

“Everything from God”: Alexander Mavrocordatos the “Exaporit” (1641-1709) and Orthodoxy

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Introduction

Speaking about Alexander Mavrocordatos, the so called “Exaporit” (1641-1709)¹, the anonymous author of the text: «Ἀποσημειώσεις εἰς τὸν βίον Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου τοῦ περιφήμου μινίστρου τῆς Ὀθωμανικῆς Πόρτας» (“Notes on the life of Alexander Mavrocordatos the famous minister of the Sublime Porte”), points out the following:

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1. Alexander Mavrocordatos, son of Nikolaos Mavrogordatos [sic] and of Roxandra Skarlatou, was the Phanariot from the early generation of the Phanariots who left their mark in the 17th century. A man of study and action, he remained known in history for various reasons. First of all, he deservedly earned a place in the European scientific community for his doctoral thesis (1664), which he first developed at the University of Padova and then in Bologna, on the subject of blood circulation and the contribution of the lounges to this vital process of human organism. Then returning to Constantinople, he also distinguished himself as teacher at the School of Manolakis Kastorianos (1665-1671/2). However, his writing work was also important, covering many fields such as history, language, philosophy, art, rhetoric, and even theology. Finally, his pride was great, and his contribution decisive to the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699), in which he took part as representative of the Sublime Port with the office of “Grand Dragoman/Interpreter”. For more details on the life and the work of the Exaporit see D. Tzelepis, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκὰ τοῦ Ἀλέξανδρου Μαυροκορδάτου τοῦ «ἔξ Ἀπορρήτων»*, vol. Α', Ὁ συγγραφέας καὶ τὸ ἔργο του. Prologue Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos – Nikos Emm. Mavrelas, Herodotos Publications, Athens 2023, pp. 19-124.

«Ὁ περίφημος Ἀλέξανδρος Μαυροκορδάτος ἦτο εὐσεβέστατος εἰς τὰ θεῖα, ἐχθρὸς ἀδιάλλακτος τῶν ἀθέων, δὲν ἤθελεν ὄχι μόνον νὰ συνομιλήσῃ μαζί τους, ἀλλ' οὔτε νὰ τοὺς βλέπῃ [...]. Δὲν ἄρχιζε καμμίαν ὑπόθεσιν χωρὶς τὴν ἐπίκλησιν τῆς θείας βοηθείας [...]. Ἡ εὐσέβεια ὁμῶς ὁποῦ ἤσκει ἦτο χωρὶς δεισιδαιμονίαν καὶ χωρὶς ὑπόκρισιν [...]. Δὲν ἔλειπον οὔτε ἀπὸ τὸν νοῦν του οὔτε ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα του σύντομοι καὶ ἐπικαίριοι εὐχαὶ χωρὶς κρότον. Καὶ ἐπειδὴ ὄχι ὁ τόπος μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ διάπυρος διάθεσις γεννᾷ τὴν προσευχήν, ἐπροσεύχετο καθήμενος, ἰστάμενος, βαδίζων, ἰππεύων, ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ὁμιλῶν τοῖς κρατοῦσιν, ἐν τῇ κλίνῃ ἤδη χωρῶν εἰς ὕπνον, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ὕπνῳ»². And the anonymous continues: «Ὁ δὲ ζῆλος ὁποῦ εἶχε διὰ τὴν σύστασιν καὶ τιμὴν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἦτο θερμὸς καὶ διάπυρος, δὲν ἐφείδετο οὔτε τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῦ, οὔτε τῆς ἰδίας τιμῆς, οὔτε αὐτῆς τῆς ζωῆς διὰ νὰ ἀπαντήσῃ εἰς τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα δεινὰ τῆς κοινῆς Μητρὸς»³.

However, Iakovos of Argos, «Ἵπατος Φιλόσοφος τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλῃς Ἐκκλησίας» (“Supreme Philosopher of the Great Church of Christ”) and educator of the children of the “Exaporit”, speaking of the Orthodox Mavrocordatos, he will write in only a few lines, in his text that takes precedence over the history of the Jews, titled *Τὰ Ἰουδαϊκά*: «Ἄλλ' ἐκεῖνῳ γ' ἐν ἐδόκει ἀξίωμα μέγιστον καὶ καύχημα, τὸ Χριστιανὸν εἶναι καὶ ὀνομάζεσθαι, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτὴν προέσθαι ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ κλήσεως». In order for the Orthodox moral of Alexander to become clearer, he points out the following: «Τῆς μὲν γὰρ χαμαιζήλου, καὶ σήμερον μὲν οὔσης, αὔριον δὲ μὴ οὔσης κατέπτυε

2. K. Dapontes also points out the unceasing prayer of Mavrocordatos: «Καὶ εἰς τὸ καῖκι, καὶ εἰς τὸ ἄλογο καβαλάρης ἐμελετοῦσε ψαλμοὺς καὶ εὐχὰς» (“And in the boat and on the horse rider he was studying psalms and blessings”) [K. Dapontes, «Ἱστορικὸς κατάλογος ἀνδρῶν ἐπισήμων (1700-1784)», in: K. Σάθας, *Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. Γ', Typois tou Chronou, Venice 1872, p. 171].

3. N. Karatzas, «Ἀποσημειώσεις εἰς τὸν βίον Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου τοῦ περιφήμου μινίστρου τῆς Ὀθωμανικῆς Πόρτας», *Πανδώρα/Pandora* 22 (1872), p. 316. We refer to N. Karatzas, because as Apostolopoulos claims, is the one who is hiding behind the anonymous writer [see D. G. Apostolopoulos, «Ἀρμογὴ σπαραγμάτων. Νεότερα γιὰ τὴ βιβλιοθήκη Νικολάου καὶ Κωνσταντίνου Καρατζᾶ», *Ὁ Ἐρανιστής/Ἡ Eranistis* 29 (2016), pp. 115-117].

δόξης, καὶ τῶν ἐνταῦθα τερπνῶν, καὶ ἡδέων τῶν παραρρέοντων, καὶ ἀπερχομένων μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν ὠρέγετο, τῶν δ' ἄει μερόντων, καὶ ἀκινήτων ἐκτόπως ἦν ἐπιθυμῶν, καὶ πάντα τὸν ἔρωτα ὑπὲρ τῆς τούτων ἐπιτυχίας κατέτεινε»⁴.

Having as an occasion the above views, we will try in this article to outline the personality of Alexander Mavokordatos –one of the most important personalities of Hellenism during the 17th century– in relation to Orthodoxy. In particular, we will attempt to approach: his relationship with atheism and superstition, his Orthodox life, his brief efforts to keep the Holy Sepulchre in the hands of the Orthodox, his great interest in Orthodox churches, his relationship with the Orthodox hierarchs and, finally God’s presence in his work.

1. Mavrocordatos and Atheism

The negative criticism of atheism by Mavrocordatos is eloquently depicted in chapter 56th of the second book of *Φροντίσματα*⁵. There then, after briefly defining atheism, saying that «ἀναιρεῖ τὸ Θεῖον, ὅπου ἀληθῶς ἐστι», records eight consequences of it:

Thus, atheism «πρῶτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατασπᾶ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τῆς ἄνω μετουσίας, καὶ γήινον αὐτὸν ἀπεργάζεται, φιλήδονόν τε καὶ χαμερπῆ. Δεύτερον ἀναιρεῖ τὴν Πρόνοιαν, καὶ δυσέλπιδας ἀπεργάζεται τοὺς θνητούς, ἀπαρηγορήτους τε, καὶ ἀπονενομημένους ἐν συμφοραῖς. Τρίτον ὅτι τὴν περὶ τὸ Θεῖον γινῶσιν, καὶ ἔρουναν

4. In fact, these are passages from the funeral oration that Iakovos from Argos composed in honor of Alexander. This text was included in *Ἰουδαϊκά* by Nicolaos the son of Alexander, the first ruler of Wallachia, who published the work of his father in Bucharest in 1716 (see Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἱστορία ἱερὰ ἦτοι, Τὰ Ἰουδαϊκά*, en ti Sevasmia Moni ton Hagion Panton, Bucharest 1716).

5. The particular work of the Exaporit is a collection of political and other exhortations –the fruit of a lifetime of participation in political life–, with recipient all those who had in mind to exercise power, one of whom was –obviously– his son Nikolaos (see Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα τοῦ Ἐκλαμπροτάτου Ἀοιδίμου Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου τοῦ ἐξ Ἀπορόρήτων*, En ti Helliniki Typografeia Georgiou Vendoti, En Vienni en Aoustra 1805).

πολλῶν καλῶν οὖσαν πρόξενον ἀπελαύνει τοῦ πολιτεύματος. Τέταρτον ὅτι τοὺς Παλαμναίους [= δολοφόνους, ἀχρείους, βδελυρούς], καὶ ἀλιτηρίους ἀνερεθίζει, καὶ παροξύνει κατὰ τῶν χρηστῶν, καὶ ἐπιεικῶν, καὶ ἔνθα μὴ ὁ φόβος τῶν Ἐξουσιαστῶν ὑπάρχει, πολλῆς κακουργίας, καὶ μιαρίας γίνεται παραίτιος. Πέμπτον μιμητὴν Θεοῦ ὄντα τὸν Ἄνθρωπον, θηρίων ἀγέλαις ἐγκατατάττει, καὶ μηδὲν ἐκείνων διαφέρειν ἀπεργάζεται. Ἑκτον, ὅτι μάχεται τῇ Ἀθανασίᾳ, καὶ κωλύει ὅτι ἂν ἄξιον εἰσπράσσεσθαι ὑπὲρ Ἀθανασίας, ὀκνηρούς τε καὶ ῥαθύμους ἀπεργάζεται τοὺς ἔνεκα τῆς Ἀθανασίας φιλοπονοῦντας, καὶ δουλεύοντας αὐτῇ, καὶ δῆλον ἐκ τούτου, ὁπόσων Ἀγαθῶν στερεῖ τὸ Γένος ἡμῶν. Πρὸς δέ, φιλοψύχους ποιεῖ πάντας, καὶ ἀγενεῖς, καὶ φοφοδεεῖς, καὶ ἀμελεῖς. Ἔτι δὲ λύει τὴν τῶν Ἀνθρώπων κοινωνίαν ἓνα τοῦτον ἔχουσα σύνδεσμον τὸ περὶ Θεὸν ἐν σέβασι»⁶.

In other words, atheism, according to Mavrocordatos, harms the soul of the man himself and the struggle for its salvation, but also dynamites his coexistence with his fellow human beings within society. That is why he considers atheism to be –along with superstition– «κακὰ μέγιστα, καὶ πάντως ὀλέθρια τοῖς Πολιτεύμασιν [...] καὶ οἱ τούτων ὁπαδοὶ [sic] ἐπίσης βλάπτουσι τὰ κοινά, καὶ λοιμὸς εἰσι τοῦ πολιτεύματος»⁷.

2. Mavrocordatos and Superstition

The polemic against atheism, however, does not imply that the faith of Mavrocordatos was a superstitious faith. In the same chapter of *Φροντισμάτων*, in which he deals with atheism, we find the views of Alexander on superstition.

First of all, comparing the two concepts with each other, he considers that «ἡ δεισιδαιμονία πολλῆς εὐσεβείας ὑποδυομένη σχῆμα, καὶ πρόσωπον πολλῶν χείρων ἐστὶ τῆς Ἀθεΐας», justifying at the same time his opinion: «καὶ γὰρ ἡ Ἀθεΐα τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἀναιρεῖ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ δὲ δεισιδαιμονία τῇ οὐσίᾳ πολλὰ ἄττα βλάσφημα προστριβεῖ», introducing

6. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντισμάτα...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 157-158.

7. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντισμάτα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

in people’s life «ὕπερβολὴν τοῦ δέους»⁸. Thus, superstition «τίθησιν αὐτό [ἐνν. τὸ Θεῖον], ἔνθα οὐκ ἔστι», which –ultimately– makes it a sign of irreverence⁹. Finally, he considers superstition disease, characterizing it very aptly, “pestilence” a characterization that we find in the history of Romans, the so-called *Ῥωμαϊκά*, with the use of the verb «ἐνόσει».¹⁰ But what are the evils that can be caused by superstition?

«Πρῶτον, ὅτι εἰς τὸ Θεῖον βλασφημεῖ πολύμορφον αὐτόν, καὶ ποικίλλον ἀπεργαζομένη, καὶ δουλικὸν ἐξ ἀνάγκης περιστρεφόμενον ἄνω, καὶ κάτω, ἀσχολόν τε, καὶ πολυτάραχον, καὶ συμπαρόντα τῇ μαριὰν τινῶν, ὀλίγων τυράννων τῆς ἡμετέρας συνειδήσεως, καὶ δὴ καὶ γυναιῶν τινῶν, καὶ μάγων, καὶ μαγγανιστῶν τῇ βδελυρία συνυπηρετοῦντα. Δεύτερον, ὅτι θορυβεῖ τὸν ὄχλον, καὶ περισπᾶ μυρίαὶς ἀτοπήμασι, καὶ ἄνω φέρει, καὶ κάτω, καὶ περιστρέφει. Τρίτον, ὅτι διαφέρουσα τῆς εὐσεβείας ὅσα καὶ Πίθηκος Ἀνθρώπου, καὶ ἀδρανέσι, καὶ γελοίοις τερατολογήμασι, καὶ μαγγανείαις, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἐπερείδεται»¹¹.

In fact, we see these views reflected in the best possible way in his historical work. Thus, almost rudimentary in the *Ῥωμαϊκά* –with the

8. Of course, it cannot go unnoticed that the issue of superstition is also present in *Φιλοθέου πάρεργα* by Nikolaos, who had included in his novel an essay titled «Κατὰ ἀθέων καὶ δεισιδαιμόνων». And Nikolaos, identifying with his father, considers superstition a source of fear: «Αἰρεῖ γὰρ ἐκ μέσου δεισιδαιμονοῦσα ψυχὴ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ὄντως ἱερὰν ἀγκυραν, ματαίων φόβων, καὶ ἀφορήτου λύπης ἐμπιπλῶσα ἑαυτήν τε καὶ τοὺς αὐτῇ πελάζοντας» (N. Mavrocordatos, *Φιλοθέου πάρεργα*, intr.-ed.-transl.-comm. J. Bouchard, transl. of the Introduction (from French) rendering of the text into modern Greek Dion. Chatzopoulos, Municipality of Filothei-Psychiko and Parish of the Holy Church of St. George of Neo Psychiko, Athens 2017, p. 182).

9. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

10. We read that Rome «δεισιδαιμονίας ἐνόσει», on the occasion of the way in which the Romans dealt with and interpreted certain events (256.13-14). It should be noted that the specific historical work of Mavrocordatos, which he wrote towards the end of his life, remained unpublished to this day. Its critical edition was the subject of the doctoral dissertation of the writer and is published by Herodotos Publications. We refer to it when we use passages of the text, recording the page and the line (see Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά*, in: D. Tzelepis, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά τοῦ Ἀλέξανδρου Μαυροκορδάτου τοῦ «ἐξ Ἀπορρήτων»*, vol. Β’: The text, books Α’-Β’, critical edition; vol. Γ’: The text, Book Γ’, critical edition; vol. Δ’: The text, book Δ’, critical edition, Herodotos Publications, Athens 2023, pp. 79-1214).

11. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

only exception of a few references to dreams¹² and eclipses of the sun or moon¹³ is the presence of “celestial signs” and supernatural events. In other words, they are almost entirely absent from the historical narrative –although we find them in the historical sources which he consults, such as Titus Livius, Dionysios of Halicarnassus and Plutarch– references to indications that the people of the pre-Christian –mainly– centuries, but even of the post Christ era, believed to have come from above, announcing a disaster.

Therefore, we will not encounter in the *Ῥωμαϊκὰ* the strange phenomenon in which the sky rained pieces of human flesh¹⁴; the –in a miraculous way– rescue of the wooden icon of the king Tyllius, when the temple of Tyche was completely destroyed by fire¹⁵ or the –against nature– swelling of the clay chariot that was to be placed by Tarcinius

12. Dreams are not –actually– a supernatural event, since they are experienced by all people without exception. Their interpretation is certainly that which gives them a supernatural character. In other words, they become a sign of God, in case a person believes that they reveal to him the future.

13. We record indicatively from the *Ῥωμαϊκὰ* an eclipse of the sun and of moon: a) «Ἰπὸ δὲ τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ, ἡλίου ἐκλείποντος, Ῥωμαῖοι τῷ παραδόξῳ τεθηπότες, σχολὴν ἦγον ὑπὸ πένθους ἀλύοντες καὶ εὐχαῖς διὰ δυοῖν ἡμερῶν ἐξιλεοῦντο τὸ θεῖον» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκὰ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 297, 20-23), b) «Σουλπίτιος γὰρ Γάλλος ὁ φύλαρχος ἐκλειψιν ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ συμβησομένην τῇ σελήνῃ προεῖπε τῷ στρατεύματι καὶ ὃ τὸ πάθημα ἀκαταπλήκτως ἐσκεύασε θεάσασθαι, ὥστε ἐξ ἔθους πατάγουσ ἀπεργαζόμενον τοῖς χαλκοῖς καὶ δαλοῦς καὶ δάδας ἀνατείναντα τὸν στρατὸν τὸ φῶς μετακαλέσασθαι καὶ ὁ ὑπατος δὲ ἔνδεκα βουῶς ἔωθεν ἔθυσεν ἐπ’ ἀγαθῷ αὐτοῖς, τὸ συμβὰν ἐκθειάζων καὶ διαθρυλῶν. Τοῖς δὲ Μακεδόσιν, ἐπεὶ τοῖς γε εἰδόσιν ἡ πρόρρησις παρημελήθη, τοῖς ὑπαγροικότεροις τὸ αἰφνίδιον δέος καὶ θόρουβον οὐκ ὀλίγον, ἤδη πεφοβημένοι οὖσιν, ἐπῆγε τό γε ἐκ φύσεως πάθος, ἐπὶ κακῷ ἀφελῶς καὶ εὐήθως ἐξοιωνιζόμενοις» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκὰ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 606, 24-35). From the second passage it certainly cannot go unnoticed the fact that Mavrocordatos characterizes the lunar eclipse «τό γε ἐκ φύσεως πάθος», that is, he points out that it is a natural event. This characterization is of particular interest to a text of the end of the 17th century, as it relieves from its metaphysical dimension a natural event, which seemed to the eyes of the people of that time a warning from above. Let us not forget that in Europe, during this century studies began to be compiled that tried to scientifically interpret these phenomena, such as earthquakes and eclipses. With his studies in Hesperia, Mavrocordatos could not help but become participant in these new rational approaches and then project them in his work.

14. See Titus Livius *Ab urbe condita*, 3,10.

15. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία*, 4, 40.

the Proud¹⁶; the blood, honey and milk that came out for three days of the altar of Zeus in Capitolium¹⁷.

It is also absent the voice from heaven that warned of the coming of the Galatians¹⁸ or the terrible voice that came out of the temple of «Mater Matuta» in Satrico that kept the flames of the Latins¹⁹ away from it; the appearance of the Dioscuri after the victory of the Romans over the Latins in lake Rigilia²⁰ and the conversation of the statue of Hera with the people²¹; the talking xoanon made by women after the return of Coriollanus to Rome²².

Mavrocordatos attributes the dominance of the supernatural in the lives of the people of antiquity to the fact that the era in which they lived was under the guardianship of superstition²³. For this reason, he believes that many people attempted to take advantage of the strong influence

16. See Plutarch *Ποπλικόλας*, 13.

17. See Io. Zonaras *Ἐπιτομή ἱστοριῶν*, 8, 1.

18. See Plutarch, *Κάμιλλος*, 14.

19. See Titus Livius *Ab urbe condita*, 6, 33.

20. See Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ῥωμαϊκή ἀρχαιολογία*, 6, 13.

21. See Plutarch *Κάμιλλος*, 6.

22. See Plutarch *Κοριολανός*, 37-38. It should be noted that “theosemeia” are not only an integral part of the work of ancient Greek and Roman writers, but also of the Byzantine chronography and history (see for example: H. Hunger, *Βυζαντινή λογοτεχνία. Ἡ λόγια κοσμική γραμματεία τῶν Βυζαντινῶν*, vol. B’, transl. T. Koliass, Katerina Synelli, G. Ch. Makris, Io. Vassis, National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, Athens 1997, pp. 24-26). The suppression of these incidents in the historical work of Mavrocordatos expresses –even indirectly– the view that events like these should not be material of history. On the other hand, history as a science must be an exhibition of real events and not the product of fiction and narratives that become difficult to believe. For the way Mavrocordatos deals with similar incidents in *Ἰουδαϊκά*, see the article by Ch. Minaoglou, «Τὰ Ἰουδαϊκά τοῦ Ἀλέξανδρου Μαυροκορδάτου: Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη καὶ ὁ λαὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 90, 2 (2019), pp. 85-89.

23. «Τοσοῦτο γὰρ ἐπίσχυεν ἐν τῷ τότε δεισιδαμονία», we read characteristically at one point in the *Ῥωμαϊκά* (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 278, 14-15).

that similar events exerted on the people in various ways, either to administrate it more easily²⁴ or to avoid a crisis that plagued their city²⁵.

However, while Mavrocordatos considered superstition –to some extent– justified during the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, at the same time he considered the belief in this kind of supernatural event impermissible for people who lived in the post-Christ era. This is revealed for example by a revealing passage from the fourth book of the *Ῥωμαϊκά*, in which, Alexander speaking of Titus Livius and the accusations against him, because he collects such material in his work, asks himself the following:

«Καὶ γοῦν οἱ μὲν αὐτῷ δεισιδαιμονίας ἐγκαλοῦσι καὶ ἐκπομπέουσι τοὺς λαλοῦντας βόας, τοὺς ἰδροῦντας ἀνδριάντας καὶ τὰ τούτοις ἀδελφά· ἀλλὰ γε τόδε κοινὸν Ῥωμαίων καὶ Ἑλλήνων ἐστὶν ἀμάρτημα, ταῖς ψυχαῖς αὐτῶν ἐκ τῆς μανίας τῆς περὶ τοὺς δαίμονας καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ εἶδωλα γοητείας δυσεκνίπτου δέους ἐνσκήψαντος. Τί δὲ πρὸς τούτους τοὺς οὕτω νενοσηκότας, ὅπου καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς εἰσὶν ἔνιοι, οἱ μὲν ἀγόμενοι, οἱ δὲ ἄγοντες ἄνω καὶ κάτω καὶ ἐν εὐσεβείας προσχήματι εἰς ἀβέλτερον ὑπτιότητα καὶ εὐπιστίαν εὐήθη περιστρεφόμενοι καὶ περιστρέφοντες καὶ μυρί' ἄττα τέρατα προσιέμενοι ἀταλαιπώρως;»²⁶.

24. That is what Numa, the second King of the Romans, did, for example: «Ἐπὶ δὲ πᾶσι τῆς περὶ τοὺς δαίμονας θεραπείας ἢ σπουδῆ ἔτεινε αὐτῷ –μηδὲ γὰρ ἄλλη πῶς σφριγῶντα καὶ μεμνηότα λεῶν ἐπισχέσθαι ὤφετο οἷόν τε γενέσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπὶ τὰ χεῖρω φορᾶς–». In this way, «οἷα πολὺμορφον καὶ ἀνήμερον θηρίον λαβῶν τὴν Ῥώμην, [...] ἐτιθάσσευσε καὶ τῷ ἀμφὶ τοῖς θεοῖς δέει συνέδησε καὶ συνηγάλασεν» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 116, 4-7 and 154, 22-24, respectively).

25. Speaking, for example, about the –strange– disappearance of Romulus from the earth, Mavrocordatos presents it as a trick of the senators, who in order to avoid the wrath of people and «τῆς οἰκείας σωτηρίας πρόνοιαν ποιούμενοι, ἕξαπατῶσι τὸν ὄχλον». So, they take advantage of a natural event (most likely, an eclipse of the sun) and having in the meantime killed Romulus, they spread the information –finding «πειθηγίους τὰς ἀκοάς»– «περὶ τῆς Ῥωμύλου εἰς οὐρανὸν ἐνσώμου ἀποπτήσεως». From then on everyone believed that «ἀνειλήφθαι τὸν Ῥωμύλον καὶ τῷ τῶν θεῶν ὄχλῳ ἀναμεμίχθαι» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 108, 12-13, 108, 24, 108, 15-16 and 108, 22-23, respectively).

26. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 1069, 33-1070, 7.

3. Mavrocordatos and the Orthodox Life

At the beginning of the *Ῥωμαϊκά* Mavrocordatos asks for the help of God, in order to accomplish the difficult task of writing. In other words, he does what the ancient epic poets did who invoke the Muse in order to successfully complete their work²⁷. Specifically, he writes: «Ἐπείπερ ὡς ἐν βαθυτάτῳ πελάγει ἐπὶ σαθροῦ σκάφους ἤδη γεγόναμεν, αὐτὸ δὴ τοῦθ' ὅπως ἔχει τοῖς κύμασι καὶ τοῖς ἀνέμοις ἀναγκαζόμεθα διαπιστεῦσαι, παρὰ τῆς ἐξ ὕψους εὐμενείας προσδοκῶντες τὴν εἰς καλὸν ἀγαθὸν λιμένα κάθοδον»²⁸. Of course, the fact that he places in God's hands, that is in «ἐξ ὕψους εὐμένειαν», the completion of his writing intentions is also evident in the phrases of the same work: «εἰ Θεὸς δῶ», «εἰ Θεὸς ἄγοι» and «εἰ Θεὸς διδῶ»²⁹.

But these phrases could be argued to be accidental and superficial, that is, belong to those formal expressions that many people are used to using – without necessarily feeling them. However, this is not the case in the case of Mavrocordatos as his entire life confirms in the best possible way that it was determined by the principles of the Orthodox faith and was formed on the basis of them.

The first poem relates –essentially– to the public confession of his faith in the saving work of Jesus. He writes in the fourth book of the *Ῥωμαϊκά* on the birth of the God-man: «ὁ Σωτὴρ ἡμῶν, ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος, ἐκ τῆς Θεομήτορος Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν ἐτέχθη, κατὰ τὸ πρόσλημμα τῆς σαρκὸς Θεοῦ τῆς ἀπορρήτου οἰκονομίας τῆς ἡμῶν ἀναπλάσεως εὐμενῶς ἐπιλαβομένου»³⁰.

27. The expressions at the beginning of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* are characteristic, as well as of Hesiod's *Works and Days*: «Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον», «Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος» and «Μοῦσαι Πιερίθην, ἀοιδῆσιν κλείουσαι / δεῦτε, Δί' ἐννέπετε», respectively.

28. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 81, 17-21.

29. He uses these phrases to talk about what he wishes to do in the future, such as writing a play. See respectively: Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 577, 4 and 635, 8-9, and also 1132, 11. Similar is the following phrase from *Ἰουδαϊκά*: «Ἐὰν τοιγαροῦν ἰκετεύοντί μοι τὸ κρεῖττον ἐπινεύσει προσηνῶς, ὀλόκληρον πάσης οἰκουμένης τὴν ἱστορίαν εἰλόμην ὡς οἶόν τε ἐπιτετημένως ἐξιέναι» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἰστορία ἱερά...*, *op.cit.*, p. α': 2 - β': 1).

30. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 976, 16-19.

On the other hand, unshakeable is the faith of the “Exaporit” in life after death and –consequently– in the immortality of soul. Only one phrase could be enough to confirm the security of the word. He would note for example, for one of the personalities of Roman history that «τῆς ἐνταῦθα ζωῆς ἀπέστη» – phrase that implies another life, beyond the tomb³¹. And when, a few years later after the writing of the phrase, he himself reached to the threshold that separates life from death, he gave to his children is fatherly advices, characteristic of his faith in the “future homeland” of all Christians: «Μὴ κατακόπτεσθαι, μὴ δὲ [sic] πενθεῖν ἐντειλόμενος, ἤδεσθαι δὲ μᾶλλον εἰς τὴν κοινήν, καὶ τρώντι πατρίδα τοῦτον προπέμποντας»³².

Indeed, man should not prefer anything else –Mavrocordatos thinks– from the salvation of his soul since all material goods are perishable and –therefore have a finite duration– unlike the soul, which is immortal. That is why he criticizes in his *Ῥωμαϊκά* those who fight «ὑπὲρ ἀρχῆς ἐπικήρου καὶ ταχὺ διαρρέουσῆς»³³, in other words people who fall passionately in love with power and seek at all costs the glory it offers. In other words, he castigates all those who concentrate their efforts on the meaningless and transitory, ignoring at the same time the essential and eternal.

However, of particular interest is what Mavrocordatos mentions about the uninterrupted prayer, that covered every moment and every minute of his life. Therefore, wanting to clarify even further the details of prayer, he will write in one of the chapters of his *Φροντίσματα*: «Τοῦ νυχθημέρου εἰς εἰκοσιτέτταρας ὥρας ἐκτείνοντος, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τριτημόριον ὡς χρεωστούμενον τῇ ἀνέσει τοῦ Σώματος, καθεύδοντες ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀναλίσκομεν, τῶν λοιπῶν δύο μερῶν τῆς ἡμέρας τὸ μὲν ὀφειλόμενον ἀποδεδόσθω τῷ δεδωρηκότι Θεῷ ἐν ὕμνοις, καὶ ἐντεύξεσι περαινόμενον»³⁴. It is not coincidence that he composed two prayers

31. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 509, 6-7.

32. This information is preserved by Iakovos From Argos (see Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἱστορία ἱερά...*, *op.cit.*).

33. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 113, 2-3. He uses this phrase on the occasion of King Numa’s attempt to maintain power at all costs.

34. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 80. It is about the 129th chapter of the first book of the work, which is titled: «Περὶ Ἀφορισμοῦ τῶν Ὁρῶν».

that cover the time period of the twenty-four hours, from the beginning of the day («εὐχὴ τοῦ Ὁρθροῦ»), to the end of the day («εὐχὴ μετὰ τὸ Ἀπόδειπνον»)³⁵.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the way –clear proof of his Orthodox life–, «πάντα τὰ ὅσια πρὸς σωτηρίαν ἐκτελέσας, καὶ τέλος τοῖς θείοις καὶ τιμίοις ἐφοδίοις τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ φημι μυστηρίοις διὰ τὴν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἐφοδιασθεὶς πορείαν [...], μάλα γηθοσύνως τῷ καλοῦντι Θεῷ τὸ Πνεῦμα παρέδωκεν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἐνεγκαμένη, ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ πατρώα οἰκίᾳ», in which he ended his life on earth of which we become witnesses with the help of one of the people of his close family, Iakovos from Argos: «Οὐδὲν δ’ ἠγωνίασεν, ἢ ἐδειλίασε πρὸς τὴν ἐκδημίαν, ἀλλ’ ἅτε ἐν μεγαλοψυχίᾳ, καὶ φιλοσοφίᾳ, καὶ εὐσεβείᾳ τεθραμμένος καὶ ἐπόθει τὴν ἀνάλυσιν, καὶ τὸν σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι πάντων προὔτιθει τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς»³⁶.

4. Mavrocordatos and the Orthodox Hierarchs

However, what was the attitude of Alexander towards the ministers of the Orthodox faith, especially the Orthodox hierarchs? On the one hand he praised, the religious leaders who were adorned with virtues which are consistent to their office. Among other things, he writes, for example, about the Patriarch of Alexandria Gerasimos: «Αὐτὴν δὲ ὑπερτεθαύμακα τῆς καλλῆς προαιρέσεως, καὶ μάλιστα τοῦ ταπεινόφρονος, καὶ ἤθους ὅλως ἐμπρέποντος Ἱεράρχου». Or addressing another hierarch Chrysanthos Notaras, Metropolitan of Caesarea of Palestine and later Patriarch of Jerusalem, proclaims: «Εὔγε τῆς οὕτω λαμπρᾶς φυλακῆς, εὔγε τῆς μεγαλονοίας, εὔγε τῶν κειμηλίων, ὧν ἡμῖν ἡ μετουσία εἰλικρινῆς ἐστι καὶ καθαρὰ, καὶ τῷ ὄντι οἶαν καὶ ἐπιποθήσαμεν»³⁷.

35. These two prayers were first published in the *Ἐπιστολάριον* –published by the Ecumenical Patriarchate–, a collection of letters, mainly by Alexander and his son Nikolaos (see Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολάριον*, En to tou Patriarcheiou Konstantinoupoleos typografeio, Constantinople 1804, pp. 341 and 341-343).

36. See Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἱστορία ἱερά...*, *op.cit.*

37. See respectively Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολάριον...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 110 and 131. Noteworthy is also his view for two more prominent personalities of the clergy, Archbishop of Athens Meletios (1661-1714) and Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos II (1641-1707). A

On the other hand, he stigmatized those hierarchs who, with their life or their modernist views and behavior, violated the principles of the Orthodox life and disturbed the liturgical peace, by explicitly proclaiming in every direction: «*Εἰς μέσον ἀεὶ φανερόν ἐμαυτὸν καταστήσομαι, μήτε καταινοῦντα, μήτε συμπράττοντα ἐν οἷς ἂν ὑμᾶς τῆς εὐθῆ καὶ κατ' ἴχνος τῶν θεσπεσίων πατέρων φερούσης ἐκτετραμμένους ἐπαΐσθωμαι*»³⁸.

He writes, for example, to the Patriarch of Alexandria Gerasimos: «*Ἡμεῖς δέ, ὅπως, Θεοῦ εὐδοκοῦντος, διὰ τὴν ἄνωθεν εἰρημένην εὐλάβειαν παντὸς νεωτερισμοῦ, καὶ ὑπ' αὐτὸν τὸν ζυγὸν τῆς καταδυναστείας, τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως ἄσυλον διασώζομεν καὶ ἀδιακλόνητον καὶ ἀπαρამείωτον τὴν ὀλοκληρίαν*»³⁹. Or speaking about the Patriarchate of Dionysios, he will characterize it: «*Ἡ τοῦ κατὰ παραχώρησιν Θεοῦ πεντάκις τοὺς οἶακας τῆς ἀποστολικῆς ὀκλάδος ἀρπάσαντος καὶ πεντάκις ἐλθοῦσα παρ' ὀλίγον αὐτὴν καταδῦσαι ἐπίβασις τοῦ πατριάρχου Διονυσίου*»⁴⁰.

Some other time he will not hesitate even to advise the hierarchs, reminding them the way they should follow: «*Μηδέποτε παρορῶντες τὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ ναῦν τοῖς κύμασι ποντουμένην, οὐδὲ τοὺς πλωτήρας, ἀλλ' ἀμφοτέρους εἰς τὸν λιμένα τῆς σωτηρίας κατάγοντες εὐσεβέστατα καὶ ἀνδρειότατα*»⁴¹.

great number of letters survive with Dositheos as the recipient [it concerns the letters no. 34, 35, 64, 87, 88, 89, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97 of the Livadas Collection; see *Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου Ἐπιστολαί P*, Th. Livadas (ed.), Typois tou Austrooungrikou Loyd, Trieste 1879], three of them (no. 87, 88 and 89) reveal the excellent relationship of the two men. On the other hand, declarative of the relationship of Mavrocordatos with Meletios is the letter no. 74 of the same collection.

38. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, p. 124. His attitude is confirmed and from the conclusion to which Iakovos of Argos is led: «*Ὡστε πᾶσαν καταβαλέσθαι σπουδὴν πρὸς τὸ μηδεμίαν λῦσαι κεραιάν τοῦ νόμου*» (see Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἱστορία ἱερά...*, *op.cit.*).

39. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

40. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 120 and 121.

41. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

5. Mavrocordatos and the Holy Sepulchre

Just two years before his death, and specifically on February 25, 1707, Alexander Mavrocordatos wrote to Neophytos Notaras, «ἐπίτροπον τῶν σεβασμίων ἐν τῇ ἀγίᾳ πόλει Ἱερουσαλήμ προσκυνημάτων», on the occasion of the election of his brother Chrysanthos Notaras to the throne of Jerusalem: «ὁποῦ ἀγαποῦμεν τὸ ἀζήμιον τοῦ Ἁγίου Τάφου, καὶ ἔχομεν εὐλάβειαν εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ ἅγια προσκυνήματα»⁴². These words are indicative of Alexander’s love for the sacred pilgrims of Orthodoxy and are, in a way, the cause of his tireless effort to keep the pilgrims of the Holy Sepulchre under the occupation of the Orthodox and not to pass into the hands of the Westerners⁴³. Ep. Stamatiadis refers characteristically: «Ἰδίᾳ δ’ ὅταν οἱ σύμμαχοι ἀπήτησαν τὰ προσκυνήματα τῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ ὑπὲρ τῶν Φραγκισκάνων καὶ τὴν αὐξήσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς Χίου δικαιωμάτων τῶν Ἰησουϊτῶν, ὁ Μαυροκορδάτος προσήνεγκε τῇ ὀρθοδοξίᾳ μεγίστην ὑπηρεσίαν καταπολεμήσας ἐντόνως καὶ ἐκμηδενίσας τὰς ἀξιώσεις ἐκείνης»⁴⁴.

42. Eu. Hurmuzaki, *Documente privoitoare la istoria românilor, partea I 1320-1716*, vol. xiv, Tipărituri de N. Iorga, București 1915, p. 383.

43. The specific request for the detachment of the holy pilgrims from the hands of the Orthodox was submitted for the first time by Austria, while the negotiations for the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) were in progress. For the anti-Catholicism of Mavrocordatos in general see D. Livianos, “Pride, prudence, and fear of God: the loyalties of Alexander and Nicholas Mavrocordatos (1664-1730)”, D. Ricks, M. B. Trapp (eds.), *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review* 7 (2000), pp. 2-3, and also N. Mavrelas, «Ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος Μαυροκορδάτος ὁ ἐξ Ἀπορρήτων καὶ ὁ γιός του Νικόλαος μεταξὺ Ἀνατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως: ἡ πολιτισμικὴ ταυτότητα καὶ ἡ ἔννοια τῆς ἐλευθερίας στὴν ἐποχὴ καὶ τὸ ἔργο τους», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 93, 1 (2022), pp. 51-75.

44. Ep. I. Stamatiadis, *Βιογραφίαι τῶν Ἑλλήνων Μεγάλων Διερμηνέων τοῦ Ὄθωμανικοῦ κράτους*, Ktena kai Soutsas Press, Athens 1865, pp. 76-77. This issue, however, arose later (1707), this time with the Turks, as Apostolopoulos points out (D. G. Apostolopoulos, «Μέρη τοῦ 1707: τὰ σοβαρὰ ζητήματα καὶ οἱ μικρὲς ἀπολαύσεις», in: D. G. Apostolopoulos, *Γιὰ τοὺς Φαναριώτες. Δοκιμὲς ἐρμηνείας & Μικρὰ ἀναλυτικά*, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens 2003, pp. 129-130). For more details on the issue of the Holy Land see what Argyropoulos records [see P. Argyropoulos (1853), «Ἀλέξανδρος Μαυροκορδάτος ὁ ἐξ ἀπορρήτων», in: *Λόγοι ἐκφωνηθέντες τὴν 28 Σεπτεμβρίου 1852 ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώην πρυτάνεως Σπυρίδωνος Πήλληκα καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ Καθηγητοῦ Περικλέους Ἀργυροπούλου*, Ek tou Vasilikou Typografeiou, Athens 1853, pp. 43-44], as well as Georgios Mavrocordatos (see G. Mavrocordatos, «Βίος

Thus, Argyropoulos additionally will note: «τὰ δὲ δι' αὐτοῦ ἐκδοθέντα καὶ (ὡς φημίζεται) ὑπ' αὐτοῦ συνταχθέντα Σουλτανικὰ προστάγματα (χάτια) ἐχρησίμειυσαν πρὸς λύσιν τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς γεννηθεισῶν ἀμφισβητήσεων καὶ τῶν νεωστὶ συνταχθέντων προσταγμάτων παρὰ τοῦ νῦν βασιλεύοντος τῆς Τουρκίας»⁴⁵.

6. Mavrocordatos and the Orthodox Churches

There were also many times when the “Exaporit” showed his support for Orthodoxy in practice and with the financial support of the churches in Constantinople. Thus, for example, in the Patriarchal Church «τῷ μὲν 1705, κατὰ φεβρουάριον, ἐδωρήσατο καθὰ γράφει ἡ σημείωσις, “14 φελόνια καὶ 15 ἐπιτραχήλια”, τῷ δὲ 1706 κατ' αὐγουστον [...] “ἀφιερῶσατο τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μ. Ἐκκλησίᾳ πολυκάνδηλον ἐν ἀργυροῦν ἔλκον βάρους ὀκάδων σχεδὸν 10, [...] τῷ αὐτῷ μηνὶ ἀφιερῶσατο δισκοπότηρον μετὰ δισκαρίου καὶ ἀστερίσκου, ζέσεώς τε καὶ ἱερᾶς λόγχης, ἅπαντα ἐξ ἀργύρου καθαροῦ, καὶ λεπτουργεῖα τέχνης ἐσκευασμένα”»⁴⁶. K. Dapontes also informs us that Alexander «ἀνεκαίνισε μέρος πολὺ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ ἱεροῦ μοναστηρίου τῆς Παναγίας εἰς τὸ νησὶ τῆς Χάλκης, εἶναι καὶ ζωγραφισμένος εἰς τὸ τραπεζαρίον»⁴⁷. And his support for Orthodoxy was not limited to the holy churches within Constantinople but also «πέραν τῶν ὁρίων τῆς Τουρκίας [...], διότι διὰ τῆς ἐπιρρόης του καὶ τῆς προστασίας του ἀνηγγέθη κατὰ πρῶτον ἐν Βιέννῃ ἐκκλησία τοῦ ἀνατολικοῦ δόγματος», according to information preserved by Argyropoulos⁴⁸.

On the other hand, he expressed his unlimited sadness when he saw an orthodox church suffering deterioration. For example, the case of the fire that broke out in the area of Galatas is typical, burning along

Ἀλεξάνδρου Μαυροκορδάτου τοῦ ἐξ Ἀπορρήτων», in: Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 4α'-4β').

45. P. Argyropoulos, «Ἀλέξανδρος...», *op.cit.*, p. 39.

46. M. I. Gedeon, *Χρονικὰ τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Ἀκαδημίας*, Ek tou Patriarchikou Typografeiou, Constantinople 1883, p. 107.

47. K. Dapontes, «Ἱστορικός...», *op.cit.*, pp. 165-166.

48. P. Argyropoulos, «Ἀλέξανδρος...», *op.cit.*, p. 39.

with the houses and the orthodox churches there. On the occasion of this event, Alexander writes “to the teacher Iakovos”: «Ἡμῶν καὶ γὰρ ἦψατο τῆς ἐπηρείας ταύτης ἢ χαλεπωτάτη ἐξώλεια, τοὺς ναοὺς ἡμῶν ἐξαφανίσασα, οὓς εἶχομεν καταφυγὴν οἱ δειλαιοί, συμφορῶν παραμύθιον, ἄσυλον εὐσεβείας, πνευματικὸν ἐνδιαίτημα, ψυχῶν ἐντρύφημα, ἁμαρτημάτων λυτήριον, μυστηρίων λειμῶνα, ἑορτὴν καὶ πανήγυριν»⁴⁹.

As he himself will confess in a letter to Daniel, Metropolitan of Anchialos, «οὐ γὰρ περὶ σμικρῶν ὁ ἀγὼν, ἀλλὰ περὶ παντός, καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς μητρὸς ἡμῶν, τῆς μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας, ἀφ’ ἧς πᾶν ἀρνύμεθα [= λαμβάνουμε] γέρας καὶ ἀποζῶμεν οὐκ ὀλίγων ὄσων ἀπολαύοντες». On the other hand, in another letter to the Metropolitan of Kyzikos Cyrill he will emphasize: «οὔτε τὸ θεῖον περιορᾶν ὑβριζόμενον, οὔτε τὴν ἁγίαν Ἐκκλησίαν δυναίμην παρορᾶν πεπατημένην, τὴν τροφόν, τὴν διδάσκαλον, τὴν εὐεργέτιδα, τὴν καὶ φῦσαν καὶ θανόντας ἐνστερνιασμένην»⁵⁰.

We will conclude the discussion on Mavrocordatos’ support for Orthodoxy by quoting what Patriarch Gabriel the third (d. 1707) recorded, in a patriarchal synodical letter, in 1705. In the following lines, the appreciation of the hierarch and at the same time of the whole of the church” is eloquently reflected in the person of the “Exaporit” for what he did for the sake of the Orthodox Church: «ἅτε συντρέχοντι καὶ βοηθοῦντι διηνεκῶς λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησιαστικαῖς ἀνάγκαις καὶ χρεῖαις, κοινωφελεῖ τε καὶ χρησίμῳ ἐν τῷ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν τῷ χριστωνύμῳ τελοῦντι πληρώματι, καὶ μηδέποτε διαλείποντι ὑπερασπίζεσθαι μεθ’ ὄσης προθυμίας, δι’ ἔμφυτον αὐτοῦ καλοκάγαθίαν καὶ πόθον ἐνθεον τῆς πνευματικῆς αὐτοῦ μητρὸς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας, ἄλλως τε χρηστῶ τε πάνυ, καλῶ τε κάγαθῶ, παντοίαις ἀρεταῖς κομῶντι καὶ περιφανεῖ τυγχάνοντι, ὥστε μέχρι τερμάτων τῆς οἰκουμένης γνωρίζεσθαι»⁵¹.

Of course, all the above acquire greater value, if we consider the position Alexander held in the Ottoman state machine and how delicate

49. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, p. 165. It is certainly a letter to the teacher of his children Iakovos from Argos.

50. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 120 καὶ 123-124, respectively.

51. Eu. Hurmuzaki, *Documente...*, *op.cit.*, p. 366.

manipulations were required, in order to –safely– support Orthodoxy under the watchful eye of the Sultan. Being aware of this situation, he writes in one of his letters: «Οἴσθα γὰρ ὡς αἱ αὐλικάι μέριμναι κατεδηδοκυῖαι τυγχάνουσι τὰ σπλάγχνα καὶ τὰ μέλη καὶ τὸ δὴ πάντων χαλεπώτατον, ἦν ταύτης, ἦν ἀγιστεύομεν θρησκείαν, ὧσι πολέμοιοι, οἷς ὑπηρετεῖν εἰλήχαμεν, ὡσπεροῦν καὶ εἰσι, καὶ ὑποπτα αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχει ἀεὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἅπαντα»⁵².

In recognition of all his contribution and support to the Church –in general–, the Ecumenical Patriarchate wanted to honor him with the office “Megas Logothetis” and “Megas Skeuophylax”.

7. The Presence of God in the Historic Work of Mavrocordatos

a. The Divine Providence

«Παρὰ Θεοῦ πάντα»⁵³. With this phrase Mavrocordatos expresses –with stentorian voice– his view that divine providence is the one that leads man’s steps, in contrast to those who believe that divine intervention in human affairs does not exist⁵⁴. He will dedicate one of the chapters (10th) of the first book of the *Φροντίσματα*, in which –among other things– he will write: «Οὐχ ὡς ἐθέλουσιν ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλ’ ὡς ὁ Θεὸς βούλεται διατίθησι τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς, καὶ Θεοῦ μὴ συνευδοκοῦντος μυρίῳ πόνῳ μηδὲν κατορθοῦται, καὶ διδόντος κατὰ θυμὸν ἡμῖν ἅπαντα χορηγεῖται». And below: «Πᾶς αὐτῶν [ἐνν. τῶν ἀνθρώπων] ὁ πόνος

52. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἐπιστολαί...*, *op.cit.*, p. 145. Similar thoughts are found and in the *Φροντίσματα*: «Αἱ μεγάλοι τιμαὶ τοὺς κεκτημένους δεινοῖς κινδύνοις κατατροχοῦσι» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 92).

53. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

54. For example as we read in the *Ῥωμαϊκά*, while all strongly believed that the disease that hit Rome in 452 B.C. was due to the «τῇ ἐξ ὕψους δυσμενείᾳ», considering that «οὐχὶ διὰ σπουδῆς εἶναι καὶ μερίμνης τῷ θεῷ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα», very quickly it happened «διὰ ῥῶδην ἐψεῦσθαι», since «τὸ δὲ ἐπιὸν ἔτος [...] τῇ Ῥώμῃ δὲ ὑγίειαν [...] παρέσχεν» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 208, 25-26, 208, 20-21, 208, 33 and 208, 28-31, respectively).

ἐπὶ ματαίῳ δαπανᾶται, μὴ νεύοντος Θεοῦ τοῦ τὰ πάντα διήκοντος, καὶ πάντα διοικοῦντος ὡς αὐτῷ φίλον ἐστί»⁵⁵.

b. God-Savior

One of the most characteristic cases of divine intervention in human affairs is the sending of the prophets –at the request of God– in the world: «Προφήτας ἤνεγκεν ἢ ἐξ ὕψους πρόνοια, καὶ κηδεμονία», writes Mavrocordatos, «φιλανθρωπευομένη περὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπειον, ὡς ἂν ἄρα ταῖς διαπειλητικαῖς προρρήσεσιν αἰ τῆς κακίας ὑπερβολαὶ κολαζόμεναι κατασταλεῖεν»⁵⁶.

Indeed, God intervenes saving, proving how poor human plans are in before the divine will, as the following phrase of the *Ῥωμαϊκά* reveals: «Καὶ δὴ Ἰταλίας μὲν αὐτίκα, μετ’ οὐ πολὺ δὲ καὶ Σικελίας ἀπάσης κύριοι γεγονάσι [ἐνν. Ῥωμαῖοι], τοσόνδε ἀνθρώπινος λογισμὸς, Θεοῦ μὴ διδόντος, ὡς πορῶτάτω πλανᾶται τοῦ μελετηθέντος»⁵⁷.

Thus, even the most pessimistic human thoughts and assessments are overturned –very often– changing the direction of things drastically: «Καὶ μάλα γὰρ προνοίας καὶ προμηθείας [= προνοητικότητα] ἐξήρηται τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς, κἄν σμικρὸν ἔσθ’ ὅπου σκάζοντα [= «χωλαίνου»], τελευτὴν ὅμως ἀεὶ χρηστοτέραν ἔχει καὶ οἱ ἐν ἐλπίσι διαγενόμενοι τῶν ποθουμένων τέλος οὐκ ἀποτυγχάνουσιν»⁵⁸.

This view is reflected in the 26th chapter of the first book of the *Φροντίσματα*, which is titled «Ὅτι παρὰ Θεοῦ πάντα»: «Ἄλλαι μὲν βουλαὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἄλλα δὲ ἐπιτελεῖ ὁ Θεός. Καὶ πολλὰ μὲν οὕτω κελεύοντος θαυμασίους τρόποις εὐοδοῦται, κἄν μυρίοι τινὲς τάναντία φρονῶσι, κἄν ἀπ’ ἐναντίας βαδίζωσι».⁵⁹ And the will of God does not

55. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 11 and 27, respectively. Similar views are also expressed in the *Ῥωμαϊκά*: «τῆς ἄνω προνοίας οὕτω διατιθεμένης ἂ τυχαίως οἶονταί τινες συμβαίνειν» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 197, 29-30) and «τοῦ κρείττονος οὕτω τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀφαιρουμένου καὶ διδόντος ὅτῳ ἂν βούλοιο» (Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 610, 31-32).

56. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἱστορία ἱερά...*, *op.cit.*, p. σιε’. See in particular –according to the command and dispensation of God– the miraculous events in which were protagonists the prophets Elisha (pp. σιθ’-σκα’) and Elisha (pp. σκβ’-σκγ’).

57. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, p. 332, 31-34.

58. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 208, 33-209, 2.

59. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

only overturn the plans of men but all nature submits to its commands, as can be seen, for example, in the miraculous salvation of the prophet Jonah: «Οὕτως ὑπηρετεῖν ἡ Φύσις οἶδε τῷ Δημιουργῷ, τῶν ἰδίων ὄρων ἐξισταμένη, καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐναντίαν διάθεσιν μεταπίπτουσα»⁶⁰.

c. God-Punisher

But according to Mavrocordatos, God intervenes, not only as a savior but also as a punisher, as: «αἱ τιμωρίαι ἀνήκουσι τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο λέγεται Θεὸς ἐκδικήσεων»⁶¹. The *Ῥωμαϊκά* offer us many examples.

Thus, «κεραυνῷ βληθεὶς» named Allades Sylouios, «τὰς εὐθύνας ὑπέδη τῆς κακοζήλιας», while «καὶ Δέκιος μὲν, ὁ τοῦ στρατεύματος καὶ τοῦ ἀδικήματος καθηγεμῶν, [...] τῶν ὁμμάτων ἀποστερηθεὶς, παράδειγμα γέγονε λαμπρότατον ἐς πάντας ἀνθρώπους τῆς ἐξ ὕψους ὀργῆς καὶ δυσμενείας». On the other hand, the dictator Syllas: «ἐκ τῆς ἔνδον ὑπέραγαν σήψεως καὶ φθορᾶς ἢ, μᾶλλον φάναι, ἐκ τῆς ἄνωθεν ὀργῆς, τῆς τῶν κολάσεων ἐπαγούσης τὰ προοίμια, [...] εἰς φθειρίασιν ἐνέπεσε καί, τοῦ πάθους ἀνηκέστου γενομένου, αἰσχίστῳ καὶ ἀνιαρῷ θανάτῳ καὶ οὗτος ἐτελεύτησε»⁶².

One more passage is of particular interest on the issue of God's intervention in human affairs as God-punisher. The events are placed in the year 114 B.C., when the Romans with their debauchery «ὄλω σθένει τὴν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ εἶλκον ὀργὴν καὶ δυσμένειαν». It was, among other things, the behavior –writes Mavrocordatos– of three young women who did not hesitate to have sexual intercourse even with their brothers, «ἀθεμίτῳ ἔρωτι πυρακτούμεναι». But their act not only was not condemned by the Romans but –on the contrary– «συνηγόρων καὶ προμάχων εὐμοίρησαν καὶ τῆς αἰτίας ἀπελύθησαν»⁶³.

But what men did not do, God did. Thus, «θεοσημείαις ὕστερον αὐτὸς ὁ οὐρανός, κατὰ τῆς ἀσελγείας ἐξοπλισθεὶς, τὰς ἀκολάστους παρθένους ἅμα τοῖς συνηγόροις εἰς τὴν ἀνέκαθεν εἰθισμένην ὑπόγειον

60. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Ἱστορία ἱερά...*, *op.cit.*, p. σκζ'.

61. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Φροντίσματα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

62. See, respectively, Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 91, 23 and 338, 4-8, and also 774, 29-34.

63. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Τὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 710, 15, 710, 17-18 and 710, 22-23, respectively.

καταδίκην ἀνήρπασε». Signs of divine wrath were even sent from above. Particularly: «φῶς τε γὰρ αἰθέριον νυκτὸς ἑωραθῆναι καὶ τὴν γῆν κατὰ τὸ Ἄλβανὸν ὄρος διαῤῥαγῆναι καὶ κεχυμέναι ἐπὶ πολὺ καὶ ἐν τῇ Γαλατία τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰς πῦρ ἀθρόως ἐκκεκαῦσθαι λόγος ἔχει». Also, «λιμοὶ τε καὶ λοιμοὶ καὶ ὄπλα πολέμια καὶ ὅποσα τῆς ἀνωθεν ὀργῆς καὶ δίκης ὑπάρχουσιν ὑπουργὰ ὄργανα ἐπαλλήλως ἐμπίπτοντα τοὺς ἀτακτοῦντας σωφρονεῖν ὑπῆγον»⁶⁴.

It is worth commenting on the last sentence of the historian: The «ἀνωθεν ὀργή καὶ δίκη» punishes «τοὺς ἀτακτοῦντας», using as «ὑπουργὰ ὄργανα» different kind of punishments. The goal, of course, is not the revenge of the one who commits a sin, but the «σωφρονεῖν», that is the realization of his mistake and the avoidance of its repetition.

64. Al. Mavrocordatos, *Tὰ Ῥωμαϊκά...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 710, 23-26, 710, 26-29 and 710, 31-34.