus Cabasilas, who became metropolitan of Thessalonica before his death about the year 1363.<sup>3</sup>

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1. For his letters, the complete edition is: *Démétrius Cydonès Correspondance* [hereafter cited as *Corr.*], ed. R.-J. Loenertz, 2 vols., *Studi e testi* 186 and 208 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1956-60). For a partial edition of fifty letters with French translation, see *Démétrius Cydonès Correspondance*, ed. G. Cammelli (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1930). For his speeches, see *Corr.*, I, 1-23, which prints the *First Speech to John VI Cantacuzenus* and *Speech to John V Palaeologus*; *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher*, 4 (1923), 77-83, publishes the *Second Speech to John VI*, ed. G. Cammelli; and *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeco-latina* [hereafter *PG*], ed. J. P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1857-66), for the *Oratio pro subsidio Latinorum*, CLIV, cols. 961-1008; *De non reddenda Callipoli*, CLIV, cols. 1009-36; and *Occisorum Thessalonicae Monodia*, CIX, cols. 639-52. Many important writings of Cydones, including the *Apology*, appear in G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota ed altri appunti per la storia della teologia e della letteratura bizantina del secolo XIV*, *Studi e testi* 56 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1931). All references to the *Apology* will be to this edition, cited by page and line number.

2. At present the best chronology for the life of Cydones is R. -J. Loenertz, "Essai de chronologie," in *Les recueils de lettres de Démétrius Cydonès*, ed. R. -J. Loenertz, *Studi e testi* 131 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1947), pp. 108-22; and *idem.*, "Démétrius Cydonès I: De la naissance à l'année 1373," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 36 (1970), 47-72; and "Démétrius Cydonès II: De 1373 à 1375," *ibid.*, 37 (1971), 5-39, which revise the "Essai" up to 1375. I am currently at work on a full-length biographical study of Cydones which will include a discussion of both his literary and his diplomatic activities.

3. H. -G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* 12, 2, 1, *Byzantinisches Handbuch*, 2, 1 (München: Beck, 1959), pp. 727-28.

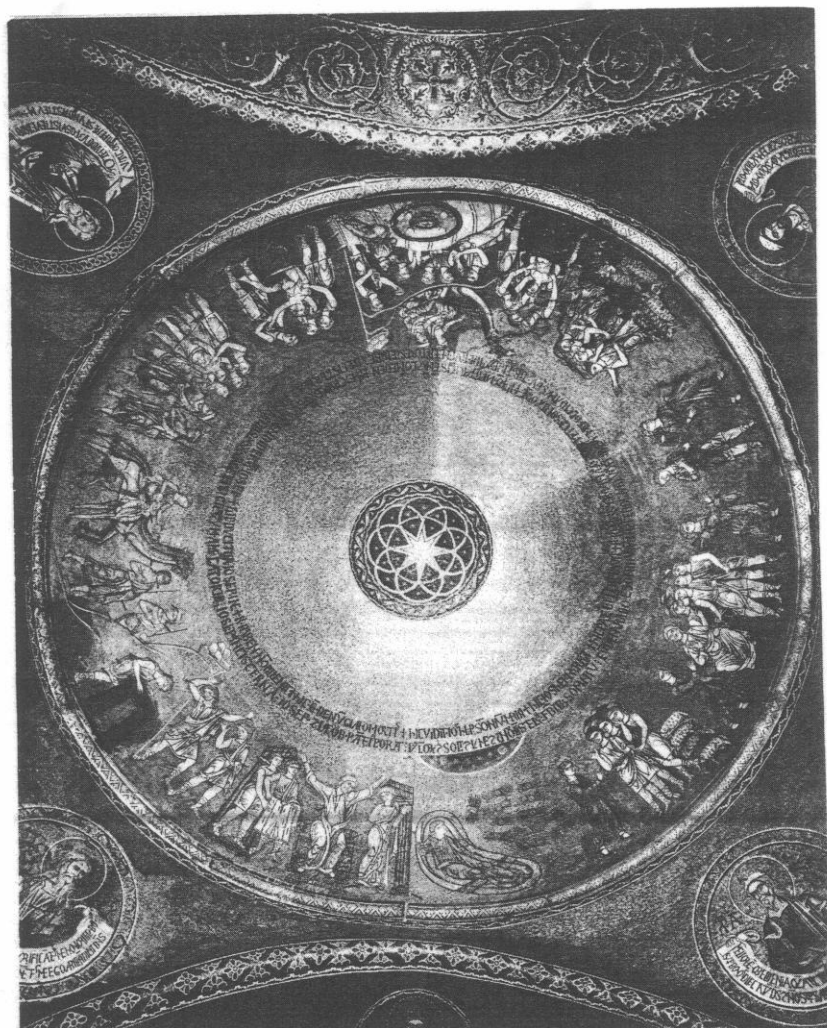


Fig. 11 Venice, San Marco, narthex, mosaic cupola.

Another was Isidore Boucheiras, a close friend of Gregory Palamas, who was elected ecumenical patriarch in 1347.<sup>4</sup>

Demetrius's family was one of the wealthiest in Thessalonica. His father had connections with the government of Andronicus III (1328-41) and, Demetrius tells us,<sup>5</sup> he enjoyed an especially close friendship with the emperor's grand domestic, John Cantacuzenus. When his father died in 1341, shortly after completing a diplomatic mission to the Mongol Golden Horde,<sup>6</sup> Demetrius and his family turned to Cantacuzenus for support. He responded generously,<sup>7</sup> and Demetrius's family remained loyal to him throughout the ups and downs of the civil war between Cantacuzenus and the regency (1341-47).<sup>8</sup>

In 1347, when Demetrius was in his early twenties and head of a family now financially ruined, through the social and political upheaval of the civil war years, he turned once again to Cantacuzenus, now the emperor John VI.<sup>9</sup> Cantacuzenus, who had already established a close friendship with him, rewarded his loyalty by appointing him to an important position in the imperial court.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, John Cantacuzenus became, in effect, the origin of Demetrius's long and checkered career as an imperial servant.

To describe his government career as a long one is no exaggeration. It spanned nearly forty years (1347-86) and three emperors,<sup>11</sup> during which Demetrius was in and out of key positions in the government—usually in. His

4. Beck, *Kirche*, p. 723. Isidore was from Thessalonica, as he indicates in his *Testament*, ed. F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, 6 vols. (Athinai: X. I. Spanos, 1860-90), I, 287-88. He succeeded John Calecas as Patriarch of Constantinople in May, 1347, a few months after Cantacuzenus's victory in the civil war. For Demetrius's continued contact with him until his death in 1349, see Demetrius Cydones, *Corr.*, I, letters 43 and 86.

5. *First Speech to John VI Cantacuzenus*, in *Corr.*, I, 2, para. 4.

6. V. Laurent, "L'assaut avorté de la Horde d'Or contre l'empire byzantin," *Revue des études byzantines*, 18 (1960), 145-62. See also R. -J. Loenertz, "Notes d'histoire et de chronologie byzantines I," *ibid.*, 17 (1959), 162-66 (=idem, *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca I, Articles parus de 1935 à 1966* . . . , Storia e Letteratura, 118 [Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1970], pp. 426-30). For Demetrius's description of his father's mission and death, see his *First Speech*, in *Corr.*, I, 3, para. 5, and p. 9, para. 17, lines 12-22.

7. *First Speech*, in *Corr.*, I, 3, para. 5.

8. On the civil war, see G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 509 ff.; and D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), pp. 191 ff.

9. In his *First Speech to John VI*, which is in fact a Byzantine job application.

10. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 360, lines 26-31.

11. *Idem*, *Corr.*, II, letter 338, lines 8-9, in which he mentions his service to John V Palaeologus for a period of thirty years (1355-86). To this figure must be added his years with John VI Cantacuzenus (1347-54). The three emperors in question include these two men, plus John V's son Andronicus IV (1376-79), whom Demetrius refused to serve during his short period of usurpation. See *Corr.*, II, letter 154 to Andronicus IV, written in 1377-78.

functions varied from decade to decade. John Cantacuzenus describes him in 1354 as his *μεσάζων*.<sup>12</sup> There are clear references in Demetrius's correspondence that at one time he headed the imperial chancery and that at another time his duties involved the imperial revenues.<sup>13</sup> But while his official position in the government varied, so did his influence on policy-making. His power at times exceeded his official position, at other times dwindled to almost nil. These fluctuations in his roles and power at court were partly due to the changing circumstances of the diminishing—one would even say "dying"—empire in the later fourteenth century and partly due to Demetrius's own evolution and response to these painful conditions. Although his family appears to have been disposed to serving the emperors of the Palaeologan dynasty and his father certainly did, Demetrius claims he himself would have preferred a quiet life of scholarly and literary leisure, if economic and political conditions had allowed.<sup>14</sup> His entry into government service was partly due to financial need. His continuance in political life can be attributed to his expertise in a number of areas which made him useful to John V Palaeologus. But it must also be attributed to his recognition of the seriously deteriorating conditions of the empire and the necessity of attempting to find solutions which would, if not restore the empire to its former glory, at least avert the threat of total disaster which was posed by the powerful force of the Ottoman Turks. Demetrius would have agreed with the judgment of Theodore Metochites, that only an insensitive man would be able to remain out of political life when his country was in danger.<sup>15</sup>

Demetrius's career, then, as a government official in Constantinople was concerned not merely with the day-to-day administrative business of the empire, but also with policy-making on the highest level during a time of serious emergency. The general tenor of his political position was already indicated

12. Ioannis Cantacuzenus, *Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, 3 vols. (Bonn: impensis E. Weberi, 1828-32), IV, 39: III, 285, lines 5-9. For the significance of the term *μεσάζων*, see J. Verpeaux, "Contribution à l'étude de l'administration byzantine: *ὁ μεσάζων*," *Byzantinoslavica*, 16 (1955), 270-96; and H. -G. Beck, "Der byzantinische 'Ministerpräsident'," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 48 (1955), 309-38 (= *Ideen und Realitäten in Byzanz* [London: Variorum, 1972], XIII). Cf. the position of Loenertz, "Le chancelier impérial à Byzance au XIV<sup>e</sup> et au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 26 (1960), 275-300 (= *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca I*, pp. 441-65). Cydones also describes himself as *μεσάζων* in *Corr.*, I, letter 50, line 23. Unfortunately this letter cannot be dated with assurance, though Loenertz suggests 1355-56.

13. For Cydones as director of the imperial chancery, see *Corr.*, I, letter 42, lines 24-26 (written in 1352); and for his financial duties, *ibid.*, I, letter 47, lines 38-40 (written about 1358-61).

14. *Speech to John V Palaeologus*, p. 11, para. 2. On his family as imperial servants, see *Apology II*, p. 411, lines 54-57.

15. See, for example, R. Guillard, "Les poésies inédites de Théodore Métrochite," in *idem, Etudes Byzantines*, Publications de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Paris (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), pp. 201-02, poem 14, lines 110-99.

during the years of service with John VI (1347-54), when, he tells us, in connection with his official duties, he decided to learn Latin in order to deal with Westerners without the often irritating necessity of depending on the dubious skills of the imperial interpreters.<sup>16</sup> From this beginning evolved for Demetrius a whole political and intellectual program, which he did not cease to maintain during the entire course of his long government career. The two sides of the program—the political and the intellectual—must be taken together and viewed in as integrated a way as possible, even though, for reasons of convenience and greater clarity, they have usually been treated separately by historians. The separate treatment of these elements has led, at times, to certain exaggerations in interpretation.

The intellectual side of the program appears first with Demetrius's discovery and translations of the theological works of a number of Latin authors. His first translation was a rendering into classical Greek of the *Summa contra gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas, completed in December 1354, about a month after John Cantacuzenus's resignation of the imperial throne and his own temporary retirement from government.<sup>17</sup> The translations continued during the early years of Demetrius's service to John V. He completed a partial translation of the *Summa theologiae* with the help of his brother Prochorus. He also produced a number of translations of various works of Augustine and Anselm of Canterbury.<sup>18</sup> One of the major results of Demetrius's familiarity with Latin theologians and their works was his own conversion to Roman Catholicism about the year 1360.<sup>19</sup>

16. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, pp. 360-61.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 362-63, describe his first steps in the translating of the *Contra gentiles* which he calls τὸ τοῦ Ὁωμᾶ κατὰ Ἑλλήνων βιβλίον. *Vat. gr. 616* contains books 3 and 4 of Cydones's translation of this work with a note (fol. 313v) in his own hand in Latin giving the exact time of its completion: "Finito libro, sit laus et gloria Christo. Istum librum transtulit de latino in grecum Demetrius de Thessalonica, servus Jesu Christi; laboravit autem transferendo per unum annum et fuit completus anno 1355, indictione octava, xxiv mensis decembris, ora post meridiem tertia." (=24 December 1354). The translation itself has never been published, except for a few fragments in Mercati, *Notizie*, pp. 17-18, and others. For further references, see Mercati, p. 160; and M. Jugie, "Démétrius Cydonès et la théologie latine à Byzance au XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles." *Echos d'Orient*, 27 (1928). 392.

18. For the translations of Augustine, whom Demetrius calls πατήρ πατέρων (*Corr.*, I, letter 25, line 28), see M. Rackl, "Die griechischen Augustinusübersetzungen," in *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle. Scritti di storia e paleografia pubblicati . . .*, Studi e testi, 37 (Roma: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1924), pp. 1-38, esp. pp. 18-28. See also Demetrius's letter to Helen Palaeologina, wife of John V, *Corr.*, I, letter 25, in which he advises the empress to profit from Augustine's works by reading his translations.

19. The exact date is unknown. But see the letters of Pope Urban V addressed to Demetrius in Constantinople during the years 1365 and 1367 which attest to his conversion and his services in furthering the union plans of both pope and emperor: 18 April 1365 and 6 November 1367, printed in O. Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome: Vingt ans de travail pour l'union des églises et pour la défense de l'empire d'orient, 1355-1375*, Travaux Historiques de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Varsovie, 8 (Warszawa: Towarzystwo naukowe Warszawskie, 1930), pp. 363 and 368.

The political side of the program was, of course, an attempt to resist Turkish pressure on the empire. This could be done only militarily and, because of the depleted state of the imperial treasury and lack of native manpower, this could be attempted only with "foreign aid." In the face of an entrenched anti-Latin party in Byzantium, Demetrius urged a policy of rapprochement with Western Europe which he believed was the natural and indeed the only possible ally of the faltering empire.<sup>20</sup> He was intimately involved in the profession of faith made by Emperor John V Palaeologus in Rome in 1369 in the presence of Pope Urban V and the papal curia.<sup>21</sup> The mission to Rome with John V was concerned with theological matters, but also with diplomatic negotiations. The pope was seen by the Byzantines as the prime mover of a crusade which would come to the aid of the empire against the infidel Turks. This expectation, of course, was not fulfilled, unless one considers the ill-fated Crusade of Nicopolis.<sup>22</sup> But this was years later in 1396. There were no immediate political advantages to John V's conversion in 1369. The papacy and, indeed, all of Western Europe had its own problems and was not able, even if willing, to come to the aid of the empire.

While Demetrius's hopes were disappointed,<sup>23</sup> he nevertheless remained convinced that Byzantium's only hope for survival was an alliance, politically and theologically, with the pope and the Western Europe which he was presumed to head. He continued to urge his countrymen to readjust their view of the world and take the only possible road to continued existence. He kept up a vigorous correspondence throughout the rest of his life—he died about 1397—with fellow-Byzantines who, like himself, had made their peace with the faith of Western Europe, continually urging them to use their influence with the pope in order to further a crusade movement.<sup>24</sup>

20. This position was by no means entirely original, though Demetrius pursued it with more intensity and, as was his custom, deepened it with intellectual and cultural-historical overtones. See, for example, his *Oratio pro subsidio Latinorum*, PG, CLIV, cols. 961-1008, esp. col. 977D: Τίνας Ῥωμαίους Ῥωμαίων οικειώτεροι σύμμαχοι; ἢ τίνες ἀξιοπιστότεροι τῶν τὴν αὐτὴν ἐχόντων πατρίδα; ἢ γὰρ ἐκείνων πόλις τῆς ἡμετέρας μητρόπολις γέγονε. There follows mention of the foundation of Rome by Romulus and of Constantinople by Constantine.

21. See Halecki, esp. ch. 8, pp. 195-98. John V's profession of faith is in PG, CLIV, cols. 1297-1308.

22. See A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London: Methuen, 1934).

23. Demetrius Cydones, *Corr.*, I, letter 37, written to John Lascaris Calophorus, 1371-72, shortly after Demetrius's return from Italy, lines 4-5: Ἐμὲ τὴν μακρὰν ἐκείνην φεύγοντα. πλάνην καὶ τὰς ἐκ ταύτης ταλαιπωρίας, καὶ τὸ μόνον εἰκὴ κόπτεσθαι μὴδ' ὀτιῶν τῇ πατρίδι λυσιτελοῦντα.

24. *Ibid.*, letter 93 to Simon Atumanus and *Corr.*, II, letter 190 to John Lascaris Calophorus. On these correspondents, see for Atumanus, G. Mercati, *Se la versione dall'ebraico del Codice veneto greco VII sia di Simone Atumano, arcivescovo di Tebe*, Studi e testi, 30 (Roma: Tip. poliglotta vaticana, 1916); *idem*, *Notizie*, pp. 130-33 and 355-58; and more recently G. Fedalto, *Simone Atumano monaco di studio, arcivescovo latino di Tebe, secolo XIV*, Storia del Cristianesimo, 2 (Brescia: Paideia, 1968); for Calophorus,



It can readily be seen that such a program—political and intellectual—however reasonable and satisfying it may have been for Demetrius, was not acceptable to all leaders of Byzantine society, especially, but not exclusively, the clergy. He found himself under attack for his translation of Latin theological treatises and his own acceptance of their value and, ultimately, their validity on points in dispute for centuries, such as the procession of the Holy Spirit. In a society apt to take up the pen at the slightest provocation, Demetrius took it up often and, it seems, with sufficient provocation. Giovanni Mercati has published a number of the defenses or “apologies” written by Demetrius at different periods of his life both on his own behalf and on behalf of his brother Prochorus.<sup>25</sup> Those written in his own defense are three in number and bear no titles of their own in the Vatican manuscripts in which they are found. The one in which I am concerned with here is *Apology I*, the longest of the three, written sometime after 1363. Mercati published it in 1931 in his *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone* . . . , giving it the title *Ai Greci Ortodossi*.<sup>26</sup> It is, in fact, a defense meant for his own countrymen. Its importance for our knowledge of Demetrius’s life and his theological views was recognized by its editor,<sup>27</sup> as well as by other scholars who made some use of it after its publication. The most notable of these people is Hans-Georg Beck who published a very readable German version of the *Apology* in *Ostkirchliche Studien* in 1952.<sup>28</sup> It was, however, published with a minimum of commentary and prefaced with a one-page sketch of Demetrius’s life and the statement that the *Apology* “spricht für sich selbst.”<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, this source which is important for a biography of Cydones and for the intellectual history of his times does not “speak for itself,” but rather calls for analysis and interpretation. While a complete analysis and interpretation cannot be offered here, I would like to present a brief summary of the main points made by Cydones and then comment on certain features

D. Jacoby, “Jean Lascaris Calophéros, Chypre et la Morée,” *Revue des études byzantines*, 26 (1968), 189-228; the study by A. K. Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben des Johannes Laskaris Kalopheros. Forschungen zur Geschichte des ost-westlichen Beziehungen im 14. Jahrhundert*, Schriften zur Geistesgeschichte des östlichen Europa, Bd. 3 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1969); and the additional information supplied by R. -J. Loenertz, “Pour la biographie de Jean Lascaris Calophéros,” *Revue des études byzantines*, 28 (1970), 129-39.

25. See Mercati, *Notizie*, pp. 293-355, for the writings of Cydones in his brother’s defense.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-403. For the two other apologies of Cydones, see the same work, pp. 403-35.

27. See Mercati’s comments, *ibid.*, pp. 135-38.

28. H. -G. Beck, “Die ‘Apologia pro vita sua’ des Demetrios Kydones,” *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 1 (1952), 208-25 and 264-82. See also Beck’s use of the *Apology* in his *Theodoros Metochites; Die Krise des byzantinischen Weltbildes im 14. Jahrhundert* (München: C. H. Beck, 1952), pp. 118-21.

29. Beck, “Die ‘Apologia,’” p. 208.

of his work which suggest important trends in the cultural climate of Byzantium in the late fourteenth century.

Demetrius begins his *Apology* with a prologue asking his readers to judge what he is about to say on its own merits, not relying on preconceived opinions.<sup>30</sup> He then begins as if writing an autobiography, giving us a sketch of his family background and education and the circumstances which led to his taking up a prominent position in the government of John VI Cantacuzenus. After the death of his father, he says: “I shut my books and went to the emperor who had intelligence and was a lover of learning, and, as it seems, a good providence was leading me, for I met with friendship from him and an office. . . .”<sup>31</sup> The position, though not named by Demetrius, was that of *μεσάζων*.<sup>32</sup> The duties of his office led him into frequent contact with people from Western Europe, ambassadors, merchants, mercenaries.<sup>33</sup> Finding the imperial interpreters insufficiently versed in the Latin language, Demetrius undertook to study the language himself.<sup>34</sup> He portrays this decision as directly connected with the proper carrying out of the duties of his office, but it is clear that important elements in his decision to learn Latin were his fundamental fascination with and love of language and his desire to discuss ideas with educated foreigners.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the disapproval and negative predictions of those around him at court,<sup>36</sup> Demetrius succeeded in learning Latin with the help of a Dominican living in Pera who had struck up a friendship with him even before his decision to learn Latin had been made.<sup>37</sup> This man acquainted him with the writings of Thomas Aquinas, which became the starting point of his theological evolution. Demetrius read Aquinas’ *Summa contra gentiles* which he described as “the most perfect of his works and, so to speak, the flower of the man’s wisdom.”<sup>38</sup> He was so fascinated with the persuasive methods of Aquinas that he decided to translate part of the work into Greek for the benefit of his skeptical friends and also to bring it to the attention of the emperor, John VI.<sup>39</sup> The emperor was delighted, Demetrius says, since he was “fond of hearing discussions” (*φιλήκοος ὢν*) and he encouraged him to translate the whole book, “saying that it would be of great advantage to the cause of the

30. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 359, lines 1-7.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 360, lines 26-28.

32. Cantacuzenus, *Historia*, IV. 39: III, 285, lines 5-9; Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 360, lines 31-33 and 39-41.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 360, lines 41-42.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 361, lines 56-58.

35. See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 361, lines 52-56; p. 363, lines 30-31; and cf. Demetrius’s letter written to Simon Atumanus in 1367-68, *Corr.*, I, letter 103, lines 63-67.

36. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 361, lines 79-82.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 361, lines 63-68.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 362, lines 5-6.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 363, lines 14-20.

Greeks in the future."<sup>40</sup> When the translation was completed, the emperor immediately had a copy made, as did many other notable people.<sup>41</sup>

After this beginning and initial success, Demetrius continued to indulge in the reading of Latin books, especially theological works. People willingly brought books in that language to his house, and members of the Dominican Order, especially those who were masters of theology, began to congregate there.<sup>42</sup> They were eager to demonstrate the intellectual respectability of Latin theology, and Demetrius was eager to translate more works for the benefit of his fellow-Byzantines.<sup>43</sup> There soon came a point, however, at which Demetrius ceased to be simply a translator of Latin theological treatises. He began to engage in theological discussions and to embrace more and more the positions taken in the works he was translating, and to explain and defend them.<sup>44</sup> Though he received praise and thanks from some Byzantines for his efforts, not everyone was pleased with his behavior. Some chose to criticize his work, characterizing it as an attempt to disparage native Byzantine theologians as "obsolete" and to persuade people that if they wished to acquire a reputation for wisdom they must read foreign writers.<sup>45</sup> The division into supporters and critics<sup>46</sup> came early on and tended to crystallize more and more as Demetrius inevitably got involved in the chief matter of dispute between Latin and Greek theologians: the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit. I say inevitably because, although Demetrius had a great love of language and took great pleasure in literary style, he was not reading Latin authors for the sake of studies in comparative literature. He was basically concerned with finding a common intellectual—and in fourteenth-century Byzantium this meant above all theological—bond between Greeks and Latins. As he tells us: "I paid no attention to poets and storytellers and orators and those who mixed with the beauty of literature the shame of the stories about the gods and myths . . . but my main concern was with the men skilled in divine things and their works."<sup>47</sup>

In order to reach a decision for himself on the question of which doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit was correct, that of the Byzantine Church or that of the Roman Church, Demetrius began to make a comparative study of theo-

40. *Ibid.*, p. 363, lines 20-23.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 363, lines 25-27.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 363, line 30-p. 364, line 35.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 364, lines 42-48. The translations must have been completed by about 1360, since Nilus Cabasilas uses them in his refutation of Aquinas, *Nilus Cabasilas et theologia S. Thomae de processione Spiritus Sancti*, ed. E. Candal, *Studi e testi*, 116 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, 1945).

44. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 364, line 52-p. 365, line 55.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 365, lines 62-67.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 366, lines 87-91.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 367, lines 36-38 and 41-42.

logical treatises. The result of his comparison was his conviction that both sides were really in agreement on all major issues in theology, including the famous question of the procession of the Holy Spirit: "... both were of one mind, being divided only by languages." The reason for this agreement was the common possession and use of the Holy Scriptures and the common inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>48</sup> His conviction, however, was attacked by those Byzantines who maintained that only their own theologians should be trusted and Latin writers should be avoided at all costs.<sup>49</sup> But Demetrius continued to argue that both Greek and Latin Church Fathers should be treated with respect, since both had been honored by the Church.<sup>50</sup> His opponents replied that in other matters, perhaps, there was hope of reconciliation, but the *filioque* could never be accepted as valid.<sup>51</sup> And they proceeded to accuse Demetrius of treason to his country.

He was nevertheless determined to search further into the famous question, since he, like his contemporaries, believed it was a matter of the greatest importance. Approaching people with some reputation in theology, he asked them respectfully why they considered the Latins to be wrong and how they could be refuted. He was asking them, as he explains it, to give him clear and reasonable proofs in theology and refers to an analogy with the sciences: "It is not at all difficult to convince others of what one has convinced himself; and this happens to the teachers of the sciences (*τῶν ἐπιστημῶν*), for they first persuade themselves with their reasons, later they compel also their students to agree with them."<sup>52</sup> If they could give him such reasonable proofs, he would gladly side with them. If not . . . The answers which he received left much to be desired. According to his description, sarcastic and obviously exaggerated, he was regaled with rhetorical statements about the greatness of New Rome and the size and safety of its harbor and the superiority of New Rome to Old Rome. According to him, this was the only type of argument he received to justify the low opinion the Byzantines had of Latin theology: "Old Rome was inferior in all things, and it is necessary on account of this to disregard it and not to call it any longer 'Rome' since it has clearly decayed through old age, and one must obey New Rome because it stands at the highest point (*ἐν ἀκμῇ*) of perfection."<sup>53</sup> Demetrius here puts in the mouths of his opponents the traditional Byzantine view of the world and Byzantium's place in it. One must recognize that, as it is stated in this passage of the *Apology*, the argument has the appearance of being totally ridiculous and is used by

48. *Ibid.*, p. 367, line 43-p. 368, line 60; quote from p. 368, line 51.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 368, lines 62-64.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 368, lines 76-78.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 368, lines 79-81.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 370, lines 15-18.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 370, lines 30-32.

Demetrius to indicate the lack of ability to give clear rational reasons for the traditional low view of Latin theology. Nevertheless it is reasonable to assume that a significant segment of the population still clung to this view or a variation of it.<sup>54</sup> It is just this traditional view which Demetrius rejects, along with its implications in theology. He is able, to his own satisfaction, to turn around every argument used by the defenders of the traditional superiority of Byzantium, while at the same time ridiculing these arguments as insufficient proofs of contemporary theological beliefs. Even if the walls of New Rome were larger than those of Old Rome (which he believes is not the case), what does that have to do with religious truth?<sup>55</sup> And if the imperial dignity makes New Rome preeminent, one must remember that it came to Byzantium from Old Rome where "one was first called 'Emperor of the Romans,'"<sup>56</sup> and therefore New Rome should obey Old Rome as a colony obeys its mother-city.<sup>57</sup>

After a brief description of the way in which the Roman emperors subjugated the world to their rule, Demetrius goes into a long description of the *plenitudo potestatis* of the bishop of Rome, which indicates he had accepted the Western medieval theory of papal monarchy<sup>58</sup> in which the pope is the source of both spiritual and temporal authority in Western Europe. He paints a highly colored picture of the beneficial power and rule of the Church of Rome which is "the ruler of peace and wisdom for all and displays to all the attributes of a mother and mistress. . . ."<sup>59</sup> According to Demetrius, no one could ever think of laying claim to her authority, just as no one would think to claim the authority belonging to God.<sup>60</sup> It is clear that Demetrius is looking at the West through "rose-colored glasses" and his description of it contrasts sharply with the picture he gives of the state of the Byzantine Church and government at the time. Not only are the "subjects" of the pope virtu-

54. However, see the remarks by I. Ševčenko, "The Decline of Byzantium Seen through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 15 (1961), 172. Also, compare this "die-hard" view, as Beck aptly calls it (*Theodoros Metochites*, p. 118), with the phrase, still on the lips of many, that "New York is still the greatest city in the world."

55. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 371, lines 60-61.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 372, lines 80-81.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 372, lines 87-88. He makes the same connections between Rome and Constantinople in his *Oratio pro subsidio Latinorum*, in *PG*, CLIV, cols. 977-79.

58. Probably one of the more extreme views; see Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 372, lines 3-5; p. 373, lines 8-15. Did Demetrius receive these ideas about the role of the papacy from Peter Thomas and Paul of Smyrna, the papal legates in Constantinople during the 1350s and 1360s?

59. *Ibid.*, p. 373, lines 14-15.

60. The fact that Demetrius held such views helps to explain the severe shock he experienced at news of the Great Schism in the West (1378-1417). See esp. his letter of 1378-79 to John Lascaris Calopherus, then living in Rome, *Corr.*, II, letter 190, lines 4-9, and his letter to Simon Atumanus (1380-81), *Corr.*, II, letter 226, lines 145-50.

ous, prosperous, law-abiding, and courageous Christians,<sup>61</sup> ready to die for Christ, but the Church of Rome itself is "a storehouse of all wisdom, bringing forth companies of philosophers, surrounded by groups of theologians, adorned by monks of manifold virtue. . . ." etc.<sup>62</sup> The power and attributes of the bishop of Rome contrast vividly, for Demetrius, with the feeble and debased position of the patriarch in Constantinople who must seek to please the emperor at every turn if he wishes to remain in office: "But here the concern of the patriarch for his flock is very slight, and all his effort is to seek how he might be pleasing to the emperor, for he knows that his gift of leading the Church comes from his [i.e., the emperor's] decrees, and if he provokes him, he will immediately be toppled. . . ."<sup>63</sup>

In foreign affairs, according to Demetrius, the picture is just as bleak. While Western Europe is free, happy, and prosperous, Byzantium is leading a miserable existence of increasing poverty, ignorance, and servitude: ". . . to rule belongs to the infidels and the offices and revenues are theirs, and we are very few . . . and this little group lives a life of most shameful and painful servitude, since we live not in any way for ourselves, but only for our masters. . . ."<sup>64</sup> To the rhetorical questions: "Where is justice? Where is law? Where a judge? Concern for studies? For theology? Where even a semblance of virtue?"<sup>65</sup> Demetrius implies the answer: "Certainly not here in this decaying city." The city of which we think so highly, he says, is in reality no better off than a city already laid waste.<sup>66</sup> It is deprived of all the things which make life enjoyable. But even more than this, the emperors are forced to heed the commands of the barbarians, and they are now under the obligation of going on military campaigns for their benefit. They are even obliged to pay tribute money which has emptied the imperial treasury and drained the private wealth of citizens as well.<sup>67</sup>

To summarize: the peoples of Western Europe are more numerous and much better off than we are. They live in freedom, knowing no other master but God, the Church, and the laws.<sup>68</sup> They are also our intellectual equals, if not superiors. After examining the theological treatises recommended to him which were intended to refute the Latin doctrines in dispute and which, he was told, would resolve his own doubts, Demetrius records his disappointment with the polemical writings of his countrymen: "The authors of these works seemed to me to have filled their books with much anger and passion and great

61. Demetrius Cydones, *Apology*, p. 373, lines 19-23.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 373, lines 23-25.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 373, lines 27-30.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 374, lines 42-45.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 374, lines 57-59.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 374, lines 59-60.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 374, lines 60-66.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 375, lines 73-74.



bitterness and hate, and to have had great concern only for speaking insults, but they had an amazingly great forgetfulness of the truth . . ."<sup>69</sup> The Byzantines, he thought, were good only at throwing insults at the Latins, and when they attempted to deal with their arguments rationally, they became entangled in dialectical contradictions due to their lack of skill in reasoning.<sup>70</sup> He is convinced his countrymen have no sound arguments with which to refute the Latins whose works he admires since "they compel human wisdom to serve the Gospel, just as a handmaid serves a mistress."<sup>71</sup> He states that he derived no benefit from reading the polemical works of his countrymen except for the knowledge he now has that such works could teach him nothing.<sup>72</sup>

Once again Demetrius contrasts the conditions in his homeland with those prevailing in the West, but this time in the area of intellectual ability. The writings of the Latins, he thinks, are free of insults and bitterness, they are models of reasonable argumentation, clearly expressed and very much to the point. They are difficult, if not impossible, to refute. Of all the Byzantine treatises which he read concerning the points in dispute with the Latins, none, he claims, provided the means of refuting the Latin arguments. Neither did he obtain the help he asked for from learned men, such as his former teacher Nilus Cabasilas.<sup>73</sup> He was left to his own resources, and concluded that his countrymen had no sound arguments with which to refute the Latins. Furthermore, he was convinced, the Church Fathers on both sides were in complete harmony.<sup>74</sup> He therefore advises his countrymen to seek to end the hostilities and, like a nation at war which realizes its opponent is stronger, to send ambassadors to their enemies' camp to negotiate peace terms.

While Demetrius admits that it is possible he is not convinced by the Byzantine treatises "through dullness and slowness at learning,"<sup>75</sup> and he does not pretend to be the greatest judge of their contents,<sup>76</sup> nevertheless he insists on his right to judge for himself and form his conscience on important theological matters according to his own investigations of the arguments used by both sides—Greeks and Latins—in the dispute. He also asks his country-

69. *Ibid.*, p. 387, lines 94-96.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 387, line 7-p. 388, line 14.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 388, lines 22-23.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 388, line 42-p. 389, line 48.

73. See Demetrius Cydones, *Corr.*, II, letter 378 to Cabasilas, asking him to "put aside the service of the emperor for a short time" (line 20), in order to advise him on arguments which could be used to refute the Latins. It is interesting to note that Demetrius describes Cabasilas, for whom he had a sincere love and respect, as "differing very much from our people" (*Apology*, p. 391, line 7). He seems to half-admit the one-sidedness of his view of Byzantine intellectual achievement by the words he chooses. See also the words of praise for Cabasilas in letter 378, lines 4-14, which cannot all be attributed to flattery and exaggeration *à la Byzantine*.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 399, lines 85-86: τούτους τοῖνυν πάντας ἀκρῶς εὐρίσκων ἀλλήλους συμβαλόντας βούλομαι καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς ἐκείνων ὁμονοίας μετέχεω.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 394, lines 94-95.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 394, lines 97-99.

men not to have too much confidence in their traditional arguments against the Latins and think that there is no need of further discussion. The Byzantines of previous centuries who wrote treatises against the Latins "do not differ much from us who read them" and we need not bow to the superiority of their wisdom, but they can be criticized by us on many points.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, he does not accuse these men of lying openly or writing things which outrage the faith.<sup>78</sup> But he asks that his countrymen realize that they must measure the strength of their arguments not by their own approval of them, but by their effect on the Latins. He appeals to them to speak to the Latins and not just to themselves. He makes the point that the Byzantines cannot refute Latin arguments because they do not really understand them.<sup>79</sup>

Needless to say, Demetrius relies on rhetorical exaggeration in defense of his actions and ideas. The contrasts he draws between Byzantium and the West—politically, intellectually, economically—are too stark. Though he himself probably was convinced that things were much better in Western Europe, he nevertheless uses his rhetorical skill in making the most use of the contrast for his own purposes. We must remember that the *Apology* is autobiography, but, as is often the case, it serves a purpose: defense of self and championing of a position with its theological and political implications. There was, as a matter of fact, in both Avignon and in Constantinople, a revival of interest in a crusade to help Byzantium resist Turkish aggression in Thrace at approximately the time the *Apology* was composed.<sup>80</sup>

But although we recognize the exaggerations and the underlying purposes which they serve, we must nonetheless see in the description which Demetrius gives of the state of Byzantium his painful awareness of its decline—political and economic, but also, for him, cultural. It was in large part this very crisis of his society which allowed him or even compelled him to take a critical attitude to inherited views of Byzantine superiority and Western inferiority.<sup>81</sup> For Demetrius, the idea that Byzantium had the best of everything could no longer be maintained seriously. It was obvious to him and to others like him that Byzantine intellectual life was in decline. The sense of being disappointed by one's culture is or can be shattering. The traditional answers to basic questions are no longer clear and acceptable. One feels the ground shaking beneath one's

77. *Ibid.*, p. 394, lines 6-8.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 395, lines 26-27.

79. On this point, see also M. Rackl, "Die griechischen Augustinusübersetzungen," pp. 7-8, who quotes from Demetrius's unedited *Defense of Thomas Aquinas*, *Vat. gr. 614*, fols. 126-126<sup>v</sup>. It was this ignorance of Latin theology which Demetrius was hoping to alleviate by his translations.

80. See, for example, Demetrius Cydones, *Corr.*, I, letter 93 (1364), a reply to Simon Atumanus's letter which advised John V to send an embassy to Pope Urban V to deal with plans for a crusade which would include aid to Byzantium.

81. Beck has called attention to this in his *Theodoros Metochites*; see esp. pp. 115-16.

feet and one must find answers for oneself. This was part of the quandary in which Demetrius found himself; the other part was the military threat of the Turks. He turned with relief to the Latin West, thinking to find a refuge in its theology as well as in its military potential. Having found this refuge, new problems arose: his relationship to his Greek culture, his conversion, his rejection by an important part of Byzantine society. But a certain amount of security also returned to him. He was able to use his new-found answers in an integrated way, by turning to the West not only for new ideas, but also for the rescue (as he saw it) of what was left of the old. He came to see Western Europe not as an enemy<sup>82</sup> or threat, but as the only and the most fitting help in preserving what was left of Byzantine culture, and it was considerable and valuable.

Demetrius was operating in a politically powerful climate. He was a government official for nearly forty years, already nearly twenty years at the time the *Apology* was written. Because of the political decline of the empire and the threat to its continued existence posed by the Turks, politics was inescapable. It is obvious, therefore, that Demetrius was not a philosopher or theologian coming to his conclusions in a position of aloofness from the everyday realities of life. Neither, for that matter, were those who disagreed with him and made "apologies" necessary. Though we tend to think of the Byzantines as "all thought and no action," Demetrius was in reality an activist, seeking solutions to the many problems overwhelming his country. He strikes a sincere note when he says: "I think my country is the thing most worthy of honor and the most sacred thing, after God . . . and I would more easily remain in it and bear many misfortunes than live among foreigners and enjoy

82. "Indeed, we were not divided from the Latins from long ago, and in everything and by nature, nor have we received our battle against them as an inheritance, just as long ago the Hellenes fought against the Barbarians, and as now we fight against those who completely insult Christ. Thus it is not necessary to preserve the old enmity forever. Quite the contrary, from the beginning we were both citizens of, as it were, one city, the Church, and we lived under the same laws and customs, and we obeyed the same rulers. Later on—I don't know *what* happened—we separated from one another." (Demetrius Cydonēs, *Apology*, p. 401, lines 39-45). Two points: (1) Had Demetrius perhaps read Augustine's *De civitate Dei*? (ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὥσπερ μιᾶς πόλεως ἄμφω τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὄντες πολῖται—lines 43-44); (2) In the whole of the *Apology*—the Greek text runs to over forty pages—Demetrius offers only one line about the origin of the schism between the Byzantine and Roman Churches, and it indicates that he was totally at a loss to explain it (ἄλλοτερον οὐκ οἶδ' ὅτι συμβάν διεκρίθημεν—line 45). Apparently the year 1054 had little or no meaning to him as marking the beginning of the schism. He does state, however, that he had read "all" the Greek polemical treatises against the Latins written during nearly 500 years. This would bring the schism back, in his mind, to the late ninth century, the time of Photius and the quarrel over Bulgaria and the *filioque*. He indicates this in *Apology*, p. 386, lines 49-52: Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὕτω παρεσκευασμένος τῶν βιβλίων ἡπόμην, καὶ πολλὰ μὲν νύκτες περὶ ταῦτα πολλὰ δὲ ἡμέραι μοι κατετρίφθησαν, ἕως οὐδὲν παραλιπεῖν ἔδοξα τῶν ἐν πεντακοσίοις σχεδὸν ἔτεσι (τοσαῦτα γὰρ ἡ τῶν ἐθνῶν διάστασις ἔχει) συγγεγραμμένων.

the greatest pleasures."<sup>83</sup> For all its shortcomings, Demetrius was engaged in seeking to save what was left of Byzantium. Hence his career in government, with its policy of resistance to the Turks and attempt to obtain an alliance with the West. Hence also his intellectual rapprochement with the theology of Western Europe.

One sees, then, in Cydonēs an integration of intellectual and political needs focusing on the West. To say either that his turning to the West was purely political or purely intellectual would be false. If we focus on either aspect apart from the other for purposes of clarity and convenience, we must not forget that the two aspects came together in his mind as well as in the minds of most, if not all, of his contemporaries.

The *Apology* is a rhetorical, polemical work, but it is also a personal statement which bears the stamp of basic sincerity. It is an important source, not only for our knowledge of the author himself, but for our understanding of one segment of the fourteenth-century Byzantine community. In concentrating on Cydonēs we can understand better the intellectual and political options in Byzantium in its final moments. We must not exaggerate his importance and see him as the leader of a significant Thomist school in Byzantium, but we also must not underestimate his attitudes and reactions and write him off as merely eccentric or as a self-indulgent "intellectual." He was not alone.

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83. *Ibid.*, p. 400, lines 2-7.