

DR. MICHAEL D. VOLONAKIS.

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# Saint Sophia and Constantinople

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## History and Art

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With Prolegomena by  
PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY  
of Oxford University.

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*"The fairest Church in all the World."*

WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY.

*"The City of refuge for all Christians,  
the pride and joy of every Greek."*

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE PALEOLOGOS.

LONDON

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To the  
**Learned Clergy of the Church of England**

as a little offering of thanksgiving  
for their kind and generous sympathy

with  
the cause which the Hellenes  
have so deeply at heart.

MICHAEL D. VOLONAKIS.

## PROLEGOMENA

There were certain periods during the long contest between the Byzantine Emperors and the followers of Mahomet when an impartial historian, if such had existed, would have been disposed to think that the welfare of civilisation was bound up with the success of the keen hard-living monotheists of the desert and the downfall of the corrupt mass of superstition, luxury and despotism which was embodied in Byzantium. He might have wished, in the interests of mankind, for the capture of Constantinople by the Turks.

Such a state of mind would have been intelligible, but it would have been strangely and enormously mistaken. Turkish rule in Constantinople has proved to be one of those cancers of the body of civilisation for which no epithet or comparison seems sufficiently strong. It has become the great type of bad government to which other infamous things in various ways approximate. Corruption, perfidy, cruelty, the power of debasing all that it touched, these were its normal instruments of administration, helped out at intervals by massacres more deliberate and widespread than are elsewhere recorded in human history. Turkish rule did many wrongs and taught much evil to its subjects; but one of the worst of its lessons was that it taught many of the most spirited of them the worship of hatred. To vow undying hatred against the Turkish ruler was often a noble and even a reasonable course. It was the only way to keep alive the possibility of freedom. But hatred, once learned, cannot be confined to one object or kept in one compartment of the mind. The hideous feuds and cruelties and revenges for which the history of the Balkan States is notorious sprang from the root of hatred for the Turk, and have on the whole mitigated and diminished in proportion as the various subject nations have shaken off the influence and memories of the Turk. They are the gift brought to Europe by Allah the All-Merciful.

Doubtless there are places in the world to which Christ the All-Merciful has brought a similar gift. One need not look beyond the ghettos of Eastern Europe. None of the great religions can afford to throw stones at another. Yet, when one stands in the vast gloom of St. Sophia and sees dimly on the wall, not quite obliterated by the scraping and painting of Moslem decorators, the gigantic figure of a tortured Christ, even the most hard-headed historian can scarcely help seeing therein an emblem of that common humanity which century after century the Turks have scourged and crucified, and longing for the time when St. Sophia will be free from its alien masters.

The almost lyrical enthusiasm with which M. Volonakis has described the great historical temple of the Greek Empire will seem strange to many English readers. We have not been robbed of our holy places, and do not know how the experience feels. But there is a lesson to be learned from this enthusiasm itself as well as from the great mass of historical facts which his industry and learning have placed before English readers.

GILBERT MURRAY.

## PREFACE

Residing here pro tempore I have been requested to give a lecture about Saint Sophia (Hagia Sophia) with lantern views illustrating this great Cathedral.

Knowing that it would be delivered before a British audience I was anxious to combine my own knowledge and information with that obtained from the books of the best English authors who wrote on the Byzantine Empire and Byzantine art.

In order also to avoid dryness and heaviness in the matter of the Lecture I have composed it without adding a superfluity of references, which frequently are either simply copied from previous authors and often inaccurately extracted, or a vain display of learning without any substantial profit to the listeners or readers.

Besides, the splendour of the ancient writers, who are our permanent examples and models of style and ability, does not arise from perpetual references to their predecessors but principally from the excellence of their own judgment and discrimination among the various facts presented to them, and from their personal impression drawn from these facts.

But political events which have arisen very rapidly compelled me to alter my plan temporarily and publish the written material in the form of an

essay, enlarging it to some extent only so that the reader may have a more sound and complete knowledge of the subject.

I have added the necessary data which would contribute to lucidity and also to show the binding links of the monument with the Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Christianity.

I have not prepared this essay without some care and labour, or without a natural interest in recognised works in furtherance of my object.

A list of most of these books is inserted here with the hope that they may be useful to readers desirous of acquiring further knowledge into Byzantine history and civilisation.

I shall consider myself well rewarded if my readers find as much satisfaction in perusing it as I had in producing it.

MICHAEL D. VOLONAKIS.

London, 25 March, 1920.

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- and others.

# Hagia Sophia and Constantinople

## INTRODUCTION

The question which we open here is not only one that I have specially studied, but also one about which I feel very keenly.

It is natural to us Greeks to be moved so strongly on the subject of Hagia Sophia and Constantinople, for even during the alien domination we did retain and keep alive the spark of our race's vitality under deep despondency.

The ruins of the ancient art, the immortal centres of Greek thought, literature, civilization and political life were always there to remind posterity of the great virtues, and the Hellenic nation of its glorious past, and to inspire her to a higher life and to free those places, laid waste by the invader and oppressor, who made every effort to cover them with deep oblivion, and to destroy the soul of Greece.

But the question of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople does not interest only the Greek nation, but also all civilized races and none more than the British people. For the Great Church is the living symbol of a marvellous past and affects the modern world politically, religiously, intellectually and aesthetically.

Hagia Sophia is the most admirable monument of the Byzantine art, and "the fairest church in all the world," as William of Malmesbury said. "A work, as they report, surpassing every edifice in the world."

But before entering on the subject of the sacred building, the spirit which animated its builder, the nature of its art and how it is bound up with the whole life of the Greek nation, and incorporates its spirit, I consider that it is necessary to make a short reference to the history of Constantinople.

In this way the reader may understand the national character of the people then inhabiting the Queen-city, the ideals of this people, and how the immortal history of Byzantium was evolving so as to be worthy of the wonderful edifice of Hagia Sophia, which caused Byzantine art to influence all ecclesiastical art and spread nearly throughout the world.

## First Part

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### CONSTANTINOPLE

#### CHAPTER I

##### The Dawn of Constantinople or The City of Byzantium

In 660 B.C. a band of colonists belonging to the Dorian race, under their chief Byzas, embarked on a small fleet of swift galleys in the harbour of Megara, a town of Greece, famous in ancient times for its enterprising spirit—a rival to Miletus, Rhodes, Chalkis and Eretria in establishing flourishing colonies.

They steered, without looking back, to the Hellespont. They rode over the waters of Propontis, waters known to their kinsmen, and anchored in the first inlet, which cuts into the European shore of the Bosphorus. "There a long crescent-shaped creek, which later on in history was known as the Golden Horn, strikes inland for seven miles, forming a quiet backwater from the rapid current which runs outside."

Attracted by the natural advantages and the extraordinary position of this site these brave and quick-sighted navigators disembarked, quickly raised rude huts and shrines and a rough stockade

for protection against a possible attack by the wild races in the neighbourhood.

Seventeen years earlier other Megarians under Argias had established themselves at Calchedon, a town opposite. But these people had not recognised the magnificent advantages of the European side.

When, therefore, the new settlers applied to the Delphic oracle for advice as to an eligible site for their new home, they were directed by Apollo to build their town opposite to the city of the blind and they would prosper.

From this oracle certainly sprang the following words of the Persian commander Megabazos, concerning the men of Calchedon and quoted by the father of history : —“This Megabazos uttered one saying whereby he left of himself an imperishable memory with the peoples of Hellespont : for being once at Byzantium, he heard that the men of Calchedon had settled in that region seventeen years before the Byzantians, and having heard it he said that those of Calchedon at that time chanced to be blind ; for assuredly they would not have chosen the worse place, when they might have settled in that which was better, if they had not been blind.”

From its very foundation the town, named after its founder Byzantium, was destined for a great and prosperous future, geographically, militarily and commercially. It was a natural port of call for ships trading throughout the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and more than one hundred Hellenic towns besides foreign ones were thus at her mercy.

The advantages of the situation of Byzantium are admirably and almost prophetically described by the well-known historian Polybius, who writes :—“As far as the sea is concerned, Byzantium occupies a position the most secure and in every way the most advantageous of any town in our quarter of the world. By sea it so completely commands the entrance to the Pontus, that no merchant can sail in or out against its will.

“The Pontus therefore being rich in what the rest of the world requires for the support of life, the Byzantians are absolutely masters of all such things.

“Now the Greeks would necessarily have been excluded entirely from traffic in these articles, or at least would have had to carry it on at a loss, if the Byzantians had adopted a hostile attitude.....

“The Byzantians, as common benefactors therefore of all Greece, might justly expect not only gratitude, but the united assistance of Greeks, when threatened by the Barbarians.”

Owing to this favoured position Byzantium grew rapidly and imposingly, and for the purpose of maintaining its independence, in the course of time, kept a strong military and naval force and was surrounded by walls of extraordinary strength, which were put to a test on several memorable and historical occasions during which the citizens manfully took an active part in the conflicts of the great powers of the day.

At the time of the Ionic revolt their walls were used by the chieftain Histæus as his ramparts, and the victor of Plataea, taking into consideration that such an important Greek town was after its submission to the great Darius still under

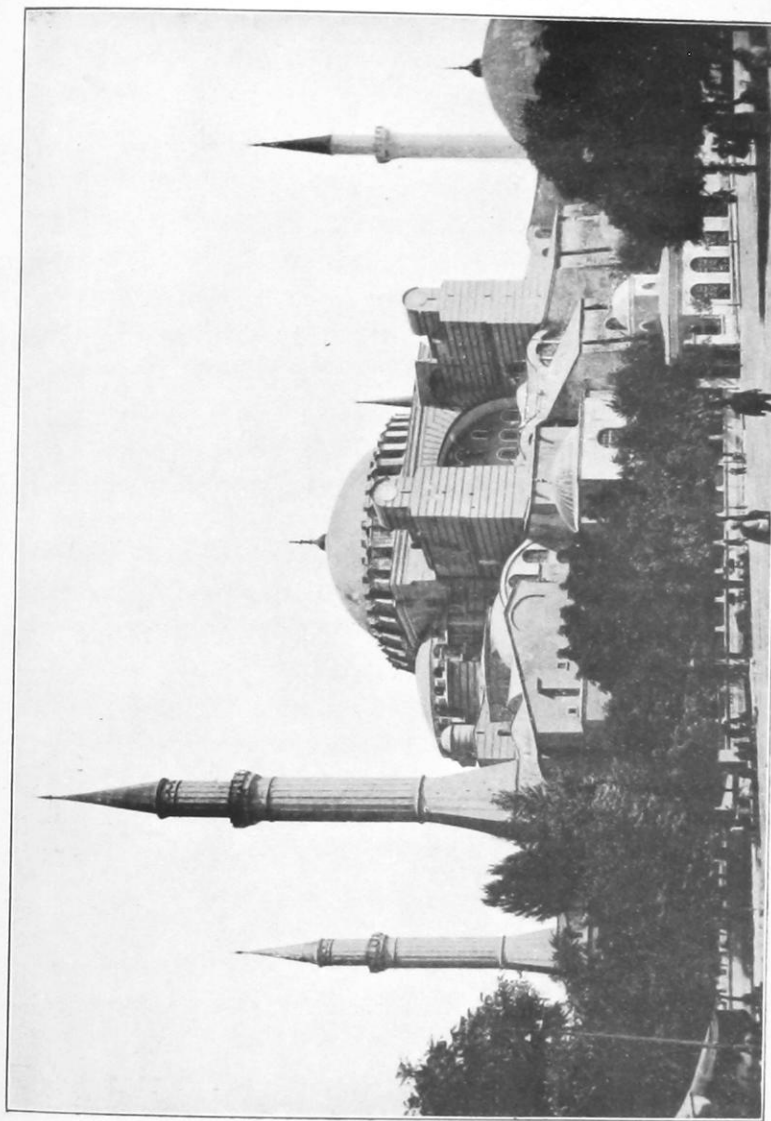
Persian control, advanced to free it from the Persian yoke and drove them from the city. In the struggle for supremacy between Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, Byzantium allied itself alternately with the one city or the other, not only according to its own interest but also to the general advancement and freedom of the Hellenic commonwealth.

Finding that the spirit which animated Philip the Macedon would result in the oppression of other parts of Greece, Byzantium resisted his advance with all its power and strength and acquired a great fame for its heroic defence, helped, as recorded, by a light which suddenly descended from heaven, and revealed the attacking enemy (339 B.C.).

It was considered as a token of divine aid, and in commemoration of it, the Byzantians assumed as one of their civic badges the *crescent* and *star*, which likewise adorned their coins and have remained throughout all its varied fortunes as the device of the wondrous city.

When Alexander the Great united all Greek forces in his effort to crush the traditional enemy of Greece and of her freedom, Byzantium took his part.

For supporting the purpose of greater freedom Byzantium threw in her lot with Rome against Mithridates and later with Pescennius Niger, the rival of Septimius Severus. The latter, indignant at its fierce and obstinate resistance for two years, razed its splendid fortifications to the ground (196 A.D.), destroyed the edifices, massacred the garrison and the administrative authorities and confiscated the property of the citizens, besides degrading it as



THE EXTERIOR OF SAINT SOPHIA AS SEEN TO-DAY

a city below the level of Heraclea, the ancient Perinthos.

But he soon repented of his political blunder in destroying a mighty stronghold of civilization against the northern hordes, so conveniently placed as Byzantium, and ordered the fortifications to be rebuilt, and the town to be refurnished with temples, theatres, baths and other public edifices. The subordination, however, of the town to Heraclea was maintained with the result that the Bishop of Heraclea became the superior to his brother of Byzantium until Constantinople arose. But the frequent attacks of barbarians and the outbreak of repeated civil wars caused much misfortune to Byzantium and postponed that hope of peace, which had been harboured.

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## CHAPTER II

### Birth and Consecration of Constantinople

At last the struggle between Constantine and Licinius for sovereignty concluded with the fall of the fortified town into Constantine's hand, after a desperate defence. By the unrivalled advantages of her situation, which ancient and modern writers have in fine language extolled, the conquered city vanquished the conqueror.

In the year 328 of our era Constantine decided to transform Byzantium into the New Rome and to make it his capital.

Geographical, strategical, religious, and administrative motives, without adding personal, urged him to take this step and build a city worthy of his great ideals and of that new epoch, which he had the faculty of creating.

Dean Stanley alluding to the selection of this matchless site for the new capital of the Empire, observed :

“Of all the events of Constantine’s life, this choice is the most convincing and enduring proof of his real genius.”

Another writer states that it was one of the highest inspirations of statesmanship that the world has witnessed.

Materials, industries and crafts from all parts of the Empire were enlisted in the service of this great purpose ; an almost unique effort in the history of the world.

It was now that Constantine, as the ancient writer Philostorgius informs us, walking with a spear in hand marked out the very large circuit of the new city and that, when his attendants thought that he was measuring out too large a space, one of them came up to him and asked how far he would proceed. The Emperor replied “until he who goes before me stops,” evidently signifying that he was guided by Divine inspiration.

The work of building was pushed forward with the greatest energy. After two years, the Imperial capital seated upon as many hills beside the Bosphorus as her older sister beside the Tiber, was surrounded by massive walls, enriched with

magnificent public buildings such as the Hippodrome, the Augustæum, numerous places of worship, palaces, theatres, forums, libraries, aqueducts and baths. On the 11th May, 330 A.D., when the unfolding beauty of Spring is supreme, the New Rome, better known by its Greek name Constantinople (city of Constantine), was consecrated as the seat of Empire to the service of Christ and dedicated to the Mother of God with great ceremony and public rejoicings, which lasted no less than forty days.

That date was the proudest in Constantine’s marvellous career, and for many centuries the anniversary of the day was observed as a public holiday.

For completing the adornment and embellishment of the new capital, which rightly has been described as the old Byzantium in flower, and as equal to the old Rome in splendour, and for uplifting the spirit of the people, from all civilized sources everything artistic and classical was brought there, as well as monuments recalling the great deeds and exploits of the forefathers. But of all these, the well-known Professor Van Millingen said that none was so inspiring as the Serpent Column brought from Delphi to the Hippodrome, upon which are engraved the names of the heroic little Greek States which hurled the Persians out of Greece, and that no monument stood more appropriately in a city whose supreme task was to resist the encroachments of barbarism upon the civilized world.

## CHAPTER III

## Evolution of Constantinople

The auspicious city attracted people from European and Asiatic Greece in large numbers, and also from Rome and other countries, and families of distinction were induced to come there by the presentation of handsome mansions ready built.

The growth of the population for obvious reasons was very rapid and in a short time no other town, not even excluding Rome, it has been said, was so populous.

If the majority of the people drawn to Constantinople were Greeks this is not surprising because the city constituted a centre and heart of the Greek lands and by the first Christian Emperor it was raised to a centre of gravity for Christianity of which the ministers themselves were Greeks.

The Greeks indeed who fell under the Roman yoke arose from the tomb holding the New Testament in their hands and blending the Hellenic spirit with it in a majestic harmony, they hellenised and christianised the conqueror and other peoples, and gradually converted, in every aspect, the omnipotent and œcumenical Eastern Roman Empire into a Greek state.

Thus Freeman was correct in stating that the Byzantine Empire was "the Dominion whose body was Roman and whose soul was Greek."

About eighty-five years after the foundation of the splendid city, under the reign of Theodosius II, the first really Greek Emperor of Byzantium, measures were taken by the far-sighted statesman Anthemius for extending the limits and fortifications to match its greater dimensions and for making it a strong bulwark of defence.

In the year 447 a great earthquake and its consequences offered to the Prefect Constantine the opportunity for re-building on a yet more formidable scale the damaged fortifications of the capital and for making it the mightiest fortress existing, capable of saving the city from attack by Attila, and resisting for more than a thousand years the repeated assaults of Barbarism. In vain did the Persians and Avars, in vain did repeatedly the Arabs, in vain did the Bulgarians, and Russians, in vain did the Knights and Barons in the fourth Crusade fight against the Greeks and the English who were then (1203) allied also in the defence of the Queen of Cities, in vain did the Sultan Murad assault her.

By reason of these triumphs and those of the Byzantine armies in the fields the city of Constantine was admittedly the rampart of its liberty and of all mankind. But those endless struggles of Byzantium, during which the flower of Hellenism perished resisting the tremendous waves of Barbarism, are what saved besides the capital, Christianity and also civilization in Europe. These gave the Western World a time of relative tranquillity so as to advance and to lay the unshaken foundations of admirable and flourishing states in true liberty and modern progress.

Thus the immortal words of Gladstone on the services of the Byzantine people in the cause of European civilization were no exaggeration, for the Byzantines indeed retarded the inroads of Barbarism for many centuries. It was that resistance which allowed Europe to claim the enjoyment of her own religion and to develop her own institutions and her own laws.

"New Rome, not old Rome," writes also the eminent Professor of Cambridge, Bury, "was the great bulwark of Christian Europe, and if New Rome had fallen in the year 718 A.D., a really œcumenical date, it might have gone hard with the civilised world."

Professor Oman of Oxford gives it as his opinion, that to Leo III, Emperor of Constantinople at that time, far more than to his contemporary Frank Charles Martel, is the delivery of Christendom from the Moslem danger to be attributed.

"Leo III was," as Finlay writes, "the first Christian sovereign who arrested the torrent of Mohammedan conquest."

Captain Granville Baker also affirms that under the shelter of the walls of Constantinople Europe drew the first rough outline of her present political aspect, and began to emerge from Barbarism.

If at length after a most heroic and momentous defence in the history of mankind Constantinople fell to the Sultan Mohammed II and his allies Hungarians and Germans and some other Christian renegades or hirelings, it was because the walls in some places gave way before the Conqueror's newly improvised and heavy artillery, it was because the number of the defenders was insufficient for the

vast fortifications and to meet the ever-increasing onslaughts of the enemy.

But the reign of Theodosius II is not only known for the material and military growth of Constantinople. It is also significant for its development in learning, justice, and both zeal and enlightenment in revealing the conception of the real Christian teachings. Here then the University of Constantinople was opened, which was to be "a glory to scholars, an ornament to the city, the hope of youth, weapons to virtue, and wealth to the good."

The eminent French Professor Diehl writes: "Students flocked from all parts of the Empire and even from the distant Arabian and Occidental world and gathered around the illustrious professors of the University of Philosophy and Sciences."

"Thus," Van Millingen writes, "while the shadows of ignorance were gathering to settle down upon Western Europe, the light of knowledge was kept burning in the capital of the East until the darkness passed away."

The Greek language predominated in the new University and in a short time the character and spirit of all Hellas prevailed there and also in judicature, in administration, in literature, in the theatre and in all the expressions of life. In the Church, in the seven Œcumenical Councils, and also in the spread of Christianity, the Greek language was, as is generally known, omnipotent. And this was very natural because the vast majority of the peoples of the Eastern Empire was Greek, and had for long been so, and lived under the sway of Greek traditions and employed the Greek language in daily life.

We think that it might be well to add here the words of Finlay, whose History is not conspicuous for over-estimation of Byzantium :—"In the time of Leo III," he writes. "and during the Byzantine Empire, Greek was the language of the administration and the people as well as of the Church."

But who also does not know Freeman on this subject? "The Roman Empire of the East," he says, "became by degrees a Greek power. . . From Sicily to Tauros, the subjects left to the Empire, the Romans of the East, were almost wholly men of Greek speech . . . Greek became the one language of Constantinople and of the whole Roman Empire of the East."

The same writer continues :—"The prince who reigned at Constantinople was by the truest political succession Emperor of the Romans; but the Romans who were left for him to rule over were well-nigh wholly Greek . . . ."

The Eastern Empire became Greek through one of its old elements obtaining an exclusive predominance."

"During the reign of Justinian," the prominent American Professor Edwin A. Grosvenor, writes, "the absorption or disappearance of the Italian element in the State becomes complete; when native forces re-assert their full supremacy and the native language retakes its place as the universal medium of speech."

"After Justinian dies in 565, the Empire can no longer be called or considered Roman or Latin; it is henceforth and distinctively Byzantine, or Greek."

The same Professor pointedly tells us:—"Eventually at Constantinople the Roman element

had disappeared, had been absorbed, costume, language, contour of brow, color of hair and eyes, tint of skin, natural disposition even, into the entity of the Greeks."

The distinguished Byzantinist M. Diehl has always declared :—"The Greek language was the language of the administration, of the Church and of literature in the Byzantine Empire, and so strong was the character and the vitality of the Byzantine civilization that without effort it has always assimilated and transformed all the elements, even savage, which entered into its life."

Constantinople was not only a main centre of the Hellenic world, but also the religious centre of the East, the holy seat of the Eastern Greek Church, the Mother City of Christendom.

We hear that there were 400 Churches standing within its walls, besides many other shrines and places of devotion.

"Many of these yet survive, desecrated," as the English historian Foord says, "and defiled by the pressure of the Barbarians, who are still encamped in the city of Constantine, among them the wondrous Santa Sophia."

Second in repute, the Church of the Holy Apostles, which, erected by Constantine, had been the Mausoleum of his family, of St. Chrysostom, of Theodosius II., Justinian and other Emperors,—like Westminster Abbey, where also rulers and notabilities are entombed—was cast down by the Conqueror, and their ashes were scattered to the winds.

We must remember that the city was consecrated to the service of Christ by its Imperial founder, that Christianity became the religion of

the State and that "the sway of Christ and Cæsar went together." We must recall that the primary duty of the Greek Emperors, "the successors of Themistocles," according to Professor Bury, was to defend the Church and propagate her teachings outside, not to allow the Christian people to diminish but on the contrary to help them to increase.

Therefore Emperors presided at Synods, and universal Councils, which consolidated the Church of Christ, they tried to remove heresies, which frequently troubled the Church and in various ways, both East and West, besides North and South, they acted as the embodiment and defenders of Christian faith, as the incarnation of Orthodoxy, under the protection of Christ and his Divine Mother.

"It is not surprising," as E. Pears remarks, "that to the West during all the Middle Ages, the Empire was the Greek Empire, just as the Orthodox Church was the Greek Church. The Empire and the Church were each alike called Greek to distinguish them from the Empire and Church of the West."

But it would be an inexhaustible description of the history of Byzantine Constantinople if we were to write about all events and some despotic excesses connected with it during its eleven centuries, or to refer to the celebrated "Greek fire" which was a terror to the foes of the Empire. It would be endless to recount the deeds of the luminaries in every branch of activity who stood out in the story of Byzantium, to name the illustrious emperors and rulers, the celebrated women, the great commanders and legislators, the distinguished churchmen, authors and artists.

An Englishman may recall the fact that the patron Saint of his Island, Saint George, was a Byzantine Greek, as was also of the same blood the first Archbishop of Canterbury, the learned Theodore of Tarsus; "magnae insulae Britanniae archiepiscopus et philosophus," "who," according to Professor Bury, "contributed more than any other individual to the making of the English Church."

In a general way we confine ourselves to say about mediaeval Constantinople in the words of Mr. Foord:—"It was the greatest fortress, the greatest naval station, the greatest arsenal, of the State; its chief University, its religious centre, its seat of Government, its commercial focus; in short, as few cities have ever been or can be, the true natural centre of the Empire, its Queen of Cities, the heart and soul of its national existence—indeed a peerless capital."

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## CHAPTER IV

### The Coming of the Turk

But the evil hour was approaching. Byzantium, which withstood the onslaught of all the wild races, which had relentlessly hurled themselves against her bastions, had alone to meet the full force and brunt of the fanatical Turkish advance in Europe.

Again and again these furious Mohammedan hosts flung themselves with reckless determination against those devoted walls "of the Queen of Cities, the pride and joy of all Greeks," against the bulwark and citadel of Christendom and civilization. The scattered ranks of the recoiling legions of the Sultan told again and again the oft-repeated story of their defeat and destruction.

But coming events were casting their shadows before them. The worst was at hand. The walls were breached, the enemy rushed through, Constantinople was lost, Byzantium doomed, the Cross overthrown and the triumph of Barbarism completed.

So the Turkish rule was established in Constantinople, and the Crescent superseded the Cross.

Every effort was made by the Turk to eradicate the Greek character of the city and the other Hellenic lands.

The Conqueror and his successors drew together Mohammedan power on Constantinople and the surrounding soil, and by force and temptation converted many to Islam. Yet these methods and others have not succeeded. The salient characteristics of Constantinople and of the ancient, really Greek, world remained Greek and will remain Greek for all time.

## CHAPTER VI

### Results and Hopes

But yet in its downfall Constantinople maintained a beneficent influence. All the Christian peoples subjected to Turkish rule, as well as Russia, felt the benefit of the Orthodox Greek Church, which extended its influence even under the Turkish administration and contributed to the Balkan peoples gradual emancipation.

Furthermore to Western Europe martyred Byzantium brought light. Illustrious Greek scholars transferred ancient Greek literature with their own knowledge and culture to these benighted lands, and produced the rays of the Renaissance from which emerged the many-sided progress of the modern world.

For Greeks especially, this fall became the ignition and lighting up of their noblest ideals and of a new era of the enslaved nation, which always turned its mind towards the lost capital, and under its savage bondage and its enormous misery hoped to regain its united freedom and glorify God again under the dome of Hagia Sophia.

The popular tradition that in the last moment of the capture of the city the angels consoling the weeping Mother of God, said :—"Be appeased Sovran Lady, and do not weep, for again with the years and seasons we shall recover all that is lost," kept alive the hope of the Hellenic restoration.

Yes ! Greece which slept, always dreaming of liberty, during a long and very dark night of more than four centuries, under the Turkish oppressor, who threatened to extinguish the last flickering spark of the Greco-Christian civilization, awoke from her slumber.

And then from the day when Byron with the trumpet tongue of a prophet sounded her "reveille," Greece roused with the impassioned love which freedom alone can give, cast away the chains by which she was bound, shook the throne of the tyrant and by her bravery universally excited a noble enthusiasm.

Nearly a century passed after Greece ejected the hideous nightmare and established a corner of liberty with the benevolent support of England, France and Russia. From that time (1821) many ancient Greek landmarks and monuments have been recovered and fallen into her warm maternal arms, and fostered the best hopes of a complete Greek national resurrection, and of Constantinople again standing as the mighty capital of the united Hellenic people.

Thus Greece unified, would become again in the Near East a shining central home of light and prosperity, and would fulfil all the lofty duties imposed upon her by vital tradition, geographical position and moral obligation towards civilized peoples ; but also Western Christendom would complete thereby the noble purpose of the Crusaders and wipe out the blunder of its passivity when the Turks advanced and took Constantinople.

## Second Part

### HAGIA SOPHIA

#### CHAPTER I

##### The Story of the Building

And now we may halt and approach the question of Hagia Sophia.

On the crest and western side of the first hill of Constantinople, and outside the limit of ancient Byzantium stands the colossal form of Hagia Sophia.

This holy Sanctuary, known in the Middle Ages under the name of the "Great Church" (Megali Ecclesia), is surrounded by the most wonderful myths and the most affectionately cherished legends from the past to the present day. This Christian edifice, thrice rebuilt and once restored after serious damages, was first erected by the Emperor Constantine in 326 A.D. on the exact site of a pagan Temple, perhaps where the Temple of Pallas stood previously.

It was a Basilica, and its construction took ten months. Its name, Hagia Sophia, namely *Holy Wisdom* of the Logos or Word of God, that is, Christ Himself, was a souvenir of the defeat of the Arians at the Council of Nikaia (325 A.D.) when Constantine himself presided, or, more pro-

bably, a transference of name from the old heathen worship, as happened in many other cases.

It may also be remembered that the founder of the city, commemorating the repose and pacification which devolved upon the Roman Empire after he had overthrown all his enemies, dedicated to Eternal peace the enlarged and beautified old Church of St. Irene (Peace) in Byzantium.

If we accept as founder of the Church of Hagia Sophia Constantine himself, we agree with the many historians who represent him as the founder of the first Church dedicated to the worship of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Divine Wisdom.

Constantius II, son of Constantine, pulled it down and built it entirely anew, for he was not only stirred by the wish to enlighten the people, as his library denotes, but he was also inflamed by the desire to surpass his father's architectural achievements both in grandeur and size. This new building was consecrated with unprecedented and magnificent ceremony on Sunday, February the 15th, 360, by the Patriarch Eudoxius and established as the Patriarchal Cathedral.

To the Papal Legates and to the Pope himself, when in Constantinople, a part of the Church of SS. Sergius and Bacchus, a gem of Byzantine art, was assigned for celebrating their services in Latin. This Church was built at the expense of Justinian some years before Hagia Sophia and by the noted architect Anthemius, the Christopher Wren of Byzantium. This brotherly act continued during the period when the Eastern and Western Churches were on good terms.

We may assume then that the historian

Socrates was correct in asserting that Hagia Sophia was entirely to be attributed to Constantius.

The second edifice was burnt down in Arcadius' reign in 404 A.D., during the riots caused by the final banishment of St. Chrysostom, who thundered his scathing sermon at the Imperial Court and was exiled to Asia on the 20th of June. There he died (September 14, 407 A.D.) and from thence his remains were later on (438) brought back and with great pomp and ceremonial received by Theodosius II. and the populace of Constantinople. Unfortunately, to the world's great loss, the flames spread also to the Senate House, which was destroyed with all the treasure of ancient Greek art gathered there by Constantine. There are conflicting records as to the origin of the fire, for it is stated that St. Chrysostom's partizans, from him called Johanites, set fire to the building, but on the other hand, Palladius, the great Bishop's biographer, says that it was the result of supernatural action.

The Church was again materially damaged by fire during the reign of Theodosius II and was restored by him, and re-dedicated on the 10th of October, 415 A.D.

At a later period, in January 532 A.D., in the reign of Justinian, the Cathedral was totally destroyed for the third time and reduced to ashes. This occurred during the "Nika" riot, when the so-called Blue and Green factions, which subsequently united against Justinian, set it on fire. These rebels were finally crushed by the Imperial forces, pushed on by the encouragement and acknowledged wisdom of that lovely and heroic Empress Theodora, a native of the enchanting island of Cyprus.

This disaster caused a greater grief to the Emperor than any other catastrophe of the outbreak, for therein perished also many of the finest specimens of Greek sculpture and manuscripts of literary classics and public buildings. And it was only forty days after the suppression of the sedition that he determined to restore the Cathedral on an unrivalled scale of magnificence and make it worthy of the worship of God and the majesty of the Empire such as the world had never seen before.

With this object in view the Emperor, regardless of expence of any kind, collected from all parts of his Empire the needful material and labour for carrying out this immense undertaking, the new Parthenon of the Divine Wisdom, and the most monumental place of worship of the Christians in his pacified Empire. The new Cathedral was to cover not only the whole site of its predecessor, but was also to extend far beyond its limits. He wrote in pursuance of his purpose to all the political authorities in the provinces of the Empire bidding them do their utmost to procure the materials. Obeying the Emperor's orders they very quickly sent all that could be obtained from the most widely known pagan shrines. Also various contributions from all classes of society and from famous quarries were given that the wonderful effort of Justinian might be carried out rapidly and triumphantly. Popular traditions speak also of a great Divine aid.

For all that, it can be truly said that Hagia Sophia is the outcome of the heart, the brain and the pious enthusiasm of the whole Byzantine Empire during that people's golden age.

The great but, at times, one-sided historian Gibbon, referring to the gathering of the material for the building of this Church, states that the triumph of Christ was adorned with the last spoils of Paganism.

The leading architects to whom the Emperor confided the execution of the work were the famous Asiatic Greek architects Anthemius of Tralles\* and Isidorus, a Milesian by birth. These were the Ictinus and Callicrates of the Parthenon of Christianity.

On February 23, 532 A.D., the Emperor laid the first foundation stone, and the Greek Patriarch Epiphanius accompanied by bishops blessed the undertaking.

There is a pious legend which tells us that the Emperor received in a dream from an angel the plan for the construction of Hagia Sophia.

A charming tradition also ran that Justinian himself clad in linen tunic toiled unceasingly with the ten thousand workmen and one hundred master builders, and that at night when all were sleeping except the watchmen, the building continued to develop with the angelic assistance of invisible hands.

But very striking is also the tradition that an angel appeared to a boy who was placed to watch the tools of the workmen during their noon-day rest, and told him to hasten the men back to their work. The boy hesitated to leave his place, but the angel insisted, and watched in his absence. The Emperor heard the story and despatched the

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\* Here also Apollonius and Tauriscus, the well-known sculptors of the Farnese bull, first saw the light.

boy to the Greek Island Cyclades under the oath not to return. The populace believed throughout that somewhere around Hagia Sophia the outwitted angel is still waiting for that boy.

But let us rather hear what the old Chronicle says about it. "It was the third hour of the day, and Strategius ordered the men to go for their dinners. As Ignatius, the first engineer of the builders, came down, he left his son with strict orders to watch the workmen's tools. He was a boy of about fourteen. As he was sitting there, a eunuch, clad in shining garments, and fair to look upon, like one sent from the palace, appeared to him and said, 'What is the reason why the workmen do not quickly finish the work of God, but have left it and gone to eat?' To him the boy answered: 'At the earliest hour, my lord, they will be here.' But he exclaimed: 'Go quickly and bring them.' When the boy said that he was ordered not to leave, lest the tools should disappear, the eunuch said: 'Go quickly and summon them here, for I swear to thee, my son, by the Holy Wisdom, whose temple is now being built, I will not depart, since by the command of the Word of God, I am to minister and guard here until you return.' When he heard this, the boy quickly set out, leaving the angel of God as guard. And when he had got down, and gone to his father and the rest, he related everything as it occurred; then the father took his son and led him to the Emperor's table. When the latter heard the story he summoned all his eunuchs, and showed each in turn to the boy. Then the boy calling out that he saw none like the one that had appeared, the Emperor knew that it was an angel of the Lord who

had addressed the boy, and this was made more clear, as the boy said that he was clothed in a white robe, his eyes glittering like fire: then the Emperor praised God, saying: 'God has accepted my temple.' And the Emperor took counsel with himself and said: 'I will not allow the boy to return, so that the angel may guard it for ever, as he promised by his oath. For if the boy return the angel will depart.' Having consulted with the principal senators and bishops, the Emperor commanded that the boy should not be sent back to the temple, so that, by the grace of God, it should have a guardian till the end of the world. And then the Emperor loaded the boy with gifts and honours, and, with the consent of his father, sent him to the Cyclades."

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## CHAPTER II.

### Consecration and Description of Hagia Sophia

The Cathedral was ready for solemn consecration in less than 6 years, an astonishing feat, when compared with others, such as St. Peter's at Rome, Notre Dame in Paris and St. Paul's in London, over which many decades were expended.

This consecration, described by Theophanes and others, was carried out with great pomp

and ceremony by the Greek Patriarch Menas and in the presence of the Emperor Justinian on the 27th of December 537 A.D. Justinian, who was then in the eleventh year of his reign, being impelled by enthusiasm at the magnificence of the sight, with outstretched hands towards heaven, exclaimed: "Glory be to God, Who has deemed me worthy to finish such a work! Solomon, I have surpassed thee!" He did not know at that time that the Cathedral covered ten times the ground of Solomon's Temple.

That day the entire population of the capital was feasted as guests of the Emperor, and general rejoicing prevailed for fourteen days. It was a marvellous pageant.

The contemporary writers and all since those days are unanimous in its praise. For example, the reliable historian Procopius, who gave a full statement of what Justinian did, says: "The Church presents a most glorious spectacle, extraordinary to those who behold it, and altogether incredible to those who are told of it. In height it rises to the very Heavens and overtops the neighbouring buildings like a ship anchored among them ..... It is distinguished by indescribable beauty.....it is singularly full of light and sunshine. You might declare that this light is not from without, but is produced by itself from within. Such an abundance of light is poured into the edifice."

Evagrius says: "It surpasses all power of description." Michael Psellus speaks of St. Sophia as "the very beautiful temple, the incomparable

home which the Divine Wisdom built in His own name and which He raised on seven pillars."

Fergusson says:—"Internally, at least, the verdict seems inevitable that Santa Sophia is the most perfect and the most beautiful Church which has yet been erected by any Christian people. It may be doubted whether any Christian Church in any age ever existed so beautiful as this marvellous creation of Byzantine art."

Another English writer, Letharby by name, tells us, that "it is the most interesting building on the Earth's surface." And yet another, Mr. Foord, "The Church of the Divine Wisdom at Constantinople is the most perfect specimen of a Christian temple that the world has ever seen."

The eminent French writer on Byzantine art M. Diehl, declares: "St. Sophia is the type *par excellence* of the Byzantine Art, the most perfect representative by the forms of its architecture and the splendour of its decoration, of the ideal which this art tried to realise."

Another distinguished French author, M. Bayet, writes that there does not exist in the history of Christian art a church whose importance is greater.

In conclusion we may say that all descriptions concur that Hagia Sophia was the herald and apotheosis of a new art, and the words gold, silver, jewels, precious, rarest, priceless, grow monotonous in describing this "House of God."

The wonderful Temple, 241 feet long and 224 broad, divided into three parts, was entered from the western side by five doors to the narthex, a large hall with porches of later date at either end.

Formerly in front of the great Church stood a large atrium, a quadrangular open and marble-floored court, surrounded with porticos, in the middle of which a beautiful marble fountain splashed its water into large basins. From the narthex nine doors opened into the nave or body of the Church. The narthex was the place of the penitents and the unbaptized and the nave of the congregation of the faithful.

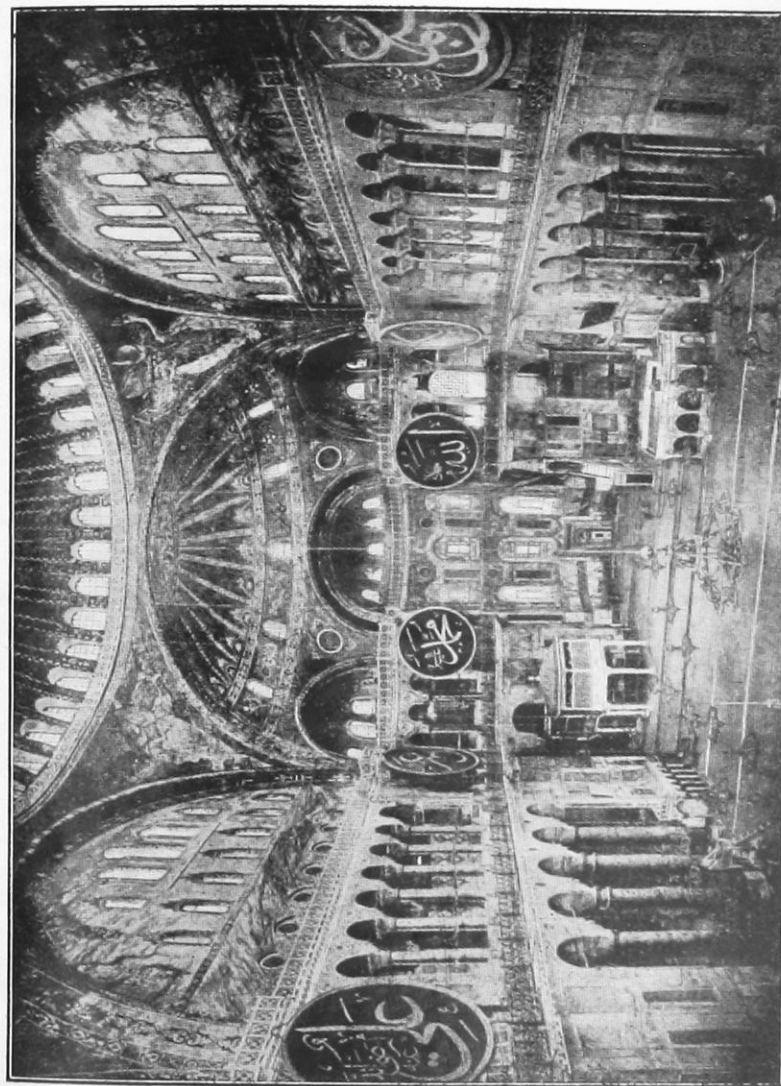
The nave has two aisles and upper galleries and another gallery on the west over the narthex. These galleries at first were allotted to women. The nave is roofed by a dome, rising 180 feet above the floor and spreading its weight on four arches, resting upon four massive pillars and by two semi-domes, leading up to it on the east and the west.

The construction of the ethereal dome,\* with its forty windows, through which the early daylight shines, was the boldest innovation in the history of Architecture and it is to the credit of the architects of Hagia Sophia that they accomplished this wonderful combination of a cruciform ground-plan, with the advantages of a domed building.

Procopius says that this cupola or dome appears to hang over the heads of those in the Church in a dangerous way, whereas, in reality, it is built for especial firmness and safety.

On the 7th of May, 558, A.D., an earthquake threw down a large part of this dome as well as other parts of the edifice, and a new dome was constructed by the younger Isidorus, nephew of the previous architect Isidorus. This dome, after

\* The diameter of this dome is fifteen feet longer than the dome of St. Paul's in London.



THE INTERIOR OF SAINT SOPHIA AS SEEN TO-DAY

having had some periodical repairs, exists up to the present day. A new dedication by Euty chius on December 24th, 563, A.D., took place just twenty-five years after the earlier inauguration, and on this occasion Paul the Silentiary in the presence of Justinian and the Patriarch pronounced his famous description of Hagia Sophia in hexameter. Of the first group of illustrious persons who took part in the earlier phases of its building, Justinian alone, now aged, remained at this period to see the renovated cupola.

Niketas Choniates calls this dome "an earthly heaven, a throne of Divine magnificence, an image of the firmament created by the Almighty."

Marbles and mosaics abound on all sides, and in various colours of exceeding beauty, and they have been gathered from diverse and distant famous places. The 107 beautiful columns with their remarkable capitols, have been the admiration of successive generations. The walls of the aisles and galleries also are covered with marble panels. The floor was likewise of various and coloured marbles, which gave it the appearance of a sea. The pierced lattices of the windows, some of gold and silver glass, were also of remarkable beauty, the glasses being of brilliant colour.

The amvon, or pulpit, stood on the north side of the nave, and as described by the poet Paul the Silentiary, it was a real "chef d'œuvre." Yet it is recorded that its predecessor, or first amvon, destroyed by the fall of the dome in 558, was more wonderful. Soleas was separated from the nave by a silver barrier. In the façade of the third part of the Church, called "holy bema," *i.e.*, sanc-

tuary, was the brilliant "eiconostasis" containing three holy doors plated with silver and in the centre of this bema stood the altar, "marvellous in form," and made of the most precious materials found in the world. Above this were suspended until 1204 A.D. the crowns of Constantine and later Emperors with other rich votive offerings. East of the altar was the apse, the only feature reminiscent of the Roman Basilica. In this place there were the thrones of the bishops, with that of the Patriarch in the middle all resplendent with gold and silver.

Only the clergy and the Emperors were allowed to enter the bema. The light of the Church was most brilliant, and when the sun set, darkness did not always descend on the mighty Cathedral. The lights of 6,000 silver and gold lamps continued the day and the Great Church seemed enveloped in a vast conflagration. Certain portions of the floor were strewn with carpets of wonderful design, the hangings and tapestry were of exceeding beauty. The bricks of the arches were prepared with special care and those of small square shape of the dome were made in the historic and picturesque island of Rhodes.

This perfect flower of the Byzantine art was so transcendently beautiful that all comers were fascinated by the charm of the scene, and particularly when a Mass was taking place. Then the sacred figures, the varied colours of the columns, the effulgence of the light, both natural and artificial, streamed down from the dome and the walls and being reflected from all sides of the Church, and gold, silver and jewels gave a brilliancy to the whole which was dazzling. This

solemnity was greatly increased by the harmonious effect of the choir, consisting of a great number of voices, in which the gentler tones of women and children were blended with the deeper notes of the men. The monophone psalms also resounded through the mighty building, with its excellent acoustics, and the large body of assistants in the service of the Church added to the powerful impression.

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### CHAPTER III

#### The mighty Destiny of Hagia Sophia

What episodes, first, second, or last could be delineated as greater examples of the mighty and historical importance of Hagia Sophia ?

No other Church in any land, it is truly said, no other structure in any age, reared by human genius, had held so large a place in a nation's life.

In its name is centred the entire duration of Byzantine history.

Under the cupola of the Great Church, under this official sanctuary of an Empire, where Church and State were one, the Kings of the Greek Empire were crowned and married, and their offspring were baptised. Here the Greek Patriarchs celebrated the divine services, and for more than nine hundred years were heard the thanksgivings for

national victories, and litanies for the removal of national dangers.

Here sovereigns and other potentates sought asylum or through their energy were either repelled by the Church or put in penitence or raised by her. Within its walls, Synods or great Œcumenical Councils of Christianity were held, and fateful or disastrous events followed, momentous in the history of Christendom.

Indeed it was here, under this gilded dome, that the citizens of the City of Constantine, standing, sang the famous thanksgiving for the victory of the army of Heraclius over the savage Avars. Here also the decisive defeat of the Persians by the great Emperor was celebrated by the enthusiastic populace of the city. It was here, too, that his great trophy, the "Holy Wood," the Palladium of Byzantium, was raised aloft. It was here again that Nikephorus Phocas (965), John Tsimiskis (992), Basil II. (1019), John Commenus and other great leaders of the Greek Empire were welcomed for their triumphant victories over the enemies of the Empire.

There the pagan envoys (987) of the Russian Vladimir, who had been sent far and wide in search of the true religion, were so overwhelmed by the celestial splendour of the worship which met their eyes, that they hastened back to Russia, to tell their Sovereign what they had seen. This Temple seemed to them the Abode of Almighty God Himself, where He manifested His Glory direct to mortal eyes. They are reported to have said: "We knew not whether we were not already in Heaven, verily on earth it would be impossible to find such

riches and such magnificence. We cannot describe to you all that we have seen, we can only believe that there one was in all likelihood in the presence of God, and that the worship of all other countries is thus entirely eclipsed. We shall never forget such grandeur."

This strong report, and the zealous help given by the Greek Church, induced Vladimir to adopt the Christian faith and spread it throughout the Russian and the other Slav peoples.

This historic and very fateful event and the important services rendered by the Greek Church also saved Russia and the other Slav peoples from becoming Mohammedan states.

In Hagia Sophia on Christmas Day 857, the illustrious Photius, a man of erudition, and a man of the world, was consecrated as Patriarch; he was thus raised to the head of the Eastern Church, and became the renowned champion of Greek national feelings and of the opposition to the Pope Nicolas I's claim to be the absolute master of the whole Christian Church. It was this claim which neither Photius nor the Greek Church, nor the Imperial Government could accept, and this had led to the beginning of the lamentable separation of the two Churches, the Eastern and Western, Greek and Latin.

On July 16th 1054, "the obstinate, proud and ill-advised attitude of Pope Leo and his legates" (Cardinal Humbert, Cardinal Frederick and the Archbishop of Amalfi), as Diehl says, "gave the ambition of the Patriarch Michael Keroularios the desired pretext to achieve the final rupture."

It was on this day that the silent walls of Hagia Sophia, thronged by the Orthodox clergy and people, saw these three Papal Legates advance to the altar and place a Papal Bull of excommunication upon the altar against the Patriarch Michael Keroularios and the Orthodox Eastern Church for insubordination to the Holy See. Then they retired from the Cathedral, shaking the dust from their feet and exclaiming "Videat Deus et judicet" (Let God see and judge).

The Patriarch, in turn, excommunicated the Pope and thus the great Schism occurred and the Christian world was torn in two bitterly hostile camps, causing an increase of acute hatred, political, religious and racial, between Eastern and Western Christianity.

The Latins and the Greeks now regarded each other as heretics as well as political enemies and this hostility was markedly witnessed by the horrors committed by the Sicilians when they captured Thessalonica, and 19 years after, in the year 1204, when Constantinople was stormed by the Latin army of the 4th Crusade, which was amazed at the first sight of the marvellous city, that extended before them.

The historian of this Crusade and one of Dandolo's comrades Villehardouin conveys it to us in the following words :

"Those who had never before seen Constantinople looked upon it very earnestly, for they never thought there could be in all the world so rich a city, and they marked the high walls and strong towers, that enclosed it round about, and the magnificent palaces, and mighty churches,—

of which there were so many that no one would have believed it who had not seen it with his eyes,—and the height and the length of that city which above all others was sovereign. And be it known to you, that no man there was of such hardihood but his flesh trembled ; and it was no wonder, for never was so great an enterprise undertaken by any people since the creation of the world."

Insult was added to cruelty, rapine and plunders of every kind occurred, during this capture of the wealthy city, so terrible that we refrain from describing the events.

The four bronze horses of Saint Marc at Venice bear adequate evidence of this sacking. Hagia Sophia was profaned and pillaged of all her glorious treasures. Gold, silver, relics, valuable works of art, gifts from monarchs were stolen by the hand of the Vandal.

The Roman Pontiff Innocent the Third, shocked and horrified at these events, denounced the Crusaders, declaring that the Greek Church would see in the Latins only treason and works of darkness, and would loathe them like dogs. He likewise foretold that they had taken an Empire which they could not defend.

An historian accused Dandolo, the chief of the Crusaders, for prostituting the purpose, piety and aim of the Crusade by wicked conquest and sack of a Christian capital. After fifty-seven years (1261) the Greek dynasty exiled to Nikæa recovered Constantinople from the foreigners, restored Hagia Sophia to the Orthodox Greek ritual, and made great efforts to repair the badly damaged Cathedral.

On the 12th of December 1452 the last Emperor

Constantine celebrated in this Church the Greek ecclesiastical union with the Papal Church, also believing like two of his predecessors that the Pope alone commanded power to unite Christendom in resisting the impending Turkish menace. But on account of the misfortunes caused to the Byzantine Empire by repeated blows directed at her by the Latins, this union was not popular. Constantine was thus deprived of much Greek support in the approaching crisis, and was found, militarily speaking, with a weakening defence.

When on the eve of the fall of Constantinople, the people realised the imminent danger, the whole forces of the Moslem army being about to break like a storm on the city, the Greeks forgot all these differences and massed together. Many fell fighting for the faith of Christ and their country, others repaired the breached walls and others again crowded into Hagia Sophia, appealing to God 'Almighty, as in the past, for help in their despair and also trusting that the guardian angel of the Cathedral would appear and drive away the infidel. More than twenty thousand people of all ages and classes had within an hour taken shelter in the Great Church.

And at midnight, from this Church, after he had partaken of the Holy Sacrament, the Emperor went to die bravely and achieve immortality in the shroud of his Empire. How different was the result of this departure from Hagia Sophia to that of Tsimiskis nearly five centuries earlier ! (972).

On the Turks entering Constantinople, on the morning of the 29th May, 1453 A.D., the saddest possible scenes of human agony, accompanied by

revolting sacrilege, were enacted under the Grand cupola, amid the resplendent marble columns and on the beautiful pavement of the magnificent Church.

Towards noon, when the last Greek defenders of the city, Cretan sailors, reluctantly agreed to cease their stubborn resistance, the Sultan Mohammed, the conqueror, alighted from his horse at the gate of Hagia Sophia, and entered the building. By his order one of the Court Ulemas ascended the pulpit and cried aloud "There is no God, but Allah" which is the Mussulman "Te Deum Laudamus." And the Conqueror, prostrating himself on the altar, gave thanks for his victory, and so the Great Church was consecrated to the faith of the Prophet, and speedily all things reminding the faithful of Christian worship were either broken or defaced or concealed. Verses from the Koran with historic Turkish names were inscribed on the walls and on the cupola, many windows were filled up, and others were closed, the Crescent appeared on the dome, and four lofty marble minarets were raised.

The Turks made every possible alteration that suggested itself to them for converting this Christian Church into a Moslem Mosque, which they look upon rather as one of the spoils of conquest than as a sanctuary. But all their Vandalism and all the effects of their wasting hand, have been unable to destroy its architectural glory or to change its name. The Christian Greek name of Aya Sophia remains through all these centuries. "That venerable pile," to quote Gibbon, "continues to excite the fond admiration of the Greeks."

Yes, all the living sentiments of the Greek people, nationally and religiously, are centred in

that sanctuary. But in this holy spot are also gathered the pious hope and deep conviction that the day will soon come when within the historic Great Cathedral will once more resound and vibrate the chant of the Orthodox creed, when the Holy Mysteries of God will again be solemnised and upon its dome the Cross restored will announce to the world its return to Christianity and with it, the national restoration of the Hellenic people.

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