

## THE BEARDLESS PATRIARCH: ST. GERMANOS

Patriarchs like all members of the Orthodox clergy are traditionally bearded. The exceptions to this rule are the iconodule Patriarch Germanos I (715-730) and the iconoclast Patriarch Nicetas I (766-780). In this essay we shall be concerned with Germanos I, born around 640 in Constantinople. His father Justinianos was a patrician, who held an important post in the government of the Emperor Heraclius (610-641). In the beginning of the reign of Constantine IV Pogonatus (668-685) Justinianos was killed by the emperor for having participated in the conspiracy which led to the assassination of Constans II (642-668). Because of his protest against the murder of his father, Constantine IV ordered that Germanos was to be castrated and be enrolled among the members of the clergy of Haghia Sophia. His service in the capital enabled him to obtain an excellent theological education<sup>1</sup>, and soon he became well-known for his deep spirituality. At the age of thirty-seven he was elected metropolitan of Cyzicus. According to Theophanes and Nicephorus he attended in this capacity the Synod of Constantinople in 712. From his see he was recalled to Constantinople, where he was elected patriarch and enthroned on August 11, 715. The peace of his patriarchal administration was interrupted by the storm of the iconoclast Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717-741). He was invited to conform to the impious orders of Leo, but instead he incited the people to rebel against the emperor<sup>2</sup>. After all negotiations had failed, Leo III had to resort to force by issuing an edict ordering the destruction of all icons. On January 17, 730, he convened the so-called *silentium*, an assembly of the highest secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and asked them to subscribe to the edict. Germanos refused and was immediately deposed. He returned to Platanion, his paternal home, where he died at the age of one hundred on May 11, 740. He was buried in the Monastery of St. Saviour in Chora in Constantinople<sup>3</sup>.

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1. He is known for his defence of Gregory's of Nyssa doctrine of the *apocatastasis restitutio in pristinum statum*.

2. For the epistles of St. Germanos on the iconoclastic controversy, cf. Migne, P. G. 98, 156 ff.

3. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, Oxford 1968, p. 163 f. Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium. The Imperial Centuries, A. D. 610-1071*, London 1966, pp. 81-83.

The Oecumenical Council of Nicaea in 787 bestowed high praise on Germanos, who is venerated on May 12 as a saint in the Greek and in the Latin Church.

On the first sight it might seem strange that the Church should elect and enthrone a mutilated candidate, especially since among the Hebrews eunuchs were excluded from the assembly (Lev. XXI: 17; Deut. XXIII: 1). The Apostolic Church, however, admitted eunuchs into the Christian fellowship, as seen by the conversion and subsequent baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip (Acts VIII: 26-39). In the latter part of the IIIrd century, Dorotheus of Antioch, «a eunuch by nature» was honoured with the rank of presbyter<sup>1</sup>, and also those who had been castrated by a barbarian master, as was Tigris of Constantinople, were eligible for orders<sup>2</sup>. Christians, who emasculated themselves from pretence of piety or from fear of committing fornication, however, were prohibited from joining the priesthood<sup>3</sup>, for the canons insisted that if someone was castrated by force, but was dignified and otherwise without blemish, he could be consecrated bishop.

From a canonical point of view there was no reason, therefore, not to enthrone Germanos to the see of Cyzicus and later to advance him to the patriarchate. It is noteworthy, however, that Byzantine iconography should portray Germanos as an eunuch, namely beardless. Since for obvious reasons Nicetas I is not iconographically depicted, Germanos is the only beardless hierarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church. According to the established iconographical canons, beardlessness was quite common among some of the warrior-saints and also among some of the other saints<sup>4</sup>, among the fathers and doctors of the Church, however, it was generally despised. Clement of Alexandria discussed the matter of growing a beard and argued that «God having bestowed this wonderful hair upon lions and men, it is not permissible to cut it under pain of dishonouring the work of the Creator»<sup>5</sup>, and St. Basil reminded a monk, who had shaved, of the glorious time when his holy tears ran down his beard<sup>6</sup>. We know from silver coins struck in commemoration of the dedication of Constantinople on May 11, 330<sup>7</sup>, that in spite of the prescriptions by Clement of Alexandria, St. Epiphanius and the author of the Apostolic Constitutions, St. Con-

1. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Bk. VIII, c. 32.

2. Soctates, Ecclesiastical History, Bk. VI, v. 15.

3. Cf. Canons of the First Council of Nicaea, can. 1; Second Council of Arles, can. 7; the Apostolic Canons 21-24.

4. I. e. Sts. George, Demetrius, the anargyroi John, Panteleimon; also Sts. Orestes, Porphyrius, Sozon, Tryphon, et al.

5. Paedagogus, Bk. III, c. 3. Migne, P.G. 8, 580-581.

6. Epist. XLV, Migne, P. G. 32, 367.

7. Cf. silver coin in the Museo del Castello Sforzesco, Milano.

stantine was beardless, and that his example was followed by his imperial successors until the Emperor Maurice (582-601) with the exception of Julian the Apostate<sup>1</sup>. Yet, interestingly enough, mediaeval Byzantine iconography has always portrayed St. Constantine with a beard.

Why then would the iconographical canons insist on portraying the castrated patriarch without a beard, especially since a beard was always considered a visible sign of full manhood as well as a symbol of the priesthood? The only possible answer could be found in the desire to convey the idea of his mar-



*Pict. 1. Wall-painting of the Old Church*

tyrium, although, again, his castration was not the result of his anti-iconoclastic attitudes, acts or policies.

The earliest known representation of St. Germanos is a mosaic fragment in the room above the south-west vestibule of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Next to the mosaic of Simon the Zealot is a figure of which little remains. On the left is inscribed Ο ΑΓΙΟC, and on the right ΓΕΡΜΑΝΟC. The patriarch wears the omophorion with the customary crosses. The head of St. Germanos is damaged, and, therefore, this mosaic is of little use for our purpose<sup>2</sup>. The painting of St. Germanos on the southern outside wall of the old

1. Cf. bronze coin in the British Museum, London.

2. Paul A. Underwood, A Preliminary Report on some unpublished mosaics in Hagia Sophia: Season of 1950 the Byzantine Institute. «American Journal of Archaeology»

Church of St. Germanos in the village of Haghios Germanos in the diocese of Florina and Prespa may well be the earliest extant representation of the patriarch. Once located in a niche above the southern door leading to the church, this painting is assigned to the XIIth or XIIIth century, when the second layer of wall-paintings was executed<sup>1</sup>. St. Germanos is portrayed clothed with the sticharion and the omophorion. His eyes are intentionally damaged by scratching. Following the custom of his day he has a tonsura<sup>2</sup> and he is shown without a beard. To the left is the head of an unidentified person (pict. 1). In many ways similar is the XVth century wall-painting of the patriarch in the Church of St. John the Theologian on the island of Aegina, and that in the Monastery of Agnountos near Nea Epidauros<sup>3</sup>.

In the old and new village churches of St. Germanos in Haghios Germanos there are three panel-paintings of the patriarch (picts. 2 and 3). Although they may not be the only existing examples, we must recognize that he is very seldom portrayed, and that icons of him are not even found in the churches of the diocesan town of Florina<sup>4</sup>. On the iconostasis of the early XIth century Church of St. Germanos there is a XIXth century panel-painting of the patriarch which shows him enthroned and clothed in his patriarchal vestments, namely the sticharion and the omophorion, and holding in his left hand the Gospel and having his right hand raised for the blessing. He is shown without a beard and a tonsura (pict. 4). The other icon of the patriarch in this church is a very recent (XXth century) painting showing him standing and crowned, supporting with his left hand the Gospel and blessing with his right hand. He is depicted without a beard (pict. 5). The third icon adorns the iconostasis of the new (1882) large village Church of St. Germanos. A late XIXth century painting, it shows the patriarch enthroned and crowned, holding in his left hand the Gospel and blessing with his right hand (pict. 6).

The issue regarding the origin of the cult honouring the VIIIth century patriarch in the small Macedonian village of Haghios Germanos has raised

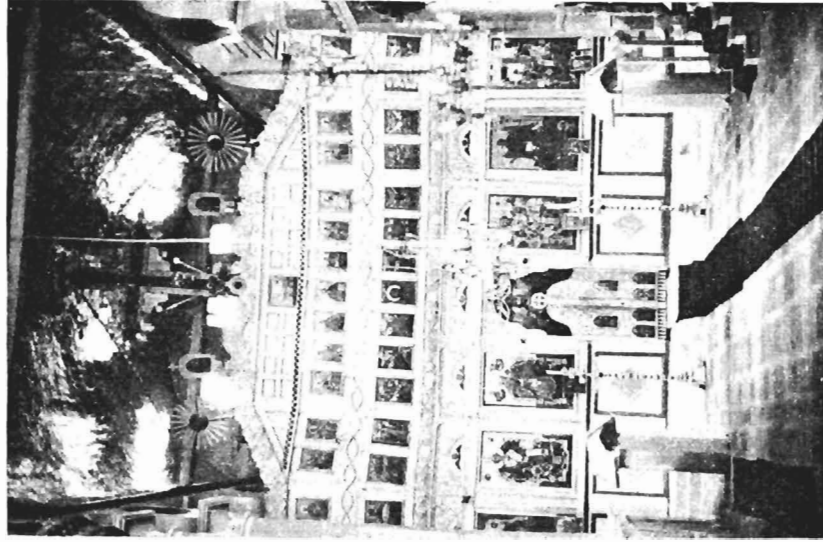
logy», vol. 55, no. 4 (Oct. 1951), p. 369, pl. 17. A. G r a b a r, *L'Iconoclasme Byzantin*, Paris 1957, p. 193.

1. S t. P e l e k a n i d e s, *Βυζαντινὰ καὶ Μεταβυζαντινὰ Μνημεῖα τῆς Πρέσπας*, Salonica 1960, pp. 20-50. N. M o u t s o p o u l o s, *Ἐκκλησίες τοῦ Νομοῦ Φλωρίνης*, Salonica 1964, pp. 9-10, pls. 29-32. N. M o u t s o p o u l o s, *Byzantinische und Nachbyzantinische Baudenkmäler aus Klein-Prespa und aus Hl. German*, «Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher», vol. XX (1970), pp. 41, 42, pl. 33.

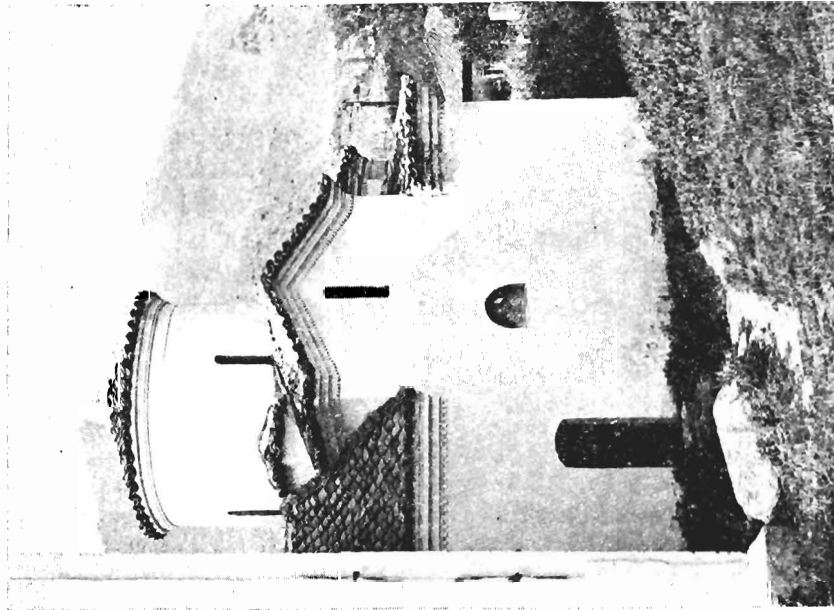
2. Cp. for example the XIIth century mosaics of Sts. Callixtus, Lawrence, Cornelius, etc. in the conch of the apse of St. Maria in Trastevere.

3. M i c h a e l H. G e t a k o s, *Μοῦνὴ Ἀγνοῦντος*, Athens 1972, p. 97.

4. St. Germanos is not listed in the very comprehensive study by L o u i s R é a u, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, Paris 1958.



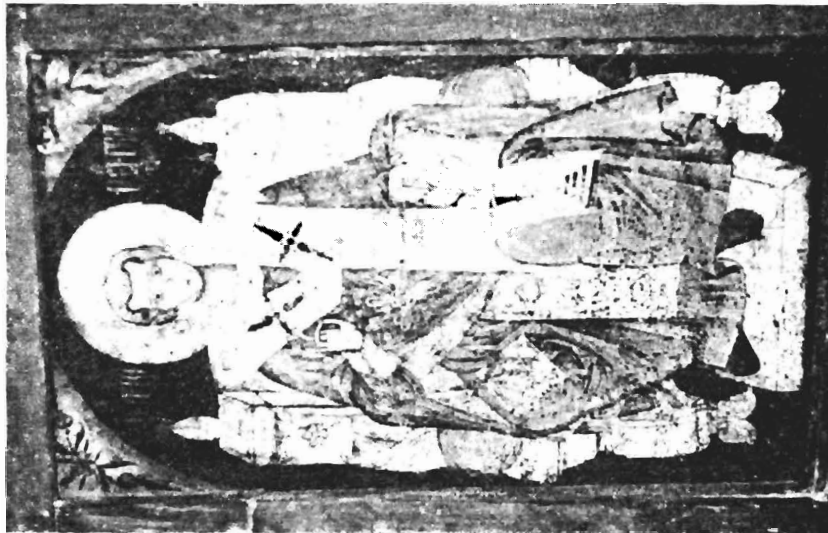
*Pict. 3. The Iconostasis of the New Church*



*Pict. 2. The Old Church of St. Germanos*



*Pict. 5. 20th cent. icon of St. Germanos*



*Pict. 4. 19th cent. icon of St. Germanos*

many questions. On the one hand, we are informed by the menologist that St. Germanos was buried in the Monastery of St. Saviour in Chora in Constantinople<sup>1</sup>, on the other hand, his relics are believed to repose in the reliquary in the north-west corner of the XIth century church. Pelekanides mentions that the name of the Church of St. Germanos was connected with the



*Pict. 6. Icon of St. Germanos, Iconostasis of the New Church*

VIIIth century patriarch on account of a tradition related by Theophylactus, archbishop of Ochrid, according to which the spirit of the Confessor Patriarch appeared together with those of the martyrs of Tiberiupolis during the reign of King Boris-Michael (852-889) in Macedonia<sup>2</sup>. A local tradition, told to me

1. 'Ο Μέγας Συναξαριστής της 'Ορθοδόξου 'Εκκλησίας, Athens 1964, vol. V., pp. 308-319.

2. St. Pelekanides, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

by the parish priest of the Church of St. Germanos, explains the origin of the association of the name of the village with the Patriarch of Constantinople by stating that once upon a time the people of this region had lost a cow when St. Germanos appeared unto them and pointed to them the way not only to their animal but also to some fresh water. In honour of this apparition of the saint they built a church and named their settlement after him<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, these traditions can hardly be accepted from an historical point of view. Moutsopoulos points out «that there could really be no relationship of the VIIIth century Patriarch of Constantinople to this village»<sup>2</sup> and following G. Konidaris he suggests that the church and the village were named after the Xth century Bulgarian Patriarch Germanos who succeeded the Patriarch Damianos, who was deposed by the Macedonian Emperor John I Tzimiscēs (969-976)<sup>3</sup>. We know that John I, after defeating the Russian Tsar Boris II (969-976), divided Bulgaria into two parts. Eastern Bulgaria was incorporated into the Empire, Western Bulgaria with its capital of Triadića (Sofia) became the kingdom of the House of Shishman. Under Tsar Samuel (976-1014) the capital was removed first to Prespa<sup>4</sup>, and later to Ochrid. It is very likely, therefore, that church and village were named after the Bulgarian prelate. With the defeat of Samuel by the Emperor Basil II at Serres, and the capture of Ochrid, Western Bulgaria became again a Byzantine province (1018-1186). It was during this period that the cult-transfer from the Bulgarian Patriarch Germanos to the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Germanos must have taken place. This means, of course, that the authenticity of the relics of the VIIIth century Patriarch in the XIth century Church of St. Germanos must be seriously doubted. In the Middle Ages, the right arm of St. Germanos was said to have been used in the ceremony of the enthronement of the patriarchs of Constantinople. To-day, relics ascribed to St. Germanos are venerated in the Hesychastirion Analepsis in Kozane, Macedonia, and in the Monastery Haghia Lavra at Kalavrita, Peloponnesos<sup>5</sup>.

The village of Haghios Germanos with the two brooks, the Naćelo and Stara Reka, is situated east of the south-eastern tip of Lake Prespa in Macedonia. Prior to the Greek Civil War 1944-1949, the population of this village con-

1. Told by the Reverend Father Georgios Lefkimmiatis of Haghios Germanos.

2. N. Moutsopoulos, loc. cit.

3. G. Konidaris, Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐκκλησία ὡς Πολιτιστικὴ Δύναμις ἐν τῇ Ἱστορίᾳ τῆς Χερσονήσου τοῦ Αἴμου, Athens 1948, p. 52.

4. F. Ivanov, Ἡ Πρωτεύουσα τοῦ Σαμουήλ εἰς Πρέσπαν, «Δελτίον τῆς Βουλγαρικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας», vol. I (1910), p. 55.

5. O. Meirardus, A Study of the Relics of Saints of the Greek Orthodox Church, «Oriens Christianus», vol. LI (1967), p. 186.



sisted of 3.000 inhabitants. According to the 1971 census, Haghios Germanos had 478 inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. The population is very heterogeneous with significant Serbo-Croatian and Rumanian constituencies. Should the present rate of emigration from Haghios Germanos continue, the village will be depopulated in a few years, and the monuments erected to the honour of St. Germanos will no longer serve their stated purpose.

OTTO F. A. MEINARDUS

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΙΣ

Otto Meinardus, Ὁ ἀγένειος πατριάρχης Ἁγ. Γερμανός.

«Ὁ ἀγένειος πατριάρχης Ἁγ. Γερμανός» ἀποτελεῖ ἔρευνα τῆς ἀπεικονίσεως τοῦ εἰκονολάτρου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ 8ου αἰ. (715-730). Εὐνουχισμένος ἀπὸ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντῖνο Δ΄ ἀπεικονιζόταν κατὰ τοὺς μέσους βυζαντινοὺς χρόνους ἀγένειος. Ἡ ἀπεικονισὴ του, τόσο στὸν ἐξωτερικὸ τοῖχο τοῦ Ἁγ. Γερμανοῦ (12ος ἢ 13ος αἰ.), ὅσο καὶ σὲ τοιχογραφίες τοῦ 19ου καὶ 20οῦ αἰ., θέτουν τὸ ἐρώτημα γιὰ τὴν αἰτία τῆς παραστάσεώς του ὡς ἀγενείου, ἰδιαιτέρως ἀνληφθῆ ὑπ' ὄψη, ὅτι ἡ ὀρθόδοξος θεολογία καὶ ἡ βυζαντινὴ τέχνη ἀπέδιδαν στὴν γενειάδα τὴν ἐνδειξὴ τοῦ ἀνδρισμοῦ καὶ τὸ σύμβολο τῆς ἱερωσύνης. Βρίσκεται ἄραγε ἡ ἀπάντησις στὴν ἐπιθυμία τῆς μεταφορᾶς τῆς ἰδέας τοῦ μαρτυρίου του; Μᾶλλον δύσκολο, καθ' ὅσον ὁ εὐνουχισμὸς του δὲν ἦταν ἀποτέλεσμα τῶν εἰκονολατρικῶν του πεποιθήσεων, πράξεων καὶ πολιτικῆς.

Ἀποδεχόμενος ὡς ἀρχὴ τὴν λατρεία τοῦ πατριάρχου τοῦ 8ου αἰ. στὸ μακεδονικὸ χωριὸ Ἁγ. Γερμανός, ὁ Μουτσόπουλος ἔχει ἤδη ἀποδείξει ὅτι προέκυψε μία σύγχυσις προσώπων μὲ τὴν ἀντικατάστασις τοῦ βουλγάρου πατριάρχου τοῦ 10ου αἰ. ἀπὸ τὸν πατριάρχη Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ 8ου αἰ. Αὐτὴ ἡ μεταφορὰ λατρείας προέκυψε στὰ τέλη τοῦ 11ου αἰ., ἢ ἀργότερα, ὅταν ἡ Δ. Βουλγαρία ἔγινε πάλι βυζαντινὴ ἐπαρχία.

Εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ ἄρθρου γίνεται λόγος γιὰ τὴν ἀυθεντικότητα τῶν λειψάνων τοῦ Ἁγ. Γερμανοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ χωριοῦ Ἁγ. Γερμανός, καὶ ἀναφέρονται τὰ κατὰ τόπους λατρευόμενα λείψανα τοῦ εἰκονολάτρου πατριάρχου.

1. Population de la Grèce, Athens 1972, p. 168.