

## **Textual Representations of Greek Christianity during the English Reformations**

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Anglo-Hellenic religious relations during the Reformation era have received very little scholarly attention. It is striking that early modern Western writers knew and talked considerably more about non-Western forms of Christianity than Reformation historians do today. This is a serious stumbling block to our understanding of Reformation Britain, since we cannot accurately understand its socio-religious or politico-economic history if we assume that its population had no knowledge of, interest in, or strategic interactions with non-Western forms of Christianity. Neither can we fully understand Reformation confessional identities if we believe that the early modern world presented only a binary model of Christian identity—Protestant or Catholic. Knowledge of a very ancient “Third Church” was formative in persuading Protestants that there was a theologically convincing alternative to Roman Catholicism. In turn, awareness of Eastern Christianity shaped Catholic responses to Protestantism. We must therefore ask: How far and in what ways did Eastern Christianity shape the Western Reformations? This article contributes to the overall picture

through a specific case study focusing on how Greek Christianity influenced the English Reformations between ca. 1530 and ca. 1583.<sup>1</sup>

Scholarship on early modern Anglo-Hellenic interactions remains sparse, both with regard to religious history and more generally. Jonathan Harris's ground-breaking monograph and articles on Anglo-Greek religio-political contacts and on Greek émigrés to England in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries are unparalleled for the Reformation era.<sup>2</sup> Scholars who have examined in some detail English interactions with Greeks during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have often confined their work to individual case studies of politico-economic history.<sup>3</sup> The few overviews of contacts between the English and Greek churches occur mostly within works on Orthodox-Anglican dialogue; however, such works leave aside both the role of English Catholicism and the broader context of English perceptions of Greeks.<sup>4</sup> Most scholarship on Anglo-Hellenic networks concerns the seventeenth century and beyond, and even works examining Jacobean and Caroline contacts overlook their substantial sixteenth-century roots.<sup>5</sup> This article thus aims to scrutinize the religious dimensions of Anglo-Hellenic relations during the Tudor era and to place them within a broader cross-confessional context.

Previous limited research examining Greek Christian influences on the sixteenth-century English Reformations has

focused almost entirely upon liturgical influences and the field of patristics.<sup>6</sup> This article breaks new ground by examining, instead, reformers' research into and constructions of Greek Christian history. The period saw an outpouring of historical scholarship, largely by religious apologists attempting to reconfigure and justify the nation's religious identity.<sup>7</sup> Not only was this material of interest to a narrow group of intellectuals, or to leading clerics and politicians, but it also fed into apologetic and propagandist works addressing the wider educated population; this was particularly the case during the break with Rome and the early decades of the Elizabethan Settlement. The authors of these works often turned to precedents from Greek Christian history to justify England's new religious policies, marshalling an array of examples spanning Eastern Christian and Byzantine history from the earliest Greek fathers to the conversion of Constantine, and from the protracted events of the East-West schism to the fall of Constantinople.

This article argues that examples drawn from Greek Christian history, beliefs, and writings served multiple apologetic purposes, including theological, ecclesiastical, and political ends. For defenders of Henry's case for the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, studying the Greek East in the patristic era and the writings of the Greek church fathers offered the possibility of finding (or claiming

to find) alternative interpretations of contested scriptural passages and useful differences in church teachings and canon law.<sup>8</sup> As England sought to break away from Rome, early Byzantine precedents became all the more useful, providing an alternative, caesaropapist model of church governance.

By contrast, for John Foxe, writing his Acts and Monuments during Elizabeth's reign, Greek Christianity was a particularly useful example of the catholic (universal) manifestation of the invisible True Church, which had long struggled against the dual Antichrist forces of Roman Catholicism and Islam. The particular history of Greek Orthodoxy thus meant that it was a strong example to hold up to the English Church, which had only recently broken again with Rome. For this reason, Foxe dealt with Byzantine history in far more detail than earlier English apologists had done, providing a narrative account running from the early Roman Empire to the fall of Constantinople.

While a range of perspectives on Greek Christian history can be found in English Reformation apologetics, only one account of the history of the English Reformation by a Greek Christian survives. This autobiographical account, by Nicander Nucius, is valuable not only in this respect, but also in suggesting how Greek Christians might have sought to navigate the confessional conflicts of the Western Reformations, and even to use them for their own apologetic ends.

Choice and usage of religious terminology in Reformation scholarship is invariably problematic, and it is necessary to address this issue at the outset. In discussing "Greek Christianity," this article draws together under one umbrella a number of different periods of history and ethno-religious groups. This broad definition is informed by how early modern English writers used the term the "Greek Church." First, Reformation writers discussed extensively the early centuries of Christianity. In doing so, they drew upon not only the history of the Latin West but also the Greek East (in this period, the two were united in one, undivided church). Reformation apologists were, naturally, very interested in the history of the Greek East during the early centuries of Christianity—not only had all the ecumenical councils been held there but most of the early church fathers had come from the East and written in Greek. Secondly, early modern authors sometimes looked to another, later period of history, namely the Byzantine Empire of the ninth to fifteenth centuries, and to the slow process of separation of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches.<sup>9</sup> Finally, some English authors were also interested in the Greeks of their own day, including their religious beliefs and their status as a Christian minority under Ottoman rule. When discussing contemporary Greek Christianity, most Protestant authors were solely interested in Greek Orthodoxy; however, some Catholic writers were also concerned with those Greek Christians who had

reunited with the Roman Catholic Church (variously called Byzantine-Rite Catholics, Greek Catholics, or Uniates).

### **The break with Rome: Henrician reformers' engagement with Greek Christianity**

While the revival of Greek learning was well underway in continental Europe by the early sixteenth century, Tudor England lagged behind. For example, the introduction of public lectures in Greek at Oxford University at the relatively late date of 1517 proved so controversial that a group of scholars united in opposition, calling themselves "Trojans." However, during the 1510s to 1520s, learning classical and Koine Greek became fashionable among England's intellectual and cultural elites.<sup>10</sup> By the 1530s in England, it was common to draw upon Greek (as well as Latin) authorities when writing on such diverse topics as politics, history, and medicine, and sometimes to draw upon manuscripts actually in Greek rather than the handful of Latin translations of Greek works that had been available in the pre-Renaissance West.<sup>11</sup> It is within this wider trend that we must contextualize the small, but growing, interest in Greek learning among reformers—both evangelicals and conservatives—during the 1520s.

During the 1530s, this expanding interest in and knowledge of the writings of the Greek church fathers and the

history of the Greek-speaking East in the early church came to serve an important purpose in royal religious propaganda. In 1529-30, Richard Croke was sent to Italy (especially Bologna, Venice, and Padua) to search for Greek manuscripts in libraries which could support Henry's case for the annulment of his marriage. Croke was one of the finest Greek humanists of his generation in England, having taught Greek at Louvain, Cologne, Leipzig, and Cambridge, before being appointed tutor to Henry Fitzroy.<sup>12</sup> His correspondence suggests that he was searching for particular texts. For example, in 1530, he reported that Hieronymus Aleander (Italian cardinal and scholar of Greek) had informed Croke that the papal libraries' collection of Greek books was limited and did not have all the letters of Gregory of Nazianzus or the book that Croke wanted.<sup>13</sup> However, while some desired works clearly eluded him, he seems to have found and obtained copies of a wide variety of texts. For example, his accounts record that in Venice, during the first three months of 1529 alone, he bought numerous Greek books and commissioned several Greek scribes to copy manuscripts of letters and biblical commentaries by the Greek church fathers, accounts of church councils held in the Greek East, and collections of Byzantine Church canons.<sup>14</sup> Some of the material Croke found was certainly used in the government's propaganda tract Censurae Academicarum (1531) and its vernacular translation of the same year, and possibly in a number of earlier tracts.<sup>15</sup>

Jean-Louis Quantin has argued that "in marked contrast to later tendencies, sixteenth-century authors had no special interest in either the Greek or the ante-Nicene Fathers."<sup>16</sup> This may in the main be true, and Quantin gives the example of Cranmer's library. However, the corpus of sources used to justify Henry's annulment and break with Rome must, in that case, stand as an important exception. The texts which Croke mentions in his correspondence and accounts are almost exclusively editions of the Greek fathers and works relating to the (Christian) history of the Greek East: the writings of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Philo, and Dionysius; Greek commentaries on the Old and New Testaments; Greek canons; accounts of councils held in the Greek East; and other unnamed Greek books.<sup>17</sup>

By 1530, Henry and his advisors realized that the annulment case would not receive a favorable hearing in Rome, and thus it would be necessary to hear the case in England instead. In defense of this, the king's apologists searched for evidence to support a historical narrative of England's long-standing religious independence.<sup>18</sup> In the king's defense of his annulment in 1532, A Glasse of the Truth, we find an outline of the kinds of sources that Henry's apologists were using to justify this degree of English religious independence:



Here have you no newe allegatyon of mans invention or imagination but onley taken of the scripture of god, of the counsels and ordinances of the churche universall, of mooste auncient popes and other holy doctours wryttinges, with the factes and authoryties of blessed men besyde.<sup>19</sup>

Byzantium, the ancient Christianized Greek branch of the Roman Empire, provided the perfect example of caesaropapism, since, until its fall in 1453, it was the oldest major Christian imperial power, its emperors had convened the ecumenical councils, and the relationship between the Latin popes and Greek emperors was well preserved in church histories.

The voluminous notes compiled by Henry's researchers are preserved in the manuscript titled Collectanea satis copiosa, including frequent excerpts from correspondence between the papacy and the Byzantine emperors. For example, the compiler reproduces parts of letters from Pope Leo I to the emperor Theodosius. Although Leo's papacy is seen by modern historians as a turning point in the growth of papal power, the compiler of the Collectanea uses Leo's correspondence to suggest that the emperors possessed wide-ranging religious powers, including the ability to call local and ecumenical councils, whereas the papacy's powers were still relatively modest, noting that the pope's tone in the extracts is deferential.<sup>20</sup> Using the research gathered in the Collectanea, Henry's apologists drew explicit parallels between the English king

and the early Byzantine emperors. For example, when Cuthbert Tunstall protested against the king's new title of "supreme head" of the English Church, Henry's apologist Edward Foxe defended the king in a letter comparing Henry to the emperor Justinian. Foxe claimed that Justinian was entrusted by God with the care of the church in his realm and legislated on spiritual matters, and thus each Christian prince was the supreme head in his own realm.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, in A Glasse of the Truth, Henry's propagandists looked to precedents not only from the Latin West but also from the Greek East in arguing that Rome had no right to interfere in the jurisdiction of the English Church. The work, for instance, cites the writings of Greek church fathers such as Basil and Gregory.<sup>22</sup> It also discusses in detail the decrees of early church councils, including the ecumenical councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon, as well as smaller local councils such as that of Antioch, and examines the powers of the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, alleging that the pope could not interfere in their jurisdictions.<sup>23</sup>

The interest in the apologetic potential of Greek Christianity shown by English critics of the papacy soon sparked similar interest among English defenders of Roman Catholicism. In the 1530s, when Thomas Starkey wrote to Reginald Pole asking him to defend "the king's business,"

Starkey suggests the lines of argument he might take to support the royal supremacy and annulment of Henry and Catherine's marriage.<sup>24</sup> Among these recommendations is the following:

Second, is the pope's pretended authority by divine law? No proof of it in scripture. You know what Christ said when the disciples fought for superiority, and that Paul confessed only Christ as his head, but many civil heads, none by divine law. Nor is there any mention in the Acts, from the beginning of the Church when the truth was clearer. No supremacy among the four patriarchs. The Greeks split from our Catholic Church largely because the bishop of Rome claimed to be head. You know better than I what good exegetes the Greeks were.<sup>25</sup>

Pole, who emerged as a staunch defender of the papacy, must have viewed the appeal to Greek Christianity as a sufficiently strong threat to the Roman Catholic case that it needed careful treatment, given that he tackled it numerous times, and from various angles, in his De Unitate (the book written in response to Starkey's letter, but in firm opposition to Henry's actions).

First, although Pole himself had excellent classical Greek and had studied the Greek fathers extensively, he refers only once to a Greek church father, John Chrysostom, in his De Unitate.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, he refers to Chrysostom warily, stating

immediately afterward that the passage of scripture under discussion is clear enough without the need to turn to Chrysostom's exegesis.<sup>27</sup> Pole was probably trying to suggest that the Greek fathers and their exegeses were utterly dispensable in evaluating the royal supremacy and the papacy.

Secondly, Pole uses the fate of the Greek Orthodox Church as an ominous warning to enemies of Rome.<sup>28</sup> He claims in De Unitate that the Greeks had accepted the papacy very loyally both in the early church and under the Byzantine emperors, alleging that the acts of the Council of Florence testify to this. He argues that it is only the contemporary Greeks of the Ottoman Empire who reject the papacy, and that their fate highlights why England should avoid doing the same (246-47). He writes that Henry's advisors "present the example of those Greeks who are now suffering under the very burdensome yoke of the Turks. They attempt to lead to you to this most wretched manner of living, since they are the authors who urge you on to embrace the opinion that drives you to these dangers" (247). **[AU: "attempt to lead to you to this...? check transcription]** Indeed, he singles out the Greeks and the Jews as the two nations most heavily punished by God, which should act as a warning to the English:

But, I beseech you, what nations under the heavens lead a life of greater misery than these two? One denies that Christ is the Messiah; the other does not recognize the

vicar of Christ. They pay the penalty for their impiety through the most just judgement of God. Though they, above all other nations, were enlightened by the gift of knowledge to know the will of God—and many did this—afterwards, they repudiated this knowledge. Now they scarcely know about the other nations that they once despised as servile and barbarous; they endure the harshest servitude. (247)

If any of his audience knew something of recent Byzantine history, they would have seen that Pole had stretched the historical facts to a breaking point. In reality, Constantinople had actually fallen during the period when the Greek emperors had briefly reunited with Rome (after the Council of Florence); it was only once the Greeks had already been conquered by the Ottomans that the Greek Church formally broke with Rome once more, as the Ottomans replaced a unionist patriarch of Constantinople with one who firmly opposed the reunion.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the historical facts could not support Pole's narrative of the Greeks' suffering under the Turks being caused by their breaking definitively with Rome. However, Pole probably relied upon few English people being knowledgeable about the chronology. Pole's discussion is a fine example of an early English attempt within a work of Reformation apologetics to provide a theological explanation of why Constantinople fell. It does not seem to have received a

direct Protestant reply, despite Pole returning to the theme in his first speech to Parliament in November 1554.<sup>30</sup> Until Foxe's Acts and Monuments, English Protestant apologetic interest in Greek Christianity generally focused upon the early church and the early and middle Byzantine periods.

### **A Greek perspective on the Henrician Reformation**

With regard to the Henrician Reformation, we can view not only the reformers' perceptions of Greek Christianity, but also a Greek Christian's view of the Reformation. This is due to the survival of an exceptional source. Nicander Nucius's autobiographical account of his diplomatic mission to England in 1545-46 is the second in a three-volume account of his travels around Europe; it was never published in the early modern period, circulating only in manuscript form. It is written in classical Greek, modeled on the writings of ancient Greek historians such as Plutarch, Thucydides, and Herodotus.<sup>31</sup>

Until recently, Nicander's work has received little scholarly attention in Anglophone scholarship. A translation of part of the autobiography (largely relating to Nicander's time in England) was published in 1841, but no further English translations followed, although two French editions were published in 1962 and 2002.<sup>32</sup> The state of affairs has now

changed, however, with John Muir's complete English translation in 2022, encouraging future scholars to integrate Nicander's narrative into discussions of the Henrician and European Reformations.<sup>33</sup>

Relatively little is known about Nicander Nucius. Nicander is an adaptation (with classical Greek overtones) of Andronicos, and Nucius, although meaning "emissary," was probably his true surname rather than a nom de plume.<sup>34</sup> He relates that he had been driven by various misfortunes from his homeland of Corfu, a Venetian colony.<sup>35</sup> By the 1540s, he had emigrated to Venice itself, which had a large Greek community.<sup>36</sup> This community was officially in communion with Rome, albeit with simmering tensions.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the form of Greek Christianity Nicander practiced was technically Greek Catholicism rather than Greek Orthodoxy, although he would not have viewed his religious identity in such a black-and-white manner. He was a literate, educated man, as evidenced by his work as a copyist and in the printing trade in Venice, and his accounts of his travels show that he was well connected. He was ordained as a reader (one of the lowest clerical ranks in the Greek Church), and he possessed a good knowledge of his faith, evidenced by the fact that he was involved in the production of two liturgical books—an Apostolos and a Typicon, published in 1542 and 1545 respectively.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1540s, Nicander offered his services to Emperor Charles V, and traveled throughout Europe alongside the emperor's ambassador, Gerard Veltwyck. In the Holy Roman Empire, he encountered Lutheranism. Although he admired Luther and Melanchthon's erudition, his impression of their "new-found type of worship" was not positive. He writes in his autobiography, "Their observances have nothing in common with or even similar to the church that we know." He states disapprovingly that the Lutherans reject ecclesiastical traditions, saints' cults, feasts and fasts, the decrees of the ecumenical councils, religious imagery, monasticism, and the traditional status and orders of clergy.<sup>39</sup> Viewed from this perspective, it is surprising that his description of England's break with Rome is sympathetic.

In 1545, Nicander arrived in England, staying until at least 1546. His autobiography provides a lengthy and often credulous narrative of the Henrician Reformation, containing many inaccuracies and secondhand propaganda tales, such as exaggerated stories of the corruption in England's monasteries before Henry dissolved them (55, 61-66). The clearest, and most accurate, part of his narrative is his account of Henry's attempts to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. This part of Nicander's work also highlights his sympathies with the schismatic king above the papacy (56-58). Nicander claims that the faculty of theology in Paris supported Henry, while



the pope was unyielding. The pope is presented as unreasonable in contrast to Henry, who is described as an "an energetic man of noble birth" (57).

There are also some interesting similarities between Nicander's justification of the Henrician Reformation and the justifications found in the apologetic literature of the 1530s, suggesting that he may have had discussions with English courtiers who could explain the religious rationales, or he may have read some of the Latin apologetics (56-58). Moreover, some of his language suggests he may have been influenced by Protestants at Henry's court. This can be seen in the invented speech (a typical classical device) he puts into Henry's mouth justifying the need for England to break away from the control of the Roman Church, with its emphasis on scripture, apostolic Christianity, evangelistic piety, sincere faith, and the rejection of idolatry:

All men partake of grace, and, through the admonition of the apostles, through devotion to the Gospels, and through the guidance of the Spirit, the saving message of faith has been disseminated to every race of men over practically the whole inhabited world. When men have tasted the nectar of the knowledge of God, they have shaken off a lack of faith and have changed the bitter, soul-destroying drink of idolatrous and demonic madness for the sweet taste of faith. Something of this sort has

happened to us . . . however, the present Bishop of Rome wishes to deprive us of this lovely treasure.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, Nicander's anticlerical account of the dissolution of the monasteries may have been influenced by English apologetics, especially given the sharp contrast with his criticism of the German Lutherans for dissolving their monasteries and degrading the status of their clergy (24).

Nicander's sympathetic portrayal of the Henrician Reformation and criticism of Roman Catholicism in England may seem daring, given that the Venetian Greeks were already being questioned by the Latin Catholic authorities, who suspected that the Greek community held schismatic and heretical leanings and was not fully wedded to the reunion with Rome.<sup>41</sup> The fact that Nicander wrote in classical Greek would not have prevented educated Venetian religious elites from reading his writings, and the fact that a manuscript survives in Italy may suggest that at least one copy of his text circulated there.<sup>42</sup> This raises the question of why Nicander wrote this sympathetic account of the break with Rome: was he truly convinced of the merits of the English Reformation, or was it rather an attempt to please the friends he had made during his time in England, and perhaps even win English patronage at a future point?

In 1546, the rest of Charles V's embassy left England. Nicander, however, entered into service (in a civilian

capacity) under Thomas of Argos, the commander of a band of elite Greek mercenaries fighting in Henry's wars, first against Scotland, and then near Calais against the French (72-76). Nicander (who doubtless saw himself in the classical Greek mold of the traveling historian) describes this expedition in his autobiography, including the skill and bravery of his compatriots, the Greek mercenaries.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps, Nicander intended to give a copy to Thomas of Argos, whom he clearly admired, describing him as "a generous and splendid man" (76). If so, it is possible that Nicander's warm treatment of Henry VIII was designed partly to please Thomas, given he was not only employed by Henry, but moreover had been favored and very richly rewarded by the English king (75).

It is also possible that Nicander hoped that the circulation of his manuscript account (describing his travels across Europe and his time in England, and written in classical-style Greek) might win him further patronage in highly elite, intellectual circles. Nicander chose to leave the service of Thomas of Argos ca. 1546, wanting to return to Italy (76). Thus, he cannot have been looking for English patronage in the immediate future. However, given his evident love of traveling, perhaps he hoped that, by writing a flattering account of his time in England and impression of the English monarchy, there might be an opportunity to return to the island, whether under the patronage of the monarch or

one of his well-connected acquaintances. It is even plausible that the king, or someone else at his court, encouraged Nicander to send a copy of his travels once he had written the second volume concerning his time in England; this hypothesis is the more credible given that a manuscript copy did remain in England.<sup>44</sup>

In light of this evidence, various nonreligious motivations probably influenced Nicander's warm treatment of the Henrician Reformation. However, when placed within the broader context of Nicander's other comments on Western Christianity in his autobiography, his narrative of the break with Rome also offers important insight into his confessional beliefs. Paolo Odorico has suggested that Nicander, as a Greek Christian, may have had an antipapal religious mindset, which could have engendered sympathy with Henry's Reformation, including Henry's suppression of Catholic monasticism (as an arm of papal power).<sup>45</sup> However, while it does seem that Nicander sympathized with the particular circumstances that led Henry VIII to break with Rome, Nicander's religious mindset overall arguably was not anti-Catholic or antipapal. Rather, his Greek Christian beliefs allowed him to take a nonpartisan stance overall on the Western Reformations, expressing an appreciation of both Roman Catholicism and Henry's Reformation.

Nicander's visit to England allowed him to experience an alternative model of proto-Protestantism to that which he witnessed in Germany. Henry's Reformation blended an idiosyncratic mix of Catholic and Lutheran theologies and practices, contained within the mold of an independent national church, constructed on a broader caesaropapist model. It was a religious system likely to appeal more to a Greek Christian, given that its organizational structure, religio-political ideology, ornate visual culture, and traditional liturgical style were all closer to Byzantine Christianity, which may explain Nicander's sympathetic narrative of the English Reformation.

Nicander's surprisingly warm description of the Henrician Reformation cannot be explained by suggesting that his own personal religious beliefs were anti-Catholic or antipapal. In his account of the sack of Rome, Nicander's description is certainly not critical of the papacy, and is perhaps even quietly complimentary, as he describes how the pope's willingness to reach terms meant that he could free himself, his city, and its people (88). Moreover, in his account of the misbehavior of the Italian soldiers in the Peloponnese and Corfu, fighting on behalf of Charles V and his allies against the Ottoman sultan, he reproachfully describes the Catholics and Orthodox as brothers sharing the same faith. In fact, he refuses to view the mistreatment of the Greeks by the Italians

through the lens of confessional conflict. He relates that when Admiral Doria's soldiers had taken the city of Patras from the Ottomans in 1532, they looted it and violently treated its population of Greeks, Turks, and Jews. In the case of the Greeks, according to Nicander, the excuse was made that they were heretics. However, Nicander is at pains to explain that this was merely a pretext, that the soldiers were simply intent on financial gain.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in his account of the ill treatment of the Corfiot population by Italian mercenaries during the Ottoman siege of the island in 1537, Nicander refuses to see any religious divide between the Italians and the Greeks. To the contrary, his strong criticism is based on their shared tradition: he would not have been so surprised by such behavior, he states, from those who are "barbarians . . . opposed to our religion and faith," but he is stunned by the fact that the Italians and Greeks share the same faith (100).

**[AU: The important point you are trying to make here was not clear or precise: is my revision OK?]**At the end of his travels, Nicander returned to live in Catholic Venice and seems to have resumed a quiet scholarly and pious life in the Greek Catholic community there, working on publishing his typicon, a liturgical book on the Byzantine rite.

Placing Nicander's description of the Henrician Reformation within the wider context of his writings, it becomes impossible to maintain that Nicander's sympathy for

Henry's suppression of the monasteries and break with Rome stemmed from antipapal or anti-Catholic feeling. The reality was considerably more nuanced. Nicander was reluctant to place himself in an oppositional confessional box: just as he saw Catholics and Orthodox as sharing essentially the same faith, so also he viewed the Henrician church through the same pan-Christian lens, sympathizing with local issues of (alleged) monastic corruption and the papacy's handling of Henry's case for an annulment, without intending to take sides in the wider Reformation struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism.

**[AU: I have reworded here to be a stronger statement of your argument. I do note a frequent use of the hedging term seems throughout the article, which can undermine the sense that an argument is being made as opposed to impressions being registered. I have eliminated a bit of this, but I encourage you to carefully consider every instance with a view to eliminate wherever you are indeed making an assertion.]** Indeed, Muir characterizes Nicander's mindset as "in matters of religion . . . surprisingly independent."<sup>47</sup> This makes his visit to England and account of the English Reformation particularly compelling for embodying the rare voice of a European religious outsider maintaining neutrality in the heat of the binary confessional conflict.

Additionally, the fate of Nicander's manuscript is notable, since one of the two surviving copies belonged to

Archbishop William Laud in 1637, which contains marginal annotations (in Greek) in Laud's handwriting.<sup>48</sup> Alongside Laudian flirtation with reuniting the Church of England with Rome, the archbishop took a strong interest in Greek Christianity, both historic and contemporary, collecting Greek manuscripts, being involved with advances in the printing of Greek texts in England, and corresponding with leading figures in the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>49</sup> Nicander offered the unique, eye-witness perspective of a Greek Orthodox scholar and historian on the beginnings of the English Reformation not only to his Henrician contemporaries, but also to a critical figure at the center of another project to reform the English Church over a century later.

### **Elizabethan apologetics: John Foxe's treatment of Greek Christianity**

It can be argued that the two most important factors shaping England's religious identity during the Reformations are the initial break with Rome under Henry and the second—and final—break upon the accession of Elizabeth. The apologetics concerning both incidents drew upon Greek Christian precedents to justify religious changes occurring in England. This is particularly evident in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, the colossal work of church history and religious propaganda



produced within five years of Elizabeth's accession, and patronized by her chief minister, William Cecil.<sup>50</sup> The Acts and Monuments was also ground-breaking as the first Protestant work to provide an extended history of the Greek Church, from the early centuries A.D. to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Apologetic works that support Henry's and Elizabeth's Reformations display a continuity in the comparison between the Tudor monarchy and the early Byzantine emperors. In the 1563 edition of the Acts and Monuments, Foxe compares Elizabeth to the first Byzantine emperor, Constantine the Great (believed by early modern English people to have had British ancestry), and aligns himself with the Greek early church historian Eusebius, Constantine's biographer.<sup>51</sup> Similar rhetoric was used by godly clerics celebrating Elizabeth's succession, including Archbishop Edwin Sandys and Thomas Holland, who, like Foxe, compared themselves to Eusebius.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps uniquely among English apologists, Foxe's narrative presents the English and Greek peoples and their churches as united not only by their Constantinian heritage but also, and more importantly, by a shared history of martyrdom at the hands of the Roman Catholics. In describing the (alleged) martyrdom of the Greek Orthodox by the Roman Catholics in the early thirteenth century, and in likening the Greek victims of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople to

early Christian martyrs, Foxe implies to his readers that the Greeks are unquestionably members of the true Church. His Acts and Monuments is, at heart, a martyrological narrative, tracing the scattered histories of all those who shed their blood in opposition to the Antichrist Rome, and thereby prove that they are within the bounds of the invisible, true Church: "The blood of martyrs standeth for the verity of Christ against the world and Sathan, who would suppress the same."<sup>53</sup> It is this martyrological thread that draws into a cohesive whole an otherwise enormous, rambling account of groups as diverse as the early Persians, the Cathars, the Greek Orthodox, and the English Protestant martyrs.<sup>54</sup>

Foxe depicts the church, from its early days, as having been divided into national churches, rather than ever having been a single church under the governance of Rome. Thus, he refers to "the Greek church," and argues that its internal troubles in the early centuries led to the "church of Rome" growing in power (e.g., A&M [1583], 41). When Foxe analyzes how the Latin and Greek churches split from one another, his sympathy is entirely with the Greeks. He claims that the very early church was "united in one consent of doctrine" and that the different local churches were "as sister Churches together, not one greater than another, but all alike in equality." However, in time, "through occasion of the Bishop of Rome, tyranny and violent oppression, this ring of equality

being broken, all flew in pieces, the East Church from the West, the Greeks from the Latins, and that which was one before, now was made two." He thus uses the schism between the Greek and Latin churches to argue that the Roman Catholic Church of his day could not possibly be Catholic anymore:

[After] this pitiful breach of equality, how many and what great nations departed from the communion of the Church of Rome . . . [so that] after that time many councils were holden and many things concluded in the West Church, whereunto the one half of Christendom lying in the East parts did never agree: and contrary, many councils holden with them, which in the Latin Church were not received. So that the Church now as she lost the benefit of universal consent, so also she lost the name of Catholic. (A&M [1576], 312)

Foxe built upon this damning criticism to postulate that since the Roman Catholic Church had not been truly Catholic for at least four centuries, the doctrines subsequently decreed by its councils and popes were not Catholic at all. Thus, no one was bound to accept transubstantiation or confession—two Catholic doctrines rejected by Protestants; instead, Foxe depicted these doctrines as creations of the Lateran Council of 1215 (A&M [1576], 312). Therefore, in Foxe's apologetics, the East-West schism acquires great theological importance, since he claims that it robbed the

Western Church of all its authority and undermined many of the doctrines that had crystalized in the Western Church during the late medieval period. However, Foxe does not present the East-West schism as having undermined the authority of the Greek Church. On the contrary:

the same Churches of the Greeks, notwithstanding they sequestered themselves and fell out with the Church of Rome, and that justly, yet they kept their unity still with their God, and retained still the truth, that is the true and sincere doctrine of faith, ready to debate and try the truth of their religion by the scriptures. . . . Wherefore the Church of Rome hath done them open wrong, which being offered so gently to try and be tried by the truth of God's word, not only would stand to no trial, nor abide conference, but also hath excommunicated them as heretics, which appear here to be more orthodox [i.e., right believing] Christians than they themselves. (312)

The example of the Greek Orthodox is used by Foxe to urge his readers—Western Christians—to break with Rome themselves. He asks, rhetorically, “how few be there in this West end of the world (trow you) that would not do the same that these Grecians, Ethiopians, and Syrians have done before us?” if Christians in Catholic countries were free to break with Rome. And, he continues, “[When I consider the Eastern Christians' doings] I cannot but commend their wisdom and judge their

state happy and blessed, in shaking off from their necks the miserable yoke of the pope's tyranny" (A&M [1576], 312).

As one of the most prominent English Protestant apologists, Foxe saw the Greek Church as fortunate for having thrown off the papal yoke and obtained freedom. His purpose in discussing the history of Greek Christianity was, of course, polemical—to suggest that the Roman Catholic Church had long been in error and had no authority, and conversely that those churches who broke with Rome were wise and happy, united in the invisible True Church, which stood in opposition to the visible false church of the Antichrist.

It is probable that Foxe's particular interest in, and warmth toward, Greek Christianity had partly been inspired by contacts with Lutherans during his Continental exile. Asaph Ben-Tov has argued:

the initial Lutheran response to the Greek Orthodox Church was . . . a genuine, if short-lived, excitement at finding their Christian "soul mates" who like themselves adhered to the "pure teachings" of the Early Church. Since Luther's disputation with Johann Eck in Leipzig (1519) the Greek Orthodox Church was taken as an instance of a respectable Church stemming directly from Christian antiquity and (hence) denying the Papacy's usurpation of primacy and worldly power.<sup>55</sup>

This sentiment is echoed in the Acts and Monuments. Moreover, Foxe's relatively extensive discussion of Byzantine history (not paralleled in earlier English Protestant sources) may have been influenced by Lutheran scholarship, which was at the forefront of the growing interest in Byzantine history in learned Western European circles during the later sixteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

### **Foxe's sources on Greek Christian history in the Acts and Monuments**

Some of the key figures discussed above had direct interactions with Greek individuals: Richard Croke dealt with Greek scribes and priests in Venice, while Reginald Pole discussed the question of the filioque clause in the Nicene Creed with the Greek Catholic archbishop of Naxos, Sebastiano Leccavella, who was present at the Council of Trent.<sup>57</sup> In contrast, as far as we know, Foxe's contacts with Greek religion and culture were entirely textual. Moreover, the nature of the sources he drew on for his Act and Monuments meant that his knowledge could only be very limited. Although Foxe had excellent Greek, his sources for Byzantine history were entirely Western in Latin or the vernacular. He also worked primarily from third-hand information, and often from northern European chronicles rather than from better-informed

Italian works. It is a striking irony that one of the most detailed and sympathetic discussions of Greek Christian history in sixteenth-century English apologetics was based on such a textually distant encounter with Greek Christianity.

Foxe's treatment of the gradual schism between the Greek and Latin churches is piecemeal, doubtless reflecting his limited source base. He traces, in passing, the relationships between Rome and the Greek East when discussing the growing powers of the papacy in the early church: "The fourth cause of advauncing the church of Rome, was the unquiet state of the Greek church, much troubled in those days with sects, factions, and dissentions, wherof we may read" (A&M [1583], 41). However, he skips over the beginnings of the schism, in the ninth and tenth centuries, when East and West entered into several temporary schisms over the filioque clause in the creed and the issue of papal supremacy.<sup>58</sup> Strangely, Foxe also does not mention the schism of 1054, which was a critical point of rupture.<sup>59</sup> His first mention of growing theological division between East and West occurs within the wider context of his discussion of Anselm of Canterbury and Pope Urban II.

Foxe relates that at the Council of Bari (1098) there was "great sturre and much reasoning . . . against the Grecians, concerning the matter and order of procedyng of the holy Ghost." He takes this opportunity to list "many and sondry points" wherein "the Greeke Church, hath of long tyme

dissented from the Latin Church," which he copied from "the Register of the Church of Hereford" (A&M [1576], 212). He promises the reader that he will expound on these points later in his work, but this does not materialize, suggesting that a detailed explanation of how Greek Orthodox beliefs varied from those of the West was not important to Foxe, despite (or, perhaps, because of) the significance of the Greeks to his anti-Catholic polemics. This reproduction of points in an anonymous medieval register is, therefore, the most detailed explanation of Greek Orthodox beliefs found in the Acts and Monuments and is important because it would have shaped Foxe's readers' perceptions of Greek Orthodoxy. In some areas, the document is essentially accurate when judged against modern historical understandings. For example, it states that Constantinople and the other three Eastern patriarchates are seen as equal (rather than subject) to Rome, and offers a sound, albeit brief, explanation of Eucharistic controversies and the Orthodox rejection of purgatory. At other points, however, it misunderstands or misrepresents Greek Orthodox beliefs. For example, the register states, "they say, what soever hath been done or concluded since the second generall Councel, is of no full authority, because from that tyme they recounte the Latines to be in errour." It is possible that the unknown author of the source is here confusing the Greeks (who accepted all seven ecumenical councils, which were, indeed, held in the Greek East) and the Copts, although the Coptic



Church split with the main body of the church (East and West) at the fourth ecumenical council (Chalcedon), not the second (Constantinople).

Strangely, Foxe leaves aside the Fourth Crusade (1202-4), which culminated in the sack of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204, the temporary division of the Byzantine Empire into Latin crusader states, and the patriarchate of Constantinople being forced into exile for half a century.<sup>60</sup> Instead, he next picks up the tale of the Greek Church in the 1230s, and this unlikely period contains the bulk of his narrative of the East-West schism. His main source for the 1230s appears to have been Matthew Paris's Chronica Majora; he references this work and refers the reader to it for further details. Although Paris (d. 1259) was critical of the papacy, he also strongly disliked the Greeks whom he saw as schismatics, and he supported the Roman Catholic Church's attempt to force the Greeks to accept papal supremacy. While Foxe lifts factual details and even entire letters from Paris's account, the tone of his narratives is very different, highlighting his ability to read his sources against the grain. From Paris, Foxe also reproduces and translates two letters from Germanus II, the Greek patriarch of Constantinople in exile, one addressed to Pope Gregory IX and the Roman cardinals. The problematic nature of his source is apparent here: Foxe must have been unaware that Matthew Paris

had inserted spurious passages into Germanus's letters, criticizing papal avarice and corruption.<sup>61</sup> Not only does Foxe reprint these passages, but they seem to have heavily shaped his understanding of events, as he represents financial corruption as the straw that broke the camel's back.

Foxe's tale of the final blow in the East-West schism begins with a Greek archbishop who traveled to Rome to be confirmed at some point between 1227 and 1237. The archbishop was told by the Roman clergy that he could not be confirmed without paying "a very great summe of mony. Which when he refused to do, and detested the execrable simony of the court of Rome, he made his repayre home agayn to his country unconfirmed declaring there to the whole nobility of that land, the case how it stood." Other Greek clerics, Foxe states, related similar experiences, "Whereupon all the church of the Grecians the same time hearing this, departed utterly away from the Church of Rome" (A&M [1583], 305). This tale serves polemical purposes for Foxe, illustrating a broader narrative of the Catholic Church's increasing corruption through the medieval period; it suggests that, in the cases of the Protestants and the Orthodox, it was the papacy's economic corruption that triggered the movements' irrevocable split from Rome.<sup>62</sup> However, historically, this is unfounded. The majority of Greek Christians had been in schism from Rome for most of the period from 1054 onward, and the horrors of the

recent Fourth Crusade had cemented anti-Catholic feeling.<sup>63</sup> It is true that some Greek Christians in the Catholic crusader states were presently in an enforced unity with Rome.<sup>64</sup> Yet, even if the unnamed Greek archbishop came from one of these territories, he and his fellow clergy would have lacked the power to break away from Catholic ecclesiastical governance, and discovering simony in Rome would hardly have headed the list of brewing Orthodox grievances.

Foxe claims that, after the Greek Church (allegedly) broke away from Rome because of simony, Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople sought reconciliation with Pope Gregory IX in 1237. However, according to Foxe, Gregory not only refused Germanus's peaceful overtures but called a crusade against the Greeks, resulting in the martyrdom of many Cypriots (A&M [1583], 305). Events ended with the pope excommunicating the patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, and the patriarchs responding in kind (307). Foxe's confused narrative contains some grains of truth. Patriarch Germanus II, the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople in exile, was based in Nicaea, one of the remnant states of the splintered Byzantine Empire, during the period after the Latin conquest of Constantinople. For political reasons, at the behest of the emperor of Nicaea, John III, Germanus sought reunification with Rome. Contrary to Foxe's account, Germanus's proposal was not ignored; rather the pope sent a delegation of Franciscans

and Dominicans who met in council with the Greek clergy in 1234, but the discussions ended in arguments, and the delegation returned to Rome.<sup>65</sup> It is true that, since the Latin takeover of Byzantium, the papacy had recognized the defense of Latin rule in Constantinople as a valid form of crusade, with the same spiritual rewards as crusading against the Muslims powers in the Holy Land and Egypt. In 1237, after the breakdown of discussions, Pope Gregory issued another call for crusading troops to join the ranks of the army of Baldwin II, the Latin emperor of Constantinople, and this was directed against John III.<sup>66</sup> However, this was one among many such calls in the period 1206-61, a relatively insignificant event in the bigger picture of the Fourth Crusade and its aftermath.<sup>67</sup> Certainly relations between the Greek and Roman churches worsened after the breakdown of discussions in Nicaea, but these were no more than temporary fluctuations in the constant up-and-down relationship between the Catholic and Orthodox churches in the late Byzantine era. Foxe's tidy narrative of a conclusive schism from henceforth is thus a fiction. However, it served an apologetic purpose, providing an example against which his English readers could compare their own country. Foxe ends this discussion by lamenting that the English did not follow the Greek example sooner, perhaps implicitly suggesting that England was still only partially reformed (315).

Foxe's subsequent discussions of the Greek Church are brief. In his analysis of the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431-49), he examines the Basel sessions very closely as part of his treatment of the Hussites. In contrast, the temporary reunion of the Greek and Latin churches at Florence is summarized in a short paragraph of two sentences. Foxe relates that the emperor and patriarch of Constantinople, along with the Greek delegates, "were persuaded to receive the sentence of the church of Rome, concernyng the procedyng of the holy Ghost: also to receive the communion in unleavened bread, to admitte Purgatory, and to yelde them selves to the authoritie of the Romishe Byssshop." The moral of this short tale supports his earlier narrative of the Greeks being commendable in their rejection of the papacy, since he explains that when the delegates returned home, the Greek people would not accept the reunion at Florence, but rather "with a publike execration they did condemne afterwarde all Legates, which had consented to these Articles, that none of them should be buried in Christen buriall" (A&M [1570], 850). Foxe's source here (as he acknowledges) is the Chronicon Carionis Expositum, a Latin chronicle by the early sixteenth-century German astronomer Johannes Carion, and revised and updated by Caspar Peucer, the son-in-law of Melanchthon.<sup>68</sup> This encapsulates the limitations of Foxe's source base with regard to Byzantine history.

The Acts and Monumens also contains two accounts of the fall of Constantinople, which differ in some interesting respects, suggesting that Foxe may have come across new information between writing the first and second. The first account occurs in his chapter "The Lamentable Losing of Constantinople," which he calls "the Quene of Cities" (A&M [1570], 859-60). In this first account, Foxe mentions the Orthodox use of religious imagery only as part of his criticism of the Ottomans: "the ornamentes in churches were all sackt and spoyled, the pictures of Christ opprobriously handled, in hatred of Christ" (860). He also presents no clear religious thesis of why Constantinople fell, and the lesson to be drawn is vague. The plight of the Greeks is attributed to general guilt and wickedness, which (from a Calvinist viewpoint) characterized all human nations and civilizations, even Christian ones, so that God's just punishment for this could occur anywhere. Thus, the moral lesson for English Protestants should be to keep this in mind and beg earnestly to be spared (860).

Foxe's second account of the fall of Constantinople is found in his later chapter "History of the Turks to Suleiman I" (A&M [1570], 901-2), which also narrates in summary form earlier Byzantine conflicts against the Ottomans and dwells particularly upon the mistreatment of the Greek populations of cities such as Athens captured and sacked by the Ottomans

(900-901). In this second account Foxe is more critical of the Greek population and their (perceived) moral and religious failings. He gives several reasons why, in his view, the fall of Constantinople occurred. The first is that the population was avaricious and hid its riches instead of using them to defend the city. The second is lack of Venetian aid. The third cause

may be gathered upon occasion incident in stories, either for the Citie of Constantinople, xv. yeres before, did yelde to be Bishop of Rome . . . or els because (as in some writers it is evident) that Images were there receaued & maynteined, in their Churches, and by the Turkes the same time destroyed. (901)

Then in relating a tale from "Ioannes Ramus," in which a Turkish soldier finds a crucifix in Hagia Sophia church and gives it to his fellow soldiers to spit at, Foxe concludes that the Christian use of imagery gives "sclaunder and offence" to non-Christians, and moreover since religious imagery is against "the expresse commaundement of God," it provokes God's vengeance (000). **[AU: supply page ref. for quote]** He warns that God may thus allow other Christian cities such as Vienna to fall to the Turks as a similar salutary example, since they are also "polluted with so many Images" (000). **[AU: supply pafe ref.]** Foxe's language in certain turns of phrase (e.g., "occasion incident in stories" and "as in

some writers it is evident" [000]) [AU: supply pag ref.] suggests he recently came across fragmentary evidence that had changed his previous perception of the causes of the fall of Constantinople. This evidence—judging from differences between his two accounts—relates to the type, and possibly amount, of religious imagery present in Greek Christianity. It is likely that the main new source is Johannes Ramus's De Rebus Turcicis.<sup>69</sup> The fact that Foxe is surprised by the widespread use of images in Greek Christianity, and that his evidence for this is piecemeal, emphasizes just how limited his source base is for his extensive account of Byzantine history. His reference to Ramus highlights, once more, the important point that his sources were entirely Western Latin accounts.

In this second account of the fall of Constantinople, Foxe also suggests that the Greeks' reunion with Rome may have been a cause of the fall of the city, by implication due to the wrath of God (A&M [1570], 901). Here we see, on the other side of the confessional coin, an inverted echo of Reginald Pole's perspective. For Pole, Constantinople fell because the Greeks broke away from the Roman Catholic Church; for Foxe, Constantinople fell in part because the Greeks briefly reunited with the Catholic Church. Both perspectives were far from novel, each theological explanation having been put forward by Orthodox and Catholic apologists after the fall of the city. However, comparing Pole's and Foxe's accounts



highlights the ultimate purpose of accounts of Greek Christian history in English Reformation texts, whether Catholic or Protestant, namely, to serve an apologetic example, illustrating behavior or beliefs to be either imitated or avoided.

Despite Foxe's criticism of the Greeks in his second account of Constantinople's fall, they remain, nonetheless, the religious heroes of the story. He depicts the Byzantines suffering at the hands of both the Muslims and the Catholics, both of whom are depicted as embodiments of the Antichrist in the Acts and Monuments.<sup>70</sup> Foxe stresses the cruelty of the Muslim Turkish conquerors and also portrays in an unflattering light the handful of Catholic troops (Venetian and Genoese) who joined the Greeks to defend the city. In fact, he blames the Genoese duke Giustiniani for the city's fall.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the narrative at times displays martyrological echoes; for example, his account of the slaughter and mistreatment of Constantinople's population, during the looting of the city by the victorious Ottomans, clearly draws on details from early Christian saints' lives in claiming that "Of the which Citizens [of the city] . . . some they rosted upon spittes, of some they fleyed off their skinne . . . of other some they put salte into their woundes, the more terribly to torment them: In so much that one of them contended with an other who could

devise most strange kyndes of new tormentes and punishmentes”  
(A&M [1570], 901).

Ironically, only at the very end of his long and warm account of Greek Christianity does Foxe begin to realize that there were important confessional differences in belief between Protestantism and Greek Orthodoxy, and that Orthodox beliefs could be alarmingly similar to Catholic ones. However, although Foxe inserts the last-minute cautionary tale concerning the Greeks' use of religious imagery and its possible role in the fall of Constantinople, he ends his account of the Greek Church by implicitly stressing the Greeks' membership in the True Church. He does this by ending their story with an account of the extensive martyrdoms they had recently suffered at the hands of their religious enemies (described in a manner reminiscent of accounts of early Christian martyrdoms). Foxe thereby finishes his narrative of Greek Christian history on a note of implicit similarity between the English and Greek churches.

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Between 1530 and 1580, England broke with Rome twice; on each occasion, religious apologetics were commissioned, centered upon reinterpretations of Christian history for the purpose of justifying England's new religious policies, customs, and identity. This much is familiar to all scholars of the Reformations and of early modern England more generally. What

has been overlooked is the significant role of precedents from Greek Christian history in such important apologetic works as the Collectanea, A Glasse of the Truthe, and the Acts and Monuments. I have argued that the alternative models that English Reformation apologists searched for and found in Greek Christian history served multiple critical purposes. These purposes also changed over time, as can be seen in the significantly different motives underlying the use of Greek Christian historical precedents by the Henrician apologists and by John Foxe during the Elizabethan period.

Several theological reasons led Henry's apologists to take such great interest in early Christian writings from the Greek East, sending Richard Croke to Italy to search for manuscripts of these sources. First, the writings of the Greek church fathers and the history of the Greek East in the patristic era provided alternative, but authoritative, theological and religious precedents. Furthermore, the fact that they were less familiar than the works of the standard Latin fathers such as Augustine and the better-known history of the Latin West probably gave these texts an additional appeal and also facilitated selective or controversial readings of them. The reformers' enthusiasm for the Greek East must also have been intensified by the fact that the Greek Church, in the end, broke with Rome. Finally, the views of the Greek fathers could be seen as more authoritative on matters of scriptural

interpretation, given that the East was the center of the Christian scholarly world in the patristic era, and that the Greek fathers' native language was the Koine Greek of the New Testament. It is probably for this reason that Starkey wrote to Pole, "You know better than I what good exegetes the Greeks were."<sup>72</sup>

For Henry and his apologists, precedents from Byzantium also served useful political and ecclesiological ends. Byzantine history could be used to show that the pope's powers were relatively modest in the patristic era, while, by contrast, the Byzantine emperors had far-reaching religious powers within their territories. This provided an alternative model of relations between the papacy, the king, and the English Church, one that carried the authority of ancient Christian tradition.

While Henry's apologists, for these reasons, concentrated their attention on the patristic era, their opponent Reginald Pole turned to a later period of Greek history in search of a powerful example to persuade Henry against continuing on his path of separation from the Roman Catholic Church. What better example (since Starkey had asked Pole to discuss the Greek Church) than the present fate of the Greek Christians "now suffering under the very burdensome yoke of the Turks" (Defense, 247)? This was the inevitable divine retribution against those who rebelled against Rome, and this threat now

hung over England unless the king repented. Thus, examples from two different periods of Greek Christian history presented apologists on both sides of the Henrician Reformation with rich and relatively novel religio-political polemical material.

Standing as an interesting third dimension to these two confessional positions on the Henrician Reformation in connection with Greek Christianity, we have Nicander's autobiographical account of the break with Rome, which provides us with our only sixteenth-century Greek Orthodox viewpoint on the topic. Nicander's depiction is flattering, and yet it is hard, at first sight, to balance with his equally friendly views toward Roman Catholicism. Perhaps the work reminds us that, while Western European authors largely were interested in Greek Christianity for its apologetic potential during the heated conflict of the Reformations, some Greek Christians may have viewed the Western Reformations with more distance and with distinctive beliefs that made them reluctant to take sides in a conflict where neither confessions' views entirely matched their own.

While Henrician apologists looked East for religio-political precedents in patristic sources that could justify the royal supremacy, John Foxe's motives and chronological scope were rather different. The Acts and Monuments was intended as a work of ecclesiastical history, and indeed it

was the first major English work to trace the history of the Christian Church from the patristic era to the present day. Foxe's intention was thus to show the consistent presence of a True Church holding consistently to scriptural beliefs and standing in opposition to growing papal powers and developing Roman Catholic teachings. What stronger example to use to support this argument than the Greek Orthodox Church?

Unlike the scattered and ephemeral "heretical" movements of the medieval West, the Greek Orthodox Church had been visibly and powerfully present in the Byzantine Empire for well over a thousand years, from the patristic to late medieval eras, and had been the most enduring opponent of papal supremacy. Foxe could use the existence of Eastern Christianity to argue that Roman Catholicism was, truly, neither catholic nor orthodox; in contrast, he could postulate that across the known world there had always been those who held to core scriptural beliefs. Furthermore, Greek Christian history supported his apocalyptic understanding of world history: Foxe believed the papacy and the Ottomans to be two forms of the Antichrist, and those that suffered martyrdom at their hands were thereby shown to be members of the invisible True Church.

When the first edition of the Acts and Monuments was published in 1563, a Roman Catholic England was a vivid memory, and Elizabeth's Protestant religious settlement was

recent and fragile. Foxe himself had only very recently returned from his Continental exile. He wrote the first edition of his magnum opus in the shadow of a very real fear that his country could return again to the papal fold. For Foxe, therefore, Greek Orthodoxy—a longstanding and longsuffering opponent of Rome—provided a powerful apologetic example to exhort the English people to hold their nerve and remain free from “the miserable yoke of the pope’s tyranny” (A&M [1576], 312).

Twentieth-century scholarship sometimes treated the English Reformations as a series of largely isolated domestic events, occurring because of a set of particular local circumstances, and justified through study of domestic precedent.<sup>73</sup> **[AU: It’s not clear what this last phrase means: what is “justified through study of domestic precedent”? Please clarify.]** More recent scholarship has corrected this picture, emphasizing the transnational context within which events in England should be situated and the cross-cultural dialogue that shaped and even directed the English Reformations.<sup>74</sup> Within this frame, it is essential to recognize more fully the role of Eastern Christianity, especially Greek Christianity, in shaping areas of the English Reformations ranging from liturgies and patristics to the writing of history and apologetics. This article provides a starting point for further discussion by highlighting the importance of

Greek Christian history to English reformers and investigating its various uses to justify the Henrician and Elizabethan Reformations.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The period demarcated by ca. 1530 to ca. 1583 references the dates of the English break with Rome and the final edition of Foxe's Acts and Monuments produced in his lifetime.

<sup>2</sup> See Jonathan Harris's book, Greek Emigres in the West, 1400–1520 (Camberley, Surrey: Porphyrogenitus, 1995); and his articles "Manuel Palaiologos (1391–1425) and the Lollards," Greek Orthodox Theological Review 57, no. 1–4 (2012): 213–34; and "Greek Scribes in England: The Evidence of Episcopal Registers," in Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes, ed. Robin Cormack and Elisabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2000), 121–26.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., S. A. Skilliter, William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey, 1578–1582: A Documentary Study of the First



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Anglo-Ottoman Relations (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1977); Maria Fusaro, "Co-operating Mercantile Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean," Economic History Review 65, no. 2 (2012): 701-18; Nil Pektas, "The First Greek Printing Press in Constantinople (1625-1628)" (Ph.D. thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2014); Nil Palabiyik, "Redundant Presses and Recycled Woodcuts: The Journey of Printing Materials from London to Constantinople in the Seventeenth Century," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 110, no. 3 (2013): 273-98.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, see Judith Pinnington, Anglicans and Orthodox: Unity and Subversion, 1559-1725 (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2003); and Colin Davey, Pioneer for Unity: Metrophanes Kritopoulos (1589-1639) and Relations between the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Reformed Churches (London: British Council of Churches, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Peter M. Doll, ed., Anglicanism and Orthodoxy: 300 Years after the "Greek College" in Oxford (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Pinnington, Anglicans and Orthodox, 8-50; Arthur Middleton, Fathers and Anglicans: The Limits of Orthodoxy (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2001), 11-86; G. J. Cuming, "Eastern Liturgies and Anglican Divines, 1510-1662," in The Orthodox Churches and the West: Papers Read at the Fourteenth Summer Meeting and the Fifteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical

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History Society, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), 231-38.

<sup>7</sup> See Graham David Nicholson, "The Nature and Function of Historical Argument in the Henrician Reformation" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, Clare College, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> The term "Greek East" is used in this article to mean the geographical area stretching around the Mediterranean basin from modern-day Greece to modern-day Egypt. During much of classical antiquity and the early medieval period, Greek was the main common language in this area. These territories were all, at points, part of the Byzantine Empire.

<sup>9</sup> This article takes the common, modern scholarly viewpoint that the East-West schism cannot be seen as an event that occurred in 1054, but was instead a protracted and complicated process playing out over many centuries: 1054 was an episode within this much longer process.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Ackroyd, The Life of Thomas More (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), 203-4; Maria Dowling, Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 7-33.

<sup>11</sup> Dowling, Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII, 176-90.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Woolfson, "Croke, Richard (1489-1558), Greek scholar," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., Oxford University Press, Sept. 23, 2004, at [www-oxforddnb-com](http://www-oxforddnb-com).

<sup>13</sup> Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530, in 3 parts, ed. J. S. Brewer (London, 1875), pt. 3, no. 6149, 18 Jan. 1530. Letters and

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Papers is available at BHO: British History Online,  
[www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/letters-papers-hen8](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/letters-papers-hen8).

<sup>14</sup> Letters and Papers, vol. 4, pt. 3, no. 6375(2), 1529.

<sup>15</sup> Woolfson, "Croke, Richard"; Edward Surtz and Virigina Murphy, eds., The Divorce Tracts of Henry VIII (Angers, Fr.: Moreana, 1988), ii-v.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Louis Quantin, The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 79.

<sup>17</sup> Letters and Papers, vol. 4, pt. 3, nos. 6375(2), 6149, 6150, 6153, 6235, 6156.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholson, "Nature and Function of Historical Argument," 67-74.

<sup>19</sup> Anon. [Henry VIII et al.], A Glasse of the Truthe (London: T. Berthelet, n.d. [1532]), sig. A2r. For details of author and publisher, see Nicholson, "Nature and Function of Historical Argument," 60; and the entry for this work at The National Archives,  
[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-english-reformation-c1527-1590/glasse-of-truthe/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/the-english-reformation-c1527-1590/glasse-of-truthe/).

<sup>20</sup> Collectanea Satis Copiosa, in British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra E.vi, fols. 18v-21v.

<sup>21</sup> Nicholson, "Nature and Function of Historical Argument," 129-32.

<sup>22</sup> A Glasse of the Truthe, sigs. D4v, E1r.

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23 A Glasse of the Truthe, sigs. C8r-D4v.

24 Starkey, previously Pole's secretary, was now under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell. See T. F. Mayer, "Starkey, Thomas (c. 1498-1538), humanist and royal servant," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online ed., Sept. 23, 2004. **[AU: I am assuming you must be citing the online Oxford DNB, right, and so I have conformed the citation accordingly. If I am wrong, do correct me.]** See also Thomas Mayer, Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal: Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2, 4, 209-15.

25 Thomas F. Mayer, The Correspondence of Reginald Pole, Volume 1: A Calendar, 1518-1546; Beginnings to Legate of Viterbo (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017), 79.

26 Thomas F. Mayer, Reginald Pole: Prince and Prophet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, repr. 2007), 4; Mayer, Correspondence of Reginald Pole, Volume 1, 72.

27 Reginald Pole, Pole's "Defense of the Unity of the Church," trans. and ed. Joseph G. Dwyer (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1965), 135. Further citations of this translation of De Unitate are given parenthetically in the text.

28 Pole draws a sharp line between the Greek Orthodox (who had rejected reunion between East and West) and the Greek Catholics (who had entered into reunion, mostly following the Council of Florence in 1431-49). Although the Greek Catholics retained many Greek religious customs, they nonetheless

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accepted papal supremacy and generally followed Catholic practice in other areas of disagreement between East and West.

<sup>29</sup> Steven Runciman, The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, repr. 1985), 168–69.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas F. Mayer, The Correspondence of Reginald Pole, Volume 2: A Calendar, 1547–1554; A Power in Rome (Abingdon, Oxfordshire; New York: Routledge, 2017), 366–67.

<sup>31</sup> D. E. Eichholz, "A Greek Traveller in Tudor England," Greece and Rome 16, no. 47 (1947): 76–84, at 77, 84.

<sup>32</sup> J. A. Cramer, ed. and trans., The Second Book of the "Travels" of Nicander Nucius of Corcyra (London: J. B. Nichols and Son for the Camden Society, 1841); J. A. de Foucault, ed., Nicandre de Corcyre: Voyages (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1962); Nicandre de Corcyre, Le voyage d'Occident, trans. Paolo Odorico, ed. Paolo Odorico and Joël Schnapp (Toulouse, Fr.: Anacharsis, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Nicandros Noukios, Greek Eyes on Europe: The "Travels" of Nikandros Noukios of Corfu, trans. and ed. John Muir (London: Routledge, 2022).

<sup>34</sup> Odorico and Schnapp, eds., Le voyage d'Occident, 9; Muir, ed., Greek Eyes on Europe, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Andreas Moustoxydes, "Νικάνδρος Νουκίος," Νεα Πανδώρα 7, no. 154 (1856): 000–000, at 000. **[AU: Supply inclusive page refs. for article, and a page for the information cited.]**

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<sup>36</sup> Odorico and Schnapp, eds., Le voyage d'Occident, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ersie C. Burke, The Greeks of Venice, 1498-1600:

Immigration, Settlement, and Integration (Turnhout, Belg.:

Brepols, 2016), 113-15; James C. Ball, "The Greek Community in Venice: 1470-1620" (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1975).

**[AU: You are citing a specific fact in the text, so a page ref. should be supplied for Ball; or, if you are supplying a general "see also" citation, add "see also" before the ref.]**

<sup>38</sup> Indeed, it is possible that Nicander was related to Menander Nuntius, who co-edited an edition of the Byzantine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in Venice, in 1628. See Odorico and Schnapp, eds., Le voyage d'Occident, 10; Muir, ed., Greek Eyes on Europe, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Noukios, Greek Eyes on Europe, 24. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.

<sup>40</sup> Noukios, 57. On the classical device of an invented speech, see Eichholz, "A Greek Traveller," 82.

<sup>41</sup> Burke, Greeks of Venice, 113-15.

<sup>42</sup> Muir, ed., Greek Eyes on Europe, 13-14.

<sup>43</sup> On Nicander as a traveling historian, see Eichholz, "A Greek Traveller," 77.

<sup>44</sup> Moustoxydes, "Νικάνδρος Νουκίος," 000 **[AU: cite specific page for material referenced]**. Despite this, Nicander left England ca. 1546, never to return, as far as we know.

<sup>45</sup> Odorico, ed., Le voyage d'Occident, 10.

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<sup>46</sup> Noukios, Greek Eyes on Europe, 94. Muir translates the term literally as “heathens,” but something closer to “heretics” or “unbelievers” makes more sense, given the theological context of relations between the Catholics and Orthodox. Odorico’s French translation uses the broader term “mécréants” (Le voyage d’Occident, 215).

<sup>47</sup> Muir, ed., Greek Eyes on Europe, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Muir, ed., 13.

<sup>49</sup> Alexandra Walsham and Anthony Milton, “Richard Montagu: “Concerning Recusancie of Communion with the Church of England,” in Stephen Taylor, Puritans and Catholics in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1600–1800, ed. Crawford Gribben, and R. Scott Spurlock (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 000–000 **[AU: supply inclusive page refs. for article]**; Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Church of England and the Greek Church in the Time of Charles I,” Studies in Church History 15 (1978): 213–40.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, Religion and the Book in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 32.

<sup>51</sup> John Foxe, The Unabridged “Acts and Monuments” Online or TAMO (1563 edition), Digital Humanities Institute, Sheffield, 2011, 5–8, at [www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe](http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe). Since this article draws upon four different editions of the Acts and Monuments (hereafter A&M) presented at TAMO, the edition date is specified in each citation.

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<sup>52</sup> Rosemund Oates, "Elizabethan Histories of English Christian Origins," in Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World, ed. Katherine Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 000-000, at 180. **[AU: supply inclusive page refs. for article.]**

<sup>53</sup> A&M (1576), 1590. For further discussion, see Anastasia Stylianou, "Martyrs' Blood in Reformation England" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 2018), 132-81.

<sup>54</sup> Compare, for example, A&M (1570), 151. See Matthew Phillpott, "Albigensian Crusade," TAMO, Critical Apparatus, Commentary on the Text, Book 1.

<sup>55</sup> Asaph Ben-Tov, Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity: Melanchthonian Scholarship between Universal History and Pedagogy (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 32-33.

<sup>56</sup> Ben-Tov, 83.

<sup>57</sup> Mayer, Correspondence of Reginald Pole, Volume 1, 348.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Gill, The Council of Florence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 2-3.

<sup>59</sup> Steven Runciman, The Eastern Schism: A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955). In the Acts and Monuments, Foxe divides the history of the church into five ages. Mark Greengrass and Matthew Phillpott argue that Foxe was "insistent . . . that around the year 1000 AD something important had occurred by way of the 'loosing of



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Satan' within the Church," and that Foxe saw the next four-hundred years as "the time of antichrist." See Greengrass and Phillpott, "The Four Ages of the Church," TAMO, Critical Apparatus, Commentary on the Text, Book 1. Given this chronological scheme underlying the work, Foxe's silence on the critical 1054 schism is curious, since it could have supported his theological timeframe.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Harris, Byzantium and the Crusades (London: Bloomsbury, 2003, repr. 2014), 155-73.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Freeman, "'St. Peter Did Not Do Thus': Papal History in the Acts and Monuments Part 1," TAMO, Critical Apparatus, Essays.

<sup>62</sup> The implicit parallel is with the controversy over indulgences that began the Lutheran Reformation.

<sup>63</sup> Harris, Byzantium and the Crusades, 183-85.

<sup>64</sup>Harris, 178-79.

<sup>65</sup> Foxe, following Matthew Paris, gives the incorrect date of 1237 for the meeting of this council in 1234. John S. Langdon, "Byzantium in Anatolian Exile: Imperial Vocegerency Reaffirmed during Byzantino-papal Discussions at Nicaea and Nymphaion," 1234," Byzantinische Forschungen 20 (1994): 197-233.

<sup>66</sup> Harris, Byzantium and the Crusades, 188, 191; Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, 526.

<sup>67</sup> Harris, Byzantium and the Crusades, 188-89.

<sup>68</sup> A&M (1570), 850; Freeman, "St. Peter Did Not Do Thus"; Anthony Grafton, "Church History in Early Modern Europe:

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Tradition and Innovation," in Sacred History, ed. Van Liere, Ditchfield, and Louthan, 000-000, at 42. **[AU: Supply inclusive page refs. for article]**

<sup>69</sup> Johannes Ramus, De Rebus Turcicis Libri Tres (Louvain, 1553).

<sup>70</sup> Patrick Collinson has argued that Foxe's depiction of the Ottomans as Antichrist was a product of his Continental exile and especially his contacts with Oporinus; see "The Fog in the Channel Clears: The Rediscovery of the Continental Dimension to the British Reformations," in The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain, ed. Polly Ha and Patrick Collinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2010), 000-000, at xxxvii. **[AU: Supply inclusive page refs. for article]**

<sup>71</sup> A&M (1570), 859. Foxe was not alone in this, by any means, as some contemporary accounts of the city's fall did likewise, and the most thorough modern study concurs that Guistiniani and his troops' retreat "ensured Mehmed's victory." See Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak, The Siege and The Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies (London: Routledge, 2011, repr. 2020), 559-60. However, Foxe's tone in depicting these events is particularly hostile.

<sup>72</sup> Mayer, Correspondence of Reginald Pole, Volume 1, 79.

<sup>73</sup> This attitude is found even in Nicholson's otherwise excellent "Nature and Function of Historical Argument," which

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rarely addresses historical precedents outside of western Europe.

<sup>74</sup> See, among others, Andrew Pettegree, Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Ha and Collinson, eds., Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain; Diarmaid MacCulloch, Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700 (London: Penguin Books, 2003).