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Evangelising Zeus: the *Iliad* According to Loukanes

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As early as the fourth century AD, and despite the unflagging efforts of the emperor Julian, known by the sobriquet the Apostate, to thwart the Christians from forging an abiding bond with classical literature, the process of amalgamation of the Greek literary heritage with the emerging Christian culture was already underway spawned primarily by the writings of the Cappadocian Church Fathers, for whom Homer continued to hold the highly esteemed position of the educator of the Greeks. Against this rich backdrop of Christian *détournement* of the Homeric legacy, the present article seeks to explore the Christian resonances in Nikolaos Loukanes' 1526 *Iliad*. Rather than banishing the Olympian gods from his *Iliad*, as his Byzantine predecessor Konstantinos Hermoniakos had done in the fourteenth century cleaving to his faith, Loukanes opts to depict the gods, albeit through the lens of contemporary Christian beliefs.

Already in the fifth century AD, the Homeric tradition purged of any association with classical religion, thanks mainly to the allegorical method of interpretation that would remain so popular throughout the history of the Byzantine Empire, was refracted into a new genre, that of the *Homerocentones*, which boldly appropriated to the Christian cause the works of the Poet by recounting the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ using exclusively Homeric verses — lifted verbatim, or slightly altered — from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Against this rich backdrop of Christian *détournement*¹ of the Homeric legacy, the present article seeks to explore the Christian resonances in Nikolaos Loukanes' 1526 *Iliad*, the first printed rendition of the *Iliad* in a modern language. Rather than banishing the Olympian gods from his *Iliad*, as his Byzantine predecessor Konstantinos Hermoniakos had done in the fourteenth century cleaving to his faith, Loukanes opts to depict the gods, albeit through the lens of contemporary

¹ For the notion of Christian *détournement*, see Schnapp, 1992.

Christian beliefs. His is a cosmos of the patently pro-Greek, παντοκράτωρ Zeus where suppliants tend to bear the unmistakable marks of the humble δοῦλοι Θεοῦ.

In an effort to elucidate the motives underpinning Loukanes' metaphrastic choices with respect to the epithets of Zeus, the article will focus on one of the most bewildering epithets attributed by Loukanes to the sire of the gods, namely the epithet παντοκράτωρ, and it will attempt to trace its fascinating history over the centuries starting from its coinage in the Hellenistic period. Subsequently, the paper will seek to identify Loukanes' possible source of inspiration for the use of this particular epithet with regard to Zeus and to interpret his repeated references to a παντοκράτωρ Zeus in the context of sixteenth-century Greek Orthodox religiosity. Finally, the analysis will focus on two prayers and one supplication wherein a priest of Apollo (Chryses), an Achaean hero (Diomedes), and a goddess (Achilles' mother, Thetis) all appear to take on a remarkably unassuming and modest disposition, which is so highly typical of the Christian δοῦλοι Θεοῦ.

Starting with the divine epithets attributed to the father of gods by Homer (Dee, 2001:44–61), one cannot but observe that many of these epithets concentrate on the functions, or features of Zeus:

- 1) αἰγίοχος: aegis-bearing
- 2) εὐρύοπα: wide-eyed or far-sounding, i.e. thundering
- 3) κελαινεφής: shrouded in dark clouds
- 4) Κρονίδης, Κρονίων, Κρόνον πάϊς: son of Cronos
- 5) μέγας: great, mighty
- 6) μητίετα: counsellor, all-wise
- 7) νεφεληγερέτα: cloud-gatherer
- 8) ξείνιος: protector of the rights of hospitality
- 9) Ὀλύμπιος: dwelling on Olympus
- 10) πατήρ: father
- 11) τερπικέραunos: delighting in thunder

- 12) *ὑπερμενής*: exceedingly mighty
- 13) *ὑψιβρεμέτης*: high-thundering
- 14) *φίλος*: dear, beloved

As it becomes apparent Zeus possesses many titles denoting his control of the weather. He is *εὐρύοπα*: far-sounding, (i.e. thundering), *τερπικέρανος*: delighting in thunder, *ὑψιβρεμέτης*: high-thundering, but also *κελαινεφής*: shrouded in dark clouds and *νεφεληγερέτα*: cloud-gatherer. Moreover, many times he is depicted as the father of gods and humans, and as a god who is mighty, exceedingly mighty, or all-wise. Next to these attributes, one may also find epithets alluding to Zeus' descent from Cronos and abode in Olympus while other epithets attributed to him foreground his role as protector of the rights of hospitality and as a bearer of the aegis.

Turning, however, to Loukanes' *Iliad*, one realises that only three of these designations are being rendered, one of which only hapax, specifically *πατήρ, μέγας, πολύβροντος*:

- 1) *πατήρ*: father (36 times)
- 2) *μέγας*: great, mighty (22 times)
- 3) *παντοκράτωρ*: all-sovereign, controlling all things (16 times)
- 4) *οὐράνιος*: heavenly (3 times)
- 5) *πανάγαθος*: all-good (once)
- 6) *πανσέβαστος*: wholly august (once)
- 7) *πολύβροντος*: of many thunders (once)

Moreover, while Zeus' capacity for wielding lightning bolts is significantly downplayed and his patrilineal descent is completely obscured, his residence is transferred to the heavens. Devoid of the warlike insignia with which he was traditionally associated, the aegis, and ceasing to be Zeus Xenios, a role with which he had been indissolubly linked, Zeus is further demythologised. With the exception of a single reference to a Zeus *πολύβροντος*, which is in line with Homeric epithets such as

τερπικέραννος and *ύψιβρεμέτης*, no epithet used by Loukanes for his Zeus is able to evoke memories of an ineluctably *Iliadic* Zeus. Not only is Loukanes' Zeus divested of the most typical emblems of his Olympian counterpart, but also he is invested with qualities that typify none other than Christ. The two marked epithets that are related to Christ are *παντοκράτωρ* and *πανάγαθος*, the first of which is encountered as many as sixteen times while the second only once. On account of its high frequency, which almost gives it the character of a formulaic epithet, the word *παντοκράτωρ* merits further evaluation. First, one needs to outline the historical trajectory of the word following its intriguing story, which according to Orsolina Montevicchi is "definitely one of the most rich, intricate, and interesting that a term could have" (Montevicchi, 1957:401).

Semantically rich and abundantly documented in post-twelfth century Byzantine iconographic art (Matthews, 1978:454) the term *παντοκράτωρ* is first attested in the Septuagint. The frequency with which this newly coined word appears in the Translation of the Seventy is remarkable as one may count approximately 180 occurrences. In most of these instances, the word *παντοκράτωρ* has the meaning "Supreme Lord of the Universe" and is intended to substitute the Hebrew word "Sebaoth" (Capizzi, 1964:4, 5, 15).²

In the new era ushered in by Christ's birth, the epithet came to be attributed to the first person of the Trinity, the Father, and by the fourth century AD it had become an integral part of the Nicaean Creed. It is precisely during the critical period of the fourth century AD that the word *παντοκράτωρ* found itself embroiled in a protracted and vigorous controversy revolving around the hotly contested divinity and humanity of Christ. In openly ascribing the appellation *παντοκράτωρ* to the second person of the Trinity, the Son, Church Fathers such as the Patriarch of Alexandria Athanasios, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa were all making a very clear doctrinal statement against Arian forcefully denouncing the latter's heretical position that Christ was not of one substance with the Father. But aside from expanding its use so as to embrace the incarnate Logos, the Church Fathers can also be credited with considerably broadening the semantic scope of the word *παντοκράτωρ*. Drawing upon notions emanating from the construction of *κρατέω* with the Accusative (in place of the predominant construction with the genitive), which first emerged in the seventh and sixth centuries BC in

² See also Bergamelli, 1984; de Halleux, 1977; Holland, 1973; Hommel, 1953.

connection with the Pre-Socratic philosophers Anaximander and Anaximenes and were later passed on to them through the filter of Platonism and Stoicism, the Church Fathers infused the word *παντοκράτωρ* with three additional meanings. The *παντοκράτωρ* envisaged by them was not only an all-sovereign God, but also a God that preserved everything, encompassed everything, and was omnipresent in the world (Capizzi, 1964:37–81). Most importantly, the intimate connection that was gradually forged between the title *παντοκράτωρ* and Christ opened up new iconographic perspectives, which had a powerful impact on the trajectory of the word *παντοκράτωρ* as it became inextricably associated with one of the most prominent types of Christ, that of the Christ *παντοκράτωρ*.

Despite the fact that the title *παντοκράτωρ* does not accompany the image of Christ before the twelfth century, historians of Byzantine art often use this designation more freely to refer to any representation that falls into the category delineated above, even in cases where the image is not literally labelled *παντοκράτωρ*. Dating back to the sixth century AD the icon at St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai is one of the prime examples of this type. During the seventh century AD, the aforementioned type gained great acclaim on the coins of Justinian II while in the aftermath of the highly divisive iconoclastic dispute over the use of religious images that raged for two centuries (eighth and ninth) throughout the Byzantine Empire the Christ *παντοκράτωρ* emerged as the prevailing image in the central domes of Byzantine churches sealing with his imposing appearance the triumphant victory of the Iconophiles. A first intimation of its existence in the ninth century can be derived from the evidence of coins, and specifically from the solidi of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (issued in AD 945), where the figure of Christ is thought to evoke analogous preexisting dome representations of Christ *παντοκράτωρ* (Matthews, 1978:448). Though the impressive dome of the Holy Apostles Church in Constantinople, so graphically portrayed in the famous twelfth-century ekphrasis by Nikolaos Mesarites,³ no longer exists, there are other early domical representations of the *Pantokrator* that survive to this day, such as the celebrated eleventh-century dome mosaic depicting Christ *Pantokrator* in the Church of the Dormition in Daphne, Attica (Matthews, 1978:452).

The twelfth century, as it has already been mentioned, witnesses the actual attribution of the title *παντοκράτωρ* to representations of Christ.

³ Mesarites (ed. Angold, 2017).

The twelfth-century apse mosaic in the cathedral of Monreale in Sicily (Matthews, 1978:446) offers an eloquent example of this rapprochement whereas in the Greek East the thirteenth-century cupola presentation of the *Omorphe Ekklesia* in Attica attests to its growing popularity (Matthews, 1978: 447–448). As Jane Matthews observes, from the fourteenth century onwards it was extremely common to encounter the labeled *pantocrator* (Matthews, 1978: 453). It should be pointed out that this designation was not only reserved for domical representations as it was also given to numerous icons, one of the most celebrated being the fourteenth century icon from the Monastery of Pantokrator in Mount Athos, now displayed at St. Petersburg’s State Hermitage Museum (Matthews, 1978:449).

Deeply ingrained into the cultural and spiritual life of Byzantium throughout its century-long history, and instrumental in vividly expressing some of the most basic dogmatic tenets espoused by the Orthodox Christian Church the term *παντοκράτωρ* clearly had strong theological connotations, whose gravity and solemnity could not have escaped Loukanes’ notice. Besides, the author lived in a period during which frescoes on Mount Athos and Meteora abounded in images of inscribed *Pantokrators*, and icons, such as the one at the Monastery of Hosios Loukas by Michael Damaskenos, continued to carry the designation *παντοκράτωρ* (Matthews, 1978:453–454). Why is Loukanes opting for such a markedly Christian representation of Zeus? Is there any classical or Hellenistic reference to a *παντοκράτωρ* Zeus? Is he relying upon an earlier text that makes use of the epithet *παντοκράτωρ* in an *Iliadic* context?

To be sure, the audience that Loukanes intends to reach, a mainly Greek-speaking audience settled in the Greek East or abroad, is steeped in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition as the great demand for liturgical texts, such as *Horologia*, during the first half of the sixteenth century amply manifests (Layton, 1994). Reconstructing the author’s religious outlook is an admittedly challenging task since the information available concerning his life is meager. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that Nikolaos Loukanes belonged to the first group of students that were recruited by the renowned Cretan Hellenist Markos Mousouros to attend the Greek College of Rome (*Gymnasio Mediceo*), which was founded by Pope Leo X for the express purpose of fostering Greek studies in Italy. One may even find preserved the exact words of Loukanes’ formal salutation to the Pope in a welcome ceremony in 1514 that had been organised for the newly-admitted students: “Λέοντα, Θεοῦ εἰκόν’, ἤης ἐλευθερίας πρόμον, ἐκ θεσφάτων Ἑλλάς πέμπει με προσειπεῖν” (Manoussakas, 1963: 165). This salutation

may be translated as follows: “*Leo, image of god, Greece, as decreed by God, sends me to address you, as the foremost guardian of her freedom*”.

During that time, he must have been approximately ten to twelve years old⁴ and the elaborate salutation with which he addressed the Pope must have been written in all probability by Ianos Laskares, the individual who had in the first place envisioned the foundation of such a school (Manoussakas, 1963:166–167). It is interesting to note that when the meticulously orchestrated ceremony drew to a close the eminent Greek scholar gathered the young pupils and speaking to them privately urged them to safeguard “*the divine order of the Romaioi*” in continuing to observe the Orthodox Christian fast every Wednesday and Friday during the period of their stint in Rome (Manoussakas, 1963:166). Such a solemn exhortation on the part of Ianos Laskares reflects the anxiety felt by the Byzantine émigrés in Italy to retain their religious particularity amid a predominant Catholic environment. This kind of concern for the preservation of Orthodox doctrinal idiosyncrasies — it seems — did not lag in any way behind academic preoccupations as it was equally prioritised.

Of course, the Greek College of Rome, in stark contrast to the Pontifical Greek College of Saint Athanasios that was founded later, in 1577, by Pope Gregory XIII, had no prosyletising scope. As Manoussos Manoussakas astutely remarks, Leo X’s support for the school was not dictated by ulterior motives. Besides, the humanist pope, who was often hailed by Byzantine intellectuals as a prominent promoter and supporter of Greek learning, was the one who is said to have taken the lead in enshrining the religious rights of Greeks during the early sixteenth century through an extensive series of papal bulls (Manoussakas, 1963:167).

It is quite evident then that Loukanes was nurtured in an environment that deeply valued not only immersion in the classics, but also religious instruction. This fascinating synthesis of antiquarian predilections and Christian affinities is nowhere epitomised more vividly than in Moussouros’ Homeric *Hymn to Plato*. Commonly attributed to Markos Moussouros and prefacing the *editio princeps* of the works of Plato (Dijkstra & Hermans, 2015:33) the *Hymn* had a dual aim: to incite pope Leo X to found a Greek academy in Rome (Dijkstra & Hermans, 2015:33) and to entreat the pontiff to initiate a crusade against the Ottoman empire with a view to liberating

⁴ Loukanes’ age can be surmised on the basis of the reported age of the first three students (Manoussakas, 1963:164).

Greece. Though a detailed examination of this intriguing poem lies outside the purview of this article, some aspects of it that are of great relevance to Loukanes' work are worth commenting on.

By juxtaposing the two poems, one cannot fail to observe that both Loukanes and Moussouros retroject onto a Homeric or Homericising⁵ platform their contemporary Christian sensitivities. Loukanes, on the one hand, building upon Homeric content in order to compose his own *Iliad* employs for Zeus an epithet deeply embedded in the Orthodox Christian tradition (*παντοκράτωρ*) whereas Moussouros using Homeric, or to be more accurate Homericising diction in his invocation to Plato makes overt reference to the *Θειοτόκος*⁶ and to the *ἀλεξίκακος σταυρός* (the cross that wards off evil). Moreover, if one investigates the portrayal of the Turks in the two poems, then it becomes clear that even more analogies can be drawn between Moussouros' *Hymn* and Loukanes' *Iliad* since in both works the Turks are depicted very negatively. As it has already been mentioned above, Moussouros was the individual who had been assigned the task of selecting the first students of the Greek College of Rome and was thus personally connected with Loukanes. It is highly probable, therefore, that the ideas expressed in the eminent philologist's masterpiece had an influence on the neophyte scholar.

As to the question regarding a possible pre-existing connection of the epithet *παντοκράτωρ* with Zeus in classical or Hellenistic times there are two inscriptions that are worthy of note. The first, dating most probably from the second century BC, is an inscription surviving from the Serapeum of Delos.⁷ Even though the compound *παντοκράτωρ* per se is not mentioned in it, the syntactic structure that stands in for it amply testifies (Montevecchi, 1957: 403) to the existence in the pagan world of the concept contained in the epithet: "κατὰ πρόσταγμα Ὀσειρίδος Διὶ τῶν πάντων κρατοῦντι καὶ Μητρὶ μεγάλη τῇ πάντων κρατούσῃ". It should be pointed out that this particular inscription is associated with the worship of Egyptian divinities (Montevecchi, 1957:406). For a direct attribution of the epithet *παντοκράτωρ* to Zeus one needs to look at a different inscription, whose exact date remains unknown. The inscription, which is no longer traceable, was found on the reverse side of a white agate "representing Zeus sitting, holding the scepter

⁵ "The poem is written in what seems to be purely Homeric Greek, but closer scrutiny reveals that Musurus invented many Homericizing neologisms" (Dijkstra & Hermans, 2015:35).

⁶ "The appellation *Θειοτόκος* is thus 'adapted to Homeric morphology'" (Dijkstra & Hermans, 2015:53).

⁷ For a discussion of this inscription, see Capizzi, 1964:9–10; Montevecchi, 1957:403.

in his left hand, while crowning an eagle that is standing beside him with his right hand" (Le Blant, 1898:106, n. 260).⁸ The inscription appears to have existed in Monteleone Calabro, and specifically in the area of the ancient Ipponio-Vibo Valentia, and in 1932 it was in the possession of a jeweler. Orsolina Montevicchi observes that formulating hypotheses concerning this inscription is nigh on impossible since not even the place of discovery of the precious gem can be conclusively ascertained. Therefore, one is not in a position to know whether this Zeus παντοκράτωρ is a Hellenic Zeus or some oriental divinity assimilated to Zeus (Montevicchi, 1957:405).

Based on the well-attested pagan usage of the term παντοκράτωρ in reference to deities of a non-Greek origin to which universal and cosmic powers were attributed, especially in association with the cult of Isis, late Orphism, and the cult of the Sun (Montevicchi, 1957:405) it does not seem implausible to think that the Zeus of the elusive agate was also imbued with an oriental tint. Besides, the fact that the term παντοκράτωρ is never employed by any classical Greek author, unlike its synonym παγκρατής that appears with high frequency in classical literature (Montevicchi, 1957:402) and very often in connection with Zeus, could further corroborate the non-Hellenic character of the Zeus portrayed in this specific agate. At any rate, these two obscure and atypical attestations of the epithet παντοκράτωρ in relation to Zeus are not likely to have triggered Loukanes to use this specific epithet when referring to Zeus. The source of his inspiration should thus be sought elsewhere.

Looking at Konstantinos Hermoniakos' fourteenth century paraphrase of the *Iliad*, from which Loukanes borrows profusely in certain sections of his work, one realises that the epithet παντοκράτωρ occurs once in the seventh rhapsody (7. 79).⁹ It has already been mentioned that Hermoniakos excludes the Olympian gods from participation in action. Thus, no case of divine intervention is being documented in his work. Early on in his proemium Hermoniakos devoutly proclaims his Christian faith and is quick to denounce the false myths of the Greeks promising to recount the true story of the Trojan War. The word παντοκράτωρ crops up in the scene of Chryses' supplication of Agamemnon where the old priest refers to a παντοκράτωρ θεός. One needs to note, however, that there is only one reference and that in this case the epithet is ascribed to θεός in general and not Zeus. It is highly

⁸ This is my own translation. See also Deutsches Archäologisches Institute, 1832.

⁹ It needs to be noted that Hermoniakos' division of the *Iliad* into rhapsodies is idiosyncratic.

probable that Loukanes was inspired by Hermoniakos going one step forward and expanding the use of the epithet while attaching it to an explicitly mentioned Zeus.

It is now time to examine the ways in which Loukanes' Christian perspective infiltrates supplication and prayer diction in Homer. Specifically, the analysis will draw attention to the replete with Christian connotations term *δοῦλος*, which is employed by Loukanes in two prayers, and to the verb *ἐπροσκύνησεν* that is interestingly used by the author in the scene of Thetis' supplication to Zeus.

Commencing with Chryses' well-known prayer to Apollo from book 1 of the *Iliad*, one can note that it comprises all three constitutive elements of ancient Greek prayer, namely an *invocatio* (invocation), *pars epica* (argument), and *precatio* (request).¹⁰ Furthermore, it "can be classified as of the *da-quia-dedi*" type (give because I have given) (Pulley, 1997:17) since the priest "adduces as a reason why his prayer should be granted ... his own past actions" (Pulley, 1997:18). At this point the question arises: How does Loukanes' prayer format compare to the Homeric format used above?

Λουκ. 1. 57–63

Ἄκουσ' Ἀπολλον θεέ μου, ἀργυρότοξε τὸν Χρῦσην
 ἐμὲ νῦν τόνδε σου δ ο ὕ λ ο ν, ἐὰν τὸν καλὸν ναόν σου
 ἐστεφάνωσα μὲ δάφνη, ἢ ποτ' ἔκαυσα μηρία
 τῶν αἰγῶν καὶ τῶν ταυρίων, τήνδε μοι τὴν προθυμίαν
 τέλειωσον γοργῶς θεέ μου, ἀντὶ τῶν ἐμῶν δακρῶν
 φόνευσον τοῖς βέλεσί σου, τοὺς ληστὰς τῆς θυγατρὸς μου
 ταῦτα δ υ σ ω π ῶ ν ἐξεῖπε·

Il. 1. 37–42

κλυθί μευ, ἀργυρότοξ', ὄς Χρῦσην ἀμφιβέβηκας

¹⁰ Ausfeld in his seminal work on Greek prayer introduced this threefold division which is still widely used. For a discussion of Ausfeld's theory, see Pulley, 1997:132.

Κίλλαν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε Ἴφι ἀνάσσεις,
 Σμινθεῦ, εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα,
 ἢ εἰ δὴ ποτέ τοι κατὰ πίονα μηρί' ἔκηρα
 ταύρων ἠδ' αἰγῶν, τόδε μοι κρήνην ἐέλδωρ·
 τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν.

Hear me, you of the silver bow, who have under your protection Chryse and sacred Cilla, and who rule mightily over Tenedos, Smintheus, if ever I roofed over a pleasing shrine for you, or if ever I burned to you fat thigh pieces of bulls or goats, fulfill for me this wish: let the Danaans pay for my tears by your arrows.

It is true that Loukanes is careful to maintain all the elements that are typical in ancient Greek prayer. Thus, Loukanes' Chryses addresses Apollo of the silver bow, albeit in an abbreviated manner since no reference is made to areas that had traditionally enjoyed his protection, such as Chryse, Cilla, Tenedos, or Sminthe. Moreover, the two other parts of Chryses' prayer, the *εἰ ποτέ* clause (if ever) that constitutes the argument and the request are also faithfully rendered.

What is striking a truly jarring note, however, is the addition by Loukanes of the designation *δοῦλος* for Chryses, an appellation that came to be "emblematic of primitive Christian ethical thought as represented in the New Testament" (Carter, 1997:iii).¹¹ Philippa Carter defines the servant-ethic as "the consistent denial of one's own interests in favor of those of others, and the willingness to stand unfailingly ready to serve others" (Carter, 1997:4, 5). Such self-forgetfulness and other-directedness, she goes on to explain, is the true mark of the authentic Christian (Carter, 1997:6). Harking back to a Hittite perception of the human-God relationship (Pulley, 1997:26) this conceptualisation of the god as a master and the believer as a servant of a deity was not rooted in Greek religion. As Karl Heinrich Rengstorf insightfully remarks:

in the *δοῦλος* the free Greek world always sees its own antitype, and in *δουλεύειν* it sees the perversion of its own nature. Hence the Greek can only

¹¹ For a concise overview of the usage of the term across the centuries, see Kittel, 1964–1976:261–280.

reject and scorn the type of service which in inner or outer structure bears even the slightest resemblance to that of the slave. (Kittel, 1964–1976:261–262).

In Pergamum, to be sure, “θεραπευταί are on record in the Asklepieion and in the cult of Hygieia and other healing gods”, as “in moments of great personal distress” worshippers could regard themselves as servants of a deity (Pleket, 1981:159–160). However, in the notion of *θεραπευτής* one encounters only a “mitigated Greek version of the rigid humility of Oriental worshippers to autocratic rulers and gods” (Pleket, 1981:159–160). Plutarch, whose life spanned the first and second centuries AD, calls himself the “unimpeachable servant” (*σὸν λάτριον ἀγνόν*) of the Almighty Hera (Pleket, 1981:166), but for an attestation of the word *δοῦλος* or *δούλη* in a Greek, yet not Christian, religious context one has to look mainly at inscriptions from the imperial period, “which all concern Oriental cults” (Pleket, 1981:170).¹²

It seems reasonable, therefore, to think that Loukanes is drawing on the rich Christian tradition of the word *δοῦλος* when he applies the term to the priest of Apollo Chryses. The scene depicting Chryses’ prayer to Apollo, as rendered by Loukanes, reveals an evocative juxtaposition of clashing Christian and pagan perspectives as daring as the one found in the twelfth century illustration of the relevant scene preserved in the beginning folios of the famous tenth century Venetus A codex. In this rare illustration, one of the very few contained in Venetus A, Chryses is portrayed holding a censer “clearly a Byzantine – and thus anachronistic – object, although a necessary one, if his identity and function as a priest is to be made visually clear” (Kalavrezou, 2009:125).¹³ As Ioli Kalavrezou perceptively remarks in her discussion of the twelfth-century Venetus A illustrations, it was not uncommon for the Byzantines to represent the ancients in an anachronistic way since they often sought “to suggest a parallel with their own society”

¹² Rengstorf cites three passages from Euripides making use of the term *δοῦλος* in relation to god along with Plato’s phrase “ἡ θεῶ δουλεία” only to prove that even in these rare attestations of *δοῦλος* in connection with the Greek religious sphere the specific term does not carry any religious connotation in our sense of the term. “Within the Greek concept of God there is in fact no place for this word group as an expression of religious relationship and service. It is a distinctive feature of the Greek attitude to the gods that gods and men may be bound by family relationships ... The worshipper is not so much the *δοῦλος* as the *φίλος*” (Kittel, 1964–1976:264–265).

¹³ See also Weitzmann, 1981: 56.

(Kalavrezou, 2009:121). It is my belief that Loukanes following in the footsteps of not only the Byzantines, but also all those who had across the centuries wished to reframe the Homeric epics in more subjective contemporary terms is superimposing on the *Iliad* his own Christian viewpoints.

The second prayer in which the word *δοῦλος* makes its appearance is Diomedes' prayer to Athena in book 5 of the *Iliad*. In this prayer, which belongs to the *da-quia-dedisti* type (give because you have given), Diomedes invokes the help of Athena against the Trojans by reminding the goddess of the aid she had provided in the past to his father. Once again Loukanes remains close to the original omitting only the title of Pallas Athene *Ἀτρυτώνη*.

Λουκ. 5. 89–91

Ἄκουσε Διὸς θυγάτηρ, ᾧ θεά μου τοῦ σ ο ὕ δ ο ὄ λ ο υ
 ἄν ποτε καὶ τῷ πατρὶ μου, τῷ πολεμικῷ Τυδεί
 ἔβοήθησας ἐν μάχῃ, νῦν κ' ἐμὲ βοήθει Ἀθήνη...

Il. 5. 115–120

κλυθὶ μέυ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, Ἀτρυτώνη,
 εἴ ποτέ μοι καὶ πατρὶ φίλα φρονέουσα παρέστης
 δηῖω ἐν πολέμῳ, νῦν αὖτ' ἐμὲ φίλαι, Ἀθήνη·
 δὸς δέ τέ μ' ἄνδρα ἐλεῖν καὶ ἐς ὄρημν ἔγχεος ἐλθεῖν,
 ὅς μ' ἔβαλε φθάμενος καὶ ἐπεύχεται, οὐδέ μέ φησι
 δληθὸν ἔτ' ὄψεσθαι λαμπρὸν φάος ἠελίοιο.

Hear me, child of Zeus who bears the aegis, Atrytone! If ever with kindly thought you stood by my father's side in the fury of battle, so now again show your love to me, Athene. Grant that I may slay this man, and that he come within the cast of my spear, the man who has struck me unawares, and boasts over me, and declares that not for long shall I look on the bright light of the sun.

Even more intriguing, however, is Thetis' supplication to Zeus, “the first example of full physical supplication of a god in Greek literature” and “perhaps the most controversial because it depicts a goddess supplicating another god” (Pulley, 1997:57). Even though “this request is explicitly described as supplication”, yet the goddess “uses a *da-quia-dedi* formula” (Pulley, 1997:57) of the sort encountered in prayers, as the prayer of Chryses mentioned above. Simon Pulley posits “that Homer has conflated prayer and supplication for literary purposes” and she goes on to argue that the poet perhaps “felt it inappropriate for Thetis to make this request too confidently” (Pulley, 1997:57–58). Aubriot, on the other hand, who classifies Thetis' request as a *λιτή*, that is “a form of request that begs a favour”, based on the verb *λίσσομαι* (I entreat) that is used in the passage, suggests that “this is a deliberate device of Homer to make Thetis appear humble in deed but assertive in word” (Pulley, 1997:58).¹⁴ If one sets side by side Loukanes' rendition of this scene and the Homeric original (*Il.* 1. 493–527), many significant divergences come into view:

Λουκ. 1. 326–340

Μεταξὺ δ' ἐπανεστράφη, Ὀδυσσεὺς μὲ τοὺς συντρόφους

τοὺς προέπεμψ' Ἀγαμέμνων, ἵνα φέρωσι τὴν κόρη

εἰς τὸν ἑαυτῆς πατέρα, ἔσωσε κ' ἡ Θέτις τότε

ἢ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως μήτηρ, εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀπάνω

καὶ εὐροῦσ' αὐτὸν τὸν Δία, τὸν καθήμενον ἐν θρόνῳ

ἐπρόσκυνησεν αὐτίκα, καὶ παρακαλοῦσα εἶπεν

‘Πάτερ Ζεῦ θεῶν κ' ἀνθρώπων, ποῖσε μοι τήνδε τὴν χάριν,

ὣσπερ πράττεις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις, ὅταν σὲ παρακαλοῦσι

¹⁴ “According to Aubriot, *λίσσομαι* represents a much less self-denying action than *ἱκετεύω*. Her theory is as follows. On the one hand, *ἱκετεία* involves a total self-abasement of the petitioner whereby the person being supplicated is put under a sacral constraint to protect his suppliant. A *λιτή*, on the other hand, is both less grovelling and lacks the sacral force of *ἱκετεία*” (Pulley, 1997:58).

τίμησον καὶ τὸν υἱόν μου, ἐπειδὴ ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων
 ἔλαβε τὸ δῶρον τ' ὄχε, τὴν ὠραίαν Βρισηΐδα
 ἀλλὰ σὺ πάτερ τῶν πάντων, τίμησον τὸν Ἀχιλλέα
 ἐν τοσοῦτω τίθει κράτος, πᾶσι τοῖς Τρωσὶ δὴ μέγα
 ἕως ἂν Ἕλληνες οὔτοι, τὸν υἱόν μου νὰ τιμήσουν
 εἰ μὲν τὸ βούλει νὰ ποίσης, ὁμοσόν μοι μέγαν ὄρκον·
 οὔτως ἔλεξεν ἡ Θέτις·

To begin with, Loukanes' account positions Zeus on a throne up in heaven whereas Homer portrays him sitting "on the topmost peak of many-ridged Olympus". The most glaring deviation from the original, however, does not consist in the devoid of any mythical allusions location of Zeus, but in Thetis' approach to him, the gestures she uses, and the nature of her argument. According to Homer, when Thetis alighted on the summit of Olympus, "she sat down in front of" Zeus "and laid hold of his knees with her left hand, while with her right she clasped him beneath the chin". Specifically, the verb used in Greek for Thetis' movement is *καθέζετο*, which literally means to sit down, but which could also acquire the meaning to kneel in a supplicatory context.¹⁵ At this point, it is interesting to note that extant visual representations of this scene, such as the figurative relief found above the surviving right-hand pilaster of the Capitoline tablet, which was created in the context of early imperial Rome (Squire, 2011:135), or one of the 58 late fifth century AD miniatures adorning the *Ilias Ambrosiana* (Bianchi Bandinelli, 1955:57) invariably depict Thetis kneeling. As for the distinctive gesture of clasping the knees of the *supplicandus*, occurring in about one third of the supplications in the Homeric epics, it was thought to lend "urgency to an appeal" (Naiden, 2006:44–45):

To explain the second gesture, taking the *supplicandus* by the chin, the commentator Eustathios says that the head represents decisiveness, τὸ

¹⁵ This is Bolkestein's view. See Van Straten, 1974:183.

ἡγεμονικόν, and so touching the latter would be a way of expressing a wish that the supplicandus make up his mind. (Naiden, 2006:47)¹⁶

These last two gestures indicating contact with the *supplicandus* were considered to possess a magical effect that German scholars termed *kontaktmagie* (Naiden, 2006:9). As Naiden perceptively observes “in contrast to Greek sources, Roman ones seldom report the knee clasp or the associated gestures of kissing the hand or clasping the chin. In compensation, Roman sources offer two other gestures, falling at the feet of the supplicandus and sometimes prostrating oneself as well”. It is also significant that “in the New Testament, most suppliants prostrate themselves” (Naiden, 2006:50–51).

In light of these remarks, Loukanes’ choice of the verb *ἐπροσκύνησεν* for Thetis’ gesture becomes all the more important. Characterised by ambiguity (Van Straten, 1974:161) when encountered in Greek contexts the verb *προσκυνέω*, which as a composite verb “is only found in sources dating from the period after the Persian Wars” (Pulley, 1997:191), has been taken to mean “fall on the ground in worship”,¹⁷ or “blow a kiss”, an interpretation “not altogether surprising when one remembers that *κυνέω* means ‘I kiss’” (Pulley, 1997:192–194).¹⁸ Of course, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the meaning of the verb was uncontested, and Loukanes, according to the note from Zakynthos from the year 1514 that was published for the first time by Manoussakas, had himself performed *proskynesis* before Pope Leo X during the ceremony that was organised by Ianos Laskares on the occasion of the arrival in Rome of the first twelve students of the Greek College (Manoussakas, 1963:166). Bearing in mind that the Homeric verb *καθέζετο*, as it has already been mentioned, could also mean kneel in a supplicatory context, one realises that Loukanes’ rendition is not entirely inaccurate. To be sure, a more intense gesture is

¹⁶ Eust. ad *Il.* 1. 427.

¹⁷ According to Edith Hall “it is probable that since the Greeks genuflected before the images of the gods ... when they encountered the Persian act of obeisance towards mortal superiors, the two gestures were identified” (Pulley, 1997:191).

¹⁸ Simon Pulley bases this interpretation on an excerpt from Lucian’s *Demosthenis encomium* attempting to argue that “Lucian is continuing a classical tradition”. As the same author admits “this gesture is not found in any fifth or fourth century representations of worshippers approaching deities or altars”. See also Van Straten, 1974:159.

being implied, but kneeling is part of it. The woodcut representation corresponding to this scene portraying Thetis kneeling before Zeus would also seem to be in line with the two visual representations mentioned above, the one in the Capitoline Tablet and the other in *Ilias Ambrosiana*, had it not been for Thetis' distancing from Zeus, the positioning of Thetis' arms, and the beardlessness of Zeus, elements which require further analysis, but lie outside the scope of this article.

The aim of this article has been to demonstrate the ways in which Nikolaos Loukanes is reframing the *Iliadic* heritage in the context of the early sixteenth century. By attributing the title *παντοκράτωρ* to Zeus the author is investing Zeus with qualities redolent of an all-sovereign Christ, entreaties to whom were so often addressed by Byzantine emperors before crucial battles. John II Komnenos, for example, the founder of the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople (twelfth century), used to pray, according to tradition, in front of the icon of the Pantokrator before engaging in war (Matthews, 1978:457). Loukanes' *Iliad* was produced in Venice in 1526. That was a highly auspicious year for the Greek Brotherhood of the city as hopes for the erection of a Greek Orthodox Church were nearing fruition.¹⁹ San Giorgio dei Greci was soon to be built and prayers were soon to permeate the laden with restless yearnings congregation ascending up to the *iconostasis* of the church and the piously safeguarded for years by Anna Palaeologina Notaras Byzantine icon of the Christ Pantokrator.²⁰

¹⁹ Specifically, in 1526, and thanks to persistent and painstaking efforts, the Greek Orthodox community in Venice managed to procure a plot of land wherein the future church of San Giorgio was to be built. The construction of the church of San Giorgio dei Greci commenced in 1539. It was complete in 1573.

²⁰ Anna Palaeologina Notaras had brought this icon from Constantinople and she had entrusted its protection to the Greek Brotherhood of Venice. Christ Pantokrator is flanked by twelve Apostles and four Prophets.

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