"Femina Byzantina": The Council in Trullo on Women

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Μὴ ἐξέστω ταῖς γυναιξὶ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς θείας λειτουργίας λαλεῖν (Do not allow women to speak during the holy liturgy).[1] With this command, followed by a quotation from St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:34), the Council in Trullo instructed that women were to remain silent during church services. Canon 70 is typical of clerical attitudes toward women. Yet even in their predictable prejudice they are interesting, for they contain gender-specific material which is quite rare in Byzantine records. However skewed, such evidence adds to our meager knowledge of Byzantine women. The declarations of the Council in Trullo, for example, indicate quite particular concerns, which can be analyzed to ameliorate what has justly been identified as the "very rare" appearance of women in books on Byzantium.[2] So this study of what the late seventh-century canons can tell us about "femina byzantina" is offered, with deep gratitude and affection, as a tribute to the scholar who has done so much to make everyday life in Byzantium a serious field of study, Alexander Kazhdan.

In 692 the Council in Trullo, convened by Justinian II, met in the same domed hall of the Great Palace where the Sixth Ecumenical Council had been held ten years earlier.[3] More than two hundred bishops from most parts of the empire under secure imperial control assembled in Constantinople to fulfill their given role: to issue disciplinary canons necessary to protect and secure correct observance of the Christian faith. Although no bishops from North Africa participated, the five major sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem were represented, and in its address to the emperor the council described itself as ecumenical.

At that time the empire was under serious threat from Arab forces directed from Damascus by Caliph Abd al-Malik. The astonishingly rapid spread of Muslim control in the east Mediterranean, accompanied by the development of a new monotheistic faith, Islam, formed a backdrop to the council's activities. But Muslim belief, which to the Byzantines was yet another heresy, was not explicitly recorded. While many heresies and ways of readmitting penitent heretics were discussed, there is no indication that the bishops addressed the problem of winning back those Christians who had adopted the faith of their Arab conquerors. Since apostasy was encouraged by financial incentives, many had probably abandoned Christianity for Islam. Yet in 692 the question of their return to orthodox belief was apparently not raised.

Certainty on this matter is unfortunately impossible, because the proceedings of the council are lost. Records must have been kept, but only the opening address by the bishops to the emperor and the text of the actual canons are preserved. All the discussion that preceded the final declarations is missing. If, as seems likely, the bishops proceeded in the manner established at past councils, there would have been much debate on contentious issues, and contemporary developments among the Christian communities under Muslim control might have been one of them. On the other hand, the fact that so few Christian representatives from these areas attended the council meant that very few "expert witnesses" were present. In addi-

[1] Council in Trullo, canon 70: G. A. Ralles and M. Potles, eds., *Syntagma ton theion kai ieron kanonon,* II (Athens, 1852), 467; P. P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique,* I (Vatican, 1962), 208 (with Lat. and Fr. trans.); H. R. Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils,* A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, XIV (Oxford-New York, 1900), 396 (Eng. trans.). The Greek text is also printed in Mansi XI, and in V. N. Beneševič, *Drevne-Slavjanskaja Kormčaya* (St. Petersburg, 1906). In the following notes I give page references to Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* Joannou (the most recent edition), and Percival.

[2] A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Washington, D.C., 1982), 20.

[3] In general, see J. Pargoire, *L'église byzantine de 527 à 847* (Paris, 1923), 199–236; J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, 1987), 284–88.

tion, the team responsible for drafting the text of the canons observed the traditional style of timeless proscription. Contemporary issues, even if they were actually addressed at councils, were more often presented in hallowed ancient forms. For instance, previous condemnation of heresies of the early Christian period was reiterated, even when there was no clear upsurge of such heretical belief.

The timeless quality of the canons was further provoked by the fact that this was the first council for 240 years to add to the accepted body of canon law. Since 451, when the Council of Chalcedon issued thirty canons, ecumenical meetings had been concerned exclusively with Christian dogma. The Fifth and Sixth councils had been summoned in 553 and 681/2 to deal specifically with wrong belief; no disciplinary matter other than its condemnation had been decreed. So the Trullan council had to legislate on all the problems that had arisen since the resolutions passed in 451. During this long period much civil legislation had been issued, and many sections of the Code and *Novellae* of Justinian dealt with ecclesiastical matters. The first collections of canon law arranged according to subject had been made, and the *Synagoge* in fifty titles by John Scholastikos initiated the process of uniting canon and civil law that would culminate in the authoritative *Nomocanon* of the ninth century. But by taking all this into consideration, the council removed even further any immediate sense of seventh-century reality from the text of the 692 canons.[4]

In determining what issues required legislation, the patriarchal team responsible for planning the council would have established its own priorities. This group was probably responsible for canons which criticized Roman theology and ecclesiastical customs, and those designed to ensure uniform Byzantine practice over disputed matters. Advisers and theologians attached to the imperial court may also have brought forward legal problems, such as remarriage, for an authoritative resolution, but many issues appear to have been raised by individual bishops, who came to Constantinople with their own queries. The regional canons that refer to improper Jewish influence "in the land of the Armenians" were probably raised by local bishops. After discussion, issues were decided and legislation drafted. Where canon law already existed, it was often cited; at most councils it was necessary for old regulations to be repeated. In this way the assembled bishops tried to prevent irregularities and abuse in all aspects of Christian life.

In addition to the canons of past councils, ecumenical and provincial, the so-called Apostolic canons and rulings of the church fathers formed a body of ecclesiastical law that was, in theory, applied by all senior clerics. Whether most bishops in fact understood this material may certainly be doubted. Errors, misunderstandings, and total ignorance among some provincial church leaders is amply documented in the Trullan canons themselves. In 692 no distinct body of canon law formed an up-to-date guide for church administrators. The council was perhaps summoned partly to correct this situation, and partly to deal with specific problems. But the 102 canons finally decreed reveal concerns that seem to stem from recent anxiety over competing monotheistic faiths, both Judaism and Islam.

Of these canons, thirty are quite new or represent greatly expanded discussion of issues previously regulated by the church (although some had been addressed by civil laws).[5] That is, nearly one-third of the canons are devoted to new problems or deal with familiar ones in much more detail. Women are featured in several of these, as teenaged girls, married women, mothers, and widows. They also appear in canons on familiar topics, sometimes in rather novel ways. But here I will concentrate on aspects not covered by earlier church legislation.

Ecclesiastical concern about women can be observed in three distinct but overlapping areas: church services, monastic life, and society at large. Such concern was of course constant in medieval societies. But at the end of the seventh century it was intensified by many different regulations, all directed toward the promotion of suitable Christian behavior. The first area is represented by new canons devoted to reforming lay participation in the liturgy. From these, it is evident that seventh-century services were not always conducted properly. Similarly, in the monastic world the strict segregation of the sexes was not regularly observed.

[4] The council does not refer explicitly to the Nomocanon of the early 7th century, compiled by the so-called Enantiophanes or Younger Anonymous, and felt the need to issue a codifying canon (c. 2). When the bishops record their reaction to particular disorders, it is possible that they refer to relatively recent developments (e.g., cc. 30, 99). The significance of these references, as pointers to late 7th-century reality, requires further investigation.

[5] For reasons of space it will not be possible to analyze these civilian regulations here.

Finally, in everyday life people did not always behave in a thoroughly Christian fashion. In all three areas, therefore, the council proposed methods of making people more aware of their obligations as Christians.

(1) Lay attendance at the liturgy was criticized in several canons. Those who came to church to chant, for instance, were upbraided because "they shout in a disorderly fashion, producing a forced clamor, and even use unauthorized words unsuitable for church" (c. 75). This abuse of both the style and the text employed in chanting is closely related to other canons designed to correct inappropriate Christian behavior in church. People brought gold vessels to church and expected to receive the eucharist in them, instead of in their cupped hands (c. 101). Some of the laity even gave themselves the eucharist when no bishop, priest, or deacon was present (c. 58). Lay people entered the sanctuary (c. 69), tried to expound ecclesiastical dogmas and teach in church (c. 64), read false martyrologies aloud in church (c. 63), and profaned holy shrines by indecent activities (cc. 88, 97).

Irreverent shouting and improper chanting had attracted ecclesiastical censure in the past. At Laodicaea, toward the end of the fourth century, chanting was restricted to canonically appointed singers, *psaltai*.[6] Only the one hundred and fifty recognized psalms in the Old Testament were to be sung; any other texts or psalms were prohibited.[7] In 692 the latter regulation had to be reiterated and the manner of chanting stipulated. The use of unauthorized texts is clearly related to canon 63 against the public reading of invented, false martyrologies, stories which dishonored the true Christian martyrs and induced lack of faith, *apistia*, in those who heard them.[8] The council also noted that the clause, "who was crucified for us," was still chanted, though it had been condemned as an unauthorized addition to the text of the Trisagion hymn,[9] and forbade it (c. 81).

Canon 64 addressed a related abuse, namely, public teaching and discussion of ecclesiastical dogma by the laity.[10] By appropriating the role of the teacher, *axiōma didaskalikon*, in this way lay people transgressed God's established order, which reserved teaching to those who had received the gift of pedagogy. The laity were reminded that they should never enter the sanctuary, which was reserved for priests, and should certainly not presume to give themselves the eucharist.

In addition, churches were occasionally profaned by people who brought animals into them (c. 88).[11] This was expressly forbidden, except in cases of most dire necessity. If a traveler failed to find alternative accommodation and both the animal and owner might die if forced to spend the night outside, they could justify sleeping in the church, but any regular use of consecrated space as accommodation was severely condemned (c. 97).[12] Such profanation was apparently committed by clergy and laity alike—some as married couples, others in different fashions—which showed no respect for churches. Drawing on older regulations concerning eating in church and charitable banquets or love feasts, which also introduced beds or mattresses into a church, the council decreed that all those guilty of thus misusing holy places should be driven out.[13] This may be related to canons designed to prevent food consumption according to Jewish customs, for example, canon 99 against bringing meat into the sanctuary, which is directed particularly to Christians "in the land of the Armenians."[14]

Among the issues raised by lay behavior in church, one is quite gender-specific: canon 70 forbids women to speak during ecclesiastical services, quoting St. Paul's well-known instruction for women to be silent in church.[15] Instead, they should be obedient and may consult their husbands at home, if they want to learn anything, "for it is a shame (*aischron*) for a woman to speak in

[6] Laodicaea, canon 15, Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, III, 184; Joannou, I, ii, 136.

[7] Laodicaea, canon 59, with the list of approved biblical books to be used in church (sometimes separated to form c. 60), Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, III, 225–26; Joannou, I, ii, 154–55.

[8] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 452; Joannou, I, 200; Percival, 394.

[9] In 476/7; see V. Grumel, *Les actes des patriarches (381–715)*, I, *Regestes*, i, rev. ed. by J. Darrouzès (Paris, 1972), nos. 150, 151.

[10] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 453–54; Joannou, I, 201–2; Percival, 394.

[11] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 511; Joannou, I, 224–25; Percival, 403.

[12] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 536; Joannou, I, 234–35; Percival, 406.

[13] Laodicaea, canon 28: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, III, 195; Joannou, I, ii, 142, repeated at Trullo, canon 74: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 476; Joannou, I, 212; Percival, 398.

[14] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 543; Joannou, I, 235–36; Percival, 407.

[15] See note 1 above; R. Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l'église ancienne* (Gembloux, 1972), 27–29, accepts that these two verses are an interpolation, to be attributed to a Judaeo-Christian milieu. Whether they are really foreign to St. Paul's thinking on women or not, they were certainly accepted as authentic by later theologians.

church" (1 Cor. 14:34–35). This marks the culmination of a long process of excluding women from active participation in the liturgy. In the early Christian centuries women had preached, prophesied, taught, and expounded Scripture.[16] At the council of Laodicaea, however, those who had done so as so-called *presbytidas* or *prokathēmēnas* had been denied this role, and therefore barred from the sanctuary.[17] Female believers continued to participate in lay parts of the liturgy, primarily the responses, the creed, and certain chants and prayers, until the Trullan bishops further restricted their activity in church by ordering them to remain silent. They were thus reduced to mere spectators and hearers.[18] Such a firm denial of the public expression of Christian faith by women could only drive them into other forms of devotion. Of course, they could attend the liturgy as onlookers, but it was in more intimate relations with the holy, such as icon veneration, that they found a way of proving their commitment.[19] Their pursuit of Christian ideals could still be followed in domestic contexts, both within the home and in social work and welfare, but it was always an individual one, peripheral to the ordered ecclesiastical life of the church. While many female Byzantine saints displayed a dedication to the relief of poverty and illness, the contrast between their activity and the great variety of fields open to their male equivalents reveals what very limited possibilities existed for women.[20]

(2) Among the canons devoted to monasticism, several reveal that seventh-century women pursued a commitment to celibacy as teenaged girls, older women, or widows. One new regulation relates purely to female dedication, while others apply equally to men and women. The first and most important is canon 45, concerned with the appropriate dress to be worn when women take their vows.[21] It particularly attacks those who present candidates in silks and other fine robes, decorated with gold and a variety of precious stones. They approach the altar of the monastic church decked out in immense wealth, which they remove, in order to receive the ceremony of blessing and put on the black habit of the nun. The bishops declare: "It is not pious for a woman who has chosen of her own free will to abandon the world and all its charms . . . to enter a nunnery [attired] in such a way that recalls the world's most transitory nature, which she had already forgotten." She might become hesitant, disturbed, and even weep a little. "And then witnesses might believe her tears sprang from the fact of leaving the world and worldly things rather than from her own commitment to the ascetic struggle." So this practice must cease.

Obviously, some parents had been encouraging their daughters to take their vows wearing extremely rich apparel. But this tradition probably stemmed from acts of self-dedication recorded in early Christian martyrologies, where women declared themselves betrothed to Christ. Young girls who wished to remain celibate regularly used this argument to avoid an arranged marriage, for example, Justa, who "made Christ alone her successful suitor and lord."[22] And numerous cases document their experience of a spiritual marriage, accompanied by all the actions and vocabulary of a secular wedding, including ritual washing, anointing with oil, dressing, wearing both wedding rings and crowns, even with the notion of marriage feasts and celestial bedchambers. The Lives of the Persian martyr Martha and of St. Febronia provide telling examples of this vocabulary.[23] A comparable preparation is recorded in acts of martyrdom, when women took their daughters to their deaths as "brides of Christ" dressed in regular marriage gowns.[24] Women continued to commit their virginity to Christ in ceremonies that established the spiritual equivalent of marriage and dressed as if for a wedding.

Twelfth-century commentators on this canon reveal that it had no great success in curbing the use

[16] Jo Ann MacNamara, *A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries* (New York, 1983); E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Word, Spirit and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities," in R. Ruether and E. McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York, 1979), 29–70; Gryson, *Le ministère*, 20–40.

[17] Laodicaea, canons 11, 44; Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, III, 181, 212; Joannou I, ii, 135, 148; cf. Gryson, as above, 92–95.

[18] G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster, Md., 1945), 483–84, 486–88, 511–16.

[19] J. Herrin, "Women and the Faith in Icons in Early Christianity," in R. Samuel and G. Stedman Jones, eds., *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London, 1982), 56–83.

[20] J. Herrin, "Public and Private Forms of Religious Commitment among Byzantine Women," in L. Archer et al., eds., *An Illusion of the Night* (forthcoming).

[21] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 411–12; Joannou, I, 182–84; Percival, 386–87.

[22] P. Wilson-Kaster et al., eds., *A Lost Tradition: Women Writers of the Early Church* (Washington, D.C., 1981), 149 (this incomplete text, a martyrdom of St. Cyprian of Antioch by Eudokia, is in fact a martyrdom of Justa/Justina).

[23] S. Brock and S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley-London, 1987), 70–71, 165.

[24] See, for instance, Ruhm and her three daughters, martyrs of Najran, Brock-Harvey, as above, 112–13.

of elaborate and expensive dresses. Theodore Balsamon uses the key adverb, *nymphikōs,* like a bride, and complains that people regularly transgressed this canon.[25] Byzantine families, parents, sponsors, and candidates for nunneries all conspired to make the ceremony of monastic dedication a rich and sumptuous affair. For them, too, the ceremony took the place of a secular wedding on which considerable family resources were regularly expended.

Another situation particular to women is treated in canon 48, which tackles the awkward problem of what to do with a priest's wife if he is elevated to the episcopacy.[26] Since the lower clergy remained married at their ordination, and were enjoined not to separate from their wives (a regulation repeated at Trullo, c. 13), married men could become bishops. But in order to hold this high office they had to be celibate (another rule reiterated in c. 12). This meant that their wives had to agree to dissolve their marriages in order to free their husbands for episcopal duties.[27] While the council took care not to presume their agreement, it decreed that priests in this position should try to persuade their spouses to enter nunneries in distant regions. Nunneries were considered a suitable environment for ex-wives, who might attain the rank of deaconess if they proved worthy. Their husbands also had to give an undertaking both to support them and to avoid any further contact with their ex-wives. But if they were unsuccessful, they could not become bishops.[28]

A particular case was also discussed in canon 12. The council had learned that bishops in Africa, Libya, and other places continued to live with their wives after consecration.[29] It forcefully reminded them of the scandal they were causing, and decreed that the practice must stop immediately because it set a bad example to the faithful and brought ecclesiastical discipline into disrepute. Quoting St. Paul again, it ordered that bishops who continued living with their wives were to be deposed. Although nothing was said about wives who agreed to leave their husbands, they presumably followed the new regulation of canon 48.

This group of canons reflects Byzantine unease on the question of clerical celibacy. In contrast to the Roman demand for celibate priests, the eastern church had always upheld the sanctity of marriage, even for men later ordained to the priesthood. Only a decade earlier, during the Sixth Ecumenical Council, attended by a large and well-informed delegation from Rome, differences over celibacy and fasting had become plain. At Trullo eastern respect for the Christian sacrament of marriage was reaffirmed, but at the same time ancient regulations against inappropriate marriages—so defined because they involved a second marriage for either party, or unacceptable marriage partners (i.e., prostitutes, household slaves, entertainers)—were repeated in canon 3. Such clerics had to dissolve their unions, and once ordained they were not allowed to marry (c. 6). So while the council emphasized the indissoluble nature of marriage, it was moving steadily toward greater clerical celibacy and tighter regulation of the permitted type of marriage, leaving the wives of ordained men in a very ambiguous position.

Such contradictory pressures had caused some priests to repudiate their wives on the pretext of piety, but this had always been condemned. In 692 ancient canons were repeated, and clerics who refused to sustain their marriages were threatened with deposition (c. 13).[30] Canon 30 raised the question of priests in barbarian churches, *en tais barbarikais ekklēsiais,*[31] who agreed by mutual consent to abstain from conjugal relations. Although this was strictly against the Apostolic canon cited in canon 13, the council felt that it could justify a certain leniency because these priests lost confidence living among "strange and unsettled customs." While no location for the barbarian churches is given, in canon 39 the "heathen" who make "barbarian incursions" on Cyprus are clearly Arabs.[32] Three other decisions affect church leaders who fail to hold a regular annual synod, priests who abandon

[25] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 412–13.

[26] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 419; Joannou, I, 186; Percival, 388.

[27] This type of voluntary separation constituted a divorce by mutual consent, *bona gratia,* see P. L'Huillier, "L'attitude de l'Eglise orthodoxe vis-à-vis du remariage des divorcés," *Revue du droit canonique* 29 (1979), 44–49, esp. 48 note 19 on Balsamon's comments and evidence of the canon's continuing application. Cf. J. Zhishman, *Das Eherecht der orientalischen Kirche* (Vienna, 1864), 780–81 and note 2.

[28] Zhishman, *Eherecht,* 460–67, 778–83.

[29] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 330–31; Joannou, I, 138–39; Percival, 370. Cf. Zhishman, *Eherecht,* 462–64.

[30] Zhishman, *Eherecht,* 451–59.

[31] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 369; Joannou, I, 160–61; Percival, 379; cf. H. C. Lea, *An Historical Sketch of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church,* 2nd ed. (Boston, 1884), 89–90; R. Gryson, *Les origines du célibat ecclésiastique* (Gembloux, 1970), 117–18, 120.

[32] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 395–96; Joannou, I, 173–74; Percival, 383; this describes the emigration of John, bishop of Cyprus, with his flock to the province of Hellespont, where he was established as bishop of Nea Justinianopolis. Cf. F. R. Trombley, "The Council in Trullo (691–692): A Study of Can-

their churches because of barbarian incursions (or for any other reason), and bishops who have been prevented from occupying their sees by barbarian invasions.[33] Although the identity of the barbarians is only identified once, Muslim occupation may be implied in the others.

While canon 30 is often understood as a reference to areas of the West under Roman control, where the Roman tradition of celibate priests applied,[34] it could also relate to eastern provinces of the empire that had been overrun by the Arabs during the second half of the seventh century. There, under Muslim control, Christian priests might well suffer a lack of courage; they might try to demonstrate their commitment to the faith by separating from their wives—"going beyond the law," as the council puts it. In the twelfth century, when Balsamon wanted to identify barbarian churches, he consulted bishops from Russia who confirmed that the metropolis of Alania was a barbarian place where this canon was not observed.[35]

Whatever the area, the council decreed that priests serving in these barbarian churches should cease to cohabit in any way with their spouses, as proof of their piety and to counteract their lack of courage and faintheartedness, *tēn tēs gnōmēs mikropsychian.* Of their wives there is no further word, but they were presumably classified together with ex-wives of bishops and obliged to enter nunneries. In his commentary Theodore Balsamon is critical of this canon; he does not believe it is right to force a wife to leave the conjugal house, citing both the Apostolic canon and a law of Justinian.[36]

Finally, two additional canons, 46 and 47, incorporate civilian laws governing nuns and reveal the council's insistence that dedicated women, like men, should remain in their communities and avoid going out. If urgent need forced them to leave, they should do so only with the blessing and authorization of the abbess and only accompanied by some of the older nuns, *meta tinōn presbytidōn kai proteuousōn.* These terms recall those previously used for women ordained to a function equivalent to the male presbyter.[37] The next regulation attempts to protect nuns while they are absent from their communities by prohibiting their stay overnight in male monasteries.[38] Monks are similarly ordered never to pass the night in a nunnery. The faithful are ordered to remain beyond all sin or scandal, living according to "that which is comely," so that they may "attend upon the Lord without distraction" (1 Cor. 7:35). These two regulations clearly fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical efforts to maintain greater control over dedicated women and men.[39]

(3) The remaining canons specific to women concern social activities in general. Their purpose is evidentally to curb any public expression of licentiousness, immorality or un-Christian behavior. Under this rubric, it seems, ancient pagan traditions still provided an excuse for unsuitable festivities, even in the seventh century. Whether at the public baths or at the Hippodrome, women were at risk, especially when they bathed with men or with Jews, or attended the spectacles and entertainments that usually accompanied horse racing and Hippodrome games. Of course, Christians had repeatedly been warned not to take part in such events, even when they were held in connection with private celebrations.[40] Dancing at weddings was singled out at Laodicaea, and the dangers of theatrical dances, *tas epi skēnēs orchēseis,* at Trullo,[41] but the council also stipulated in more precise detail what Christians must avoid.

According to canon 62, the most offensive occasions occurred at the so-called Kalends, the Bota, Brumalia, and celebrations of March 1st and the grape harvest, when the sight of "women dancing in public can cause much outrage and damage, and even worse, the dances and mystic rites performed by both men and women, in the name of those falsely called gods by the pagans, according to an ancient custom and one directly contrary to

ons relating to Paganism, Heresy, and the Invasions," *Comitatus* 9 (1978), 1–18, esp. 13–15.

[33] Canons 8, 18, and 37: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 324–5, 344, and 388; Joannou, I, 135–6, 149–50, and 171–72; Percival, 369, 374, 382. Canon 16 of Sardica, against the prolonged stay of clerics in the metropolis of Thessaloniki, concerns a similar abuse but not the same reason, Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 272; Joannou, I, ii, 183.

[34] If so, the "barbarian churches" should be placed in southern Italy, Sicily, and the diocese of eastern Illyricum embracing the Balkans, Greece, and the Aegean islands, which remained formally under Rome until the 8th century.

[35] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 370.

[36] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 370–71: "the Justinianic novel which does not permit the dissolution of marriage by mutual consent" (i.e., Novel 117, 10).

[37] Trullo, canon 46: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 414, Joannou, I, 184–85; Percival, 387; cf. note 17 above.

[38] Canon 47: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 416; Joannou, I, 185–86; Percival, 387.

[39] Cf. canons 41 and 42, for instance, which insist upon regular monastic training for solitaries and so-called hermits.

[40] Laodicaea, canon 54: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 220; Joannou, I, ii, 152; repeated at Trullo, canon 24: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 356; Joannou, I, 155; Percival, 376.

[41] Laodicaea, canon 53: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 219; Joannou, I, ii, 151; Trullo, 51; Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 424–25, Joannou, I, 188–89; Percival, 388.

Christian life."[42] During these rites men and women exchanged clothes; wore masks related to the comic, tragic, and satyr plays; invoked the name of Dionysos when pressing grapes or pouring wine; and acted as if possessed by pagan demons. Those found guilty would be punished by deposition if they were clerics, anathematization if laity.

But the bishops appear most anxious to prevent public dancing by women, especially if they are dressed in men's clothes or otherwise disguised. At the early fourth-century council of Gangra, women who dressed as men or cut off their hair had been denounced, but this occurred in the context of a fervent ascetic movement led by Eustathios of Sebasteia.[43] At Trullo, the bishops attacked a long tradition of marking seasonal festivals by offensive and immoral pagan celebrations, to which people, clergy included, seemed deeply attached. Any pretext for carnival-style festivities was now singled out for condemnation. Every new moon, for example, gave people an excuse for lighting bonfires in front of their houses and jumping over them, an ancient way of assuring good luck.[44] If this involved women, it would clearly come very close to dancing in public.

In canon 61 entertainers are criticized more explicitly than ever before. People who lead shebears and other animals around are here associated with fortune-tellers, those who claim to be able to predict the future whether from clouds, charms, incantations, or oracles.[45] Consulting a soothsayer, sorcerer, fortune-teller, astrologer, or anyone else who claimed to foresee the future, or who made protective amulets, had often been condemned.[46] But obviously it continued, and in the seventh century anyone who perpetrated destructive pagan customs in this way was to be expelled from the church. This was justified as a means of protecting the most simple-minded, *oi aplousteroi,* who might otherwise be deceived.

Indeed, the council states repeatedly that it aims to protect precisely this category of people who are most at risk from tricksters, seducers, and other corrupting influences. In canon 96 very elaborate or fancy hairstyles are blamed for the destruction of weak or unstable souls, so Christian men are ordered not to arrange their hair in a seductive fashion.[47] And since this is directed against men, it's evident that women are likely to be caught in the trap. Similarly, paintings on wood or pictures on other surfaces that "stimulate bodily sensations, corrupt the spirit, and light the flames of impure desire" are not to be permitted.[48] Those responsible for producing such pictures must be excommunicated. A comparable concern is clear in canon 73, which forbids the placing of the cross on church floors where it might be trodden under foot.[49]

Even in Christian paintings of the most established and approved variety the council recommends greater clarity. Canon 82 specifies that instead of the Lamb of God, as shown in paintings with John the Baptist pointing to it, Jesus shall henceforth be portrayed in his full humanity in order to emphasize the significance of the incarnation.[50] Painters are therefore instructed to show him as a man, in the flesh, to recall to beholders his suffering and saving death, and the redemption thus wrought for the world. Although the simple-minded, uneducated, poorer people are not named as an object of this regulation, it is obviously addressed to those who might not fully understand the symbolic representation of the lamb. A more direct commemoration of Christ's human existence is therefore recommended.

An extremely interesting problem is addressed in canon 68, directed against the corruption or destruction of Bibles by "anyone who cuts up any of the books of the Old or New Testament . . . or

[42] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 448; Joannou, I, 198–200, esp. 198.16–199.5; Percival, 393. Cf. R. Browning, "Theodore Balsamon's Commentary on the Canons of the Council in Trullo . . . ," in *Praktika tou A´ Diethnous Symposiou: E kathemerine zoe sto Byzantio* (Athens, 1989), 421–27.

[43] Gangra, canons 13, 17: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 109, 113; Joannou, I, ii, 94–95, 96.

[44] Canon 65: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 456–57; Joannou, I, 203–4; Percival, 394–95. For evidence of 12th century elaboration, see Theodore Balsamon's commentary, Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 459–60; A. P. Kazhdan and A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture* (Berkeley, 1985), 239–40; Browning, "Theodore Balsamon's Commentary," 421–22.

[45] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 442–43; Joannou, I, 196–98; Percival, 393.

[46] Ancyra, canon 24 (against people who consult divinators in the pagan fashion): Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 66; Joannou, I, ii, 72; Laodicaea, canon 36 (against Christian priests who use sorcery and magic, and make amulets): Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 203; Joannou, I, ii, 145.

[47] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 533; Joannou, I, 233–34; Percival, 406. Zonaras comments that in his day men continued to dye their hair, but he regards shaving as an even more deplorable western habit, Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 534–35; cf. Browning, "Theodore Balsamon's Commentary," 425–26.

[48] Canon 100: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 545; Joannou, I, 236–37; Percival, 407.

[49] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 474; Joannou, I, 211; Percival, 398.

[50] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 492–93; Joannou, I, 218–20; Percival, 401. Cf. D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago-London, 1989) 206–7, 211–12.

hands them over to be destroyed by booksellers (*bibliokapelois*) or by the so-called perfumers (*myrepsois*) or by any of the other merchants."[51] Both the person found handing over books and the recipient will be anathematized for one year, unless the books are kept for personal instruction or given to someone who can restore them. Who are the *bibliokapeloi* and why are they associated with perfumers (or so-called perfumers, who might in fact be something else)? From twelfth-century commentators, it's clear that while they complain of shortages of parchment, their chief concern is the reuse of Bibles. They are against removing biblical texts to create reusable parchment. But was the seventh-century church really concerned with the disrespect implied by such reuse? Or was it worried about heretics corrupting biblical texts with skillful alterations? Possibly the merchants denounced were actively soliciting Christian texts in order to promote a different sort of reading matter, non-Christian learning, philosophical discourse. In the late sixth century people who frequented booksellers in Constantinople were interested in ancient learning.[52] At Trullo the classification of booksellers with perfume manufacturers and merchants may provide a clue, since the church considered the latter a disreputable lot, who pandered to the vanity of women, together with hairdressers. Were these unscrupulous merchants importuning ignorant people for biblical manuscripts in the manner of Aladdin's lamp? Were they trying to make money out of holy texts, or to corrupt them with heretical changes?

In another area the council expressed its anxiety that people were fraternizing too closely with Jews.[53] This was by no means a new matter; since the fourth century bishops had been warning against the dangers of participating in Jewish feasts, primarily the Passover, eating their unleavened bread, and generally following their customs.[54] In the late seventh century additional aspects were cited: calling on Jewish doctors and using their medicine, bathing in the company of Jews, or simply getting too familiar with them (*prosoikeiousthō*). Clergy and laity alike were guilty. These prohibitions may be related to theological differences with the Christians in Armenia who had accepted considerable Jewish influence. Their practices are condemned on more than one occasion, and range from questions of spiritual leadership to the consumption of meat slaughtered by strangulation and the bringing of meat into churches.[55] In 692 the bishops appear to have wanted to check a novel avenue of Judaic influence.

One final aspect, which reflects on women and those who were ignorant of canon law, concerns illegitimate forms of marriage. These are treated in canon 98, devoted to the seduction of girls already engaged during their fiancé's lifetime,[56] and canon 53, on the remarriage of widows to men who had stood godfather to their children at baptism.[57] Both are gender-specific, in that they are addressed to men who try to impose illegitimate marriages on women who have already declared their marital intentions or their spiritual connections. Because the spiritual kinship forged at baptism is of a higher order than its physical equivalent, those who are spiritually related may not marry. The network of relationships thus established also creates new impediments to marriage and an additional category of prohibited unions, including the marriage of a godfather to the widowed mother of his godchildren. A fuller list is given in canon 54, which declares the need to be considerably more specific than St. Basil.[58]

But the canon that seems to reflect most ecclesiastical anxiety for ignorant souls, frequently female, is number 79.[59] This condemns people for preparing and eating a special dish of *semidalis* (a sweet cereal mixture) in honor of the Virgin on the day after the feast of Christ's birth. By this custom, the secular tradition of congratulating a mother after the successful delivery of a child was trans-

[51] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 463–64; Joannou, I, 206–7; Percival, 396. Cf. N. Wilson, "Books and Readers in Byzantium," in *Byzantine Books and Bookmen* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 2.

[52] Agathias, *Historiae,* 2.29, ed. R. Keydell, CFHB (Berlin, 1967), 78.

[53] Canon 11, Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 238–39; Joannou, I, 237–38; Percival, 370.

[54] Laodicaea, canons 37, 38: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* III, 206; Joannou, I, ii, 146.

[55] Canon 33, against hereditary priesthood: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 379, Joannou, I, 166–67; Percival, 381; canon 99, against cooking and eating meat in church: Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 543; Joannou, I, 235–36, Percival, 407 (both qualified as Judaizing, *ioudaikōs*).

[56] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 538–39; Joannou, I, 235; Percival, 406. Cf. K. Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes* (Paris, 1970), 129, 180, 183–84.

[57] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 428–29; Joannou, I, 189–90; Percival, 390. Cf. Zhishman, *Eherecht,* 265–69.

[58] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 432; Joannou, I, 190–92; Percival, 390–91.

[59] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma,* II, 486–87; Joannou, I, 215–16; Percival, 399.

planted into the church. Although women were not specifically condemned for the development, it seems more than likely that they were responsible. The bishops of 692 forcefully denounced the practice as quite incorrect and inappropriate. They declared that since the Virgin had given birth miraculously and suffered no pain, she could not be celebrated as a normal mother. The custom, therefore, had to cease.

These new rules were amplified by the repetition of older gender-specific regulations against women who procured abortions, abandoned children, or remarried illegally, traditional grounds for mistrusting women. In 692 the bishops added further justification for their low opinion, based on female behavior in public during ancient ceremonies or novel Christian ones. At best women were ranked among the simple-minded, who needed protection from corrupt and wicked men or vagrant monks;[60] at worst, they constituted an equally dangerous tendency toward un-Christian behavior in society. The two polar oppositions meant that women were perceived as a source of both innocence and corruption.

This fear of female potential and determination to keep women under control is typical of medieval societies. In late seventh-century Byzantium it may also have been strengthened by Christian awareness of Muslim attitudes and the stringent Islamic regulation of women. Within the Byzantine Christian tradition, women could be seen as paragons of virtue, virgins, saintly mothers, and holy widows. But as prostitutes, licentious young girls who would seduce married men and monks, or ordinary women who simply enjoyed dancing in public, jumping over bonfires or cross-dressing, they represented what the church understood as a definite threat to its social control and order. Hence the double-edged appreciation of women in Byzantium. The negative side is most clearly represented by the church in canons such as these. But ecclesiastical condemnation was balanced by a genuine appreciation of individual Byzantine mothers, wives, and daughters expressed by their male relatives. Despite occasionally exaggerated praise, distorted by rhetorical concerns, individual writers express a positive attitude toward women, once they were enclosed within family life. There they might perpetuate the ideal of Christian service, loving their husbands and their children as instructed.

However, since female forms of self-expression remain extremely rare in Byzantium, it is the male view of women that predominates. While this constitutes a serious limitation, gender-specific evidence about Byzantine women can still yield new insights. And the evidence provided by the Trullan council, while it is rooted in the late seventh century, continued to influence later developments. The canons were incorporated into the *Nomocanon*, the most important medieval compilation of civilian and ecclesiastical laws, and continued to provoke serious consideration into the fourteenth century and beyond. So this information, however distant from Byzantine women's self-expression, documents another aspect of their daily lives. It adds a further dimension to the framework of feminine existence, and thus forms one more component in the ongoing study of "*homo byzantinus*."[61]

Addendum. Since this contribution was written in the summer of 1990, several important works have appeared on closely related subjects. In particular, Heinz Ohme has published *Das Concilium Quinisextum und seine Bischofsliste* (Berlin-New York, 1990), and "Der Terminus 'χώρα' als 'Provinzbezeichnung' in synodalen Bischofslisten des 6.-8. Jahrhunderts," *BZ* 82 (1989), 191–201. V. Déroche and G. Dagron have studied Christian-Jewish polemic in the seventh century, and I. Sorlin has examined the terms for female demons, all in *TM* 11 (1991). J. F. Haldon's book, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge, 1990), provides valuable details of practices condemned by the council, e.g., pp. 333–40. A bibliography and commentary on the council is planned by Greg Crow for publication in 1992. It has not been possible to take account of these and other studies published since August 1990.

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[60] Ralles-Potles, *Syntagma*, II, 406; Joannou, I, 180; Percival, 385; cf. H.-G. Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon* (Munich, 1986), 70–71.

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