

Church, State, and Hellenism

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Abstract and Keywords

The chapter examines the formation of a Greek national Church and its role in the political life of the country. The emergence of an independent (autocephalous) Orthodox Church in the kingdom of Greece is considered in connection with the issue of autocephaly in canon law and the debates it provoked. It is pointed out that Greek autocephaly set a precedent for the subsequent emergence of other autocephalous churches in the Orthodox communion as part of the nation- and state-building projects of the respective national societies. The multiplicity of ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the Greek state are discussed as a record bearing the traces of the unification and national integration of Greece. Penultimately, the role of the Orthodox Church of Greece as national Church and the interplay of ecclesiastical and secular politics is examined. The close connection of Church and politics in Greek society is illustrated by pointing out that periods of political instability and subversion of constitutional government in twentieth-century Greece have provoked 'archiepiscopal questions' in ecclesiastical life. Lastly, the main issues in Church-State relations in post-1974 Greece are surveyed and appraised.

Keywords: autocephaly, archiepiscopal questions, national Church, ecclesiastical jurisdiction, Church of Greece, Ecumenical Patriarchate

Introduction

AN extensively held conventional view considers the issue of Church-State relations in Greece as particularly complex and fraught with idiosyncrasies on account of the power of religion in Greek society and the weight of history in the life of the country. In what follows an attempt will be made to appraise the accuracy of this conventional view and to clarify the complexities and idiosyncrasies, if any, in Church-State relations in the country. It would perhaps be relevant in this connection to address the question of a supposed Greek 'exceptionalism' and to attempt to recover the character of Orthodoxy as a religious tradition in order to dispel many misconceptions.

It should be recalled that the problem of Church–State relations is neither a Greek peculiarity nor an invention of Greek history. The question was already prominent in John Locke’s political philosophy in the seventeenth century, while the extent of Church–State problems remained an important source of friction and concern in European history in subsequent centuries. At the time of Greece’s emergence as an independent state in the nineteenth century, serious problems in Church–State relations were preoccupying public life in Britain, France, Italy, and Germany (Sykes, 1960). There was nothing peculiar or idiosyncratic, therefore, if statecraft in modern Greece had to come to terms with the question of Church–State relations.

Inevitably, this chapter must adopt a longer historical perspective than others in this volume. An attempt will be made to draw the contours of the critical issue of ‘Church’ and ‘State’ in Greece by considering, firstly, the institutional context of the establishment of a national or autocephalous Church in the independent Greek state. This is a deeply political issue in the Orthodox world, as is being made dramatically clear by the question of Ukrainian autocephaly currently. The question of Greek autocephaly in the nineteenth century posed all the critical issues of religion and politics that were to resurface and re-open repeatedly in successive Orthodox contexts during the following (p. 87) two centuries. Secondly, the chapter considers the complex ecclesiastical geography of contemporary Greece, which constitutes an important feature of the Greek political and administrative landscape, with implications for political life that from time to time emerge with urgency in public debates. Finally, the chapter considers the ecclesiastical consequences of the transformation of the Orthodox Church in Greece into a national church and the implications of its own lively self-understanding as a national church for Church–State relations in the country.

6.1 Autocephaly and Nation-Building

The question of Church and State was posed immediately in the Greek context following the outbreak in 1821 of the Greek Revolution and during the War of Independence in the 1820s. The question was posed on the level of practice as a component of revolutionary action and on the level of theory as an object of reflection on the status of the Church in the new political community claiming its freedom and independence. On the level of practice the question of the Church was literally incarnated in the participation of several bishops and other clergymen in revolutionary action. Some of them fell in battle, others were executed by the Ottoman authorities at the capital or in the provinces in reprisal for the rising of their flock, still others died in prison as it happened with most of the bishops of the Peloponnese who were held hostages by the local Ottoman governor while the capital city Tripolitsa was under siege by the revolutionaries in the course of the year 1821.

The new role assumed by the Church in the revolutionary situation also involved a serious administrative upheaval with grave implications from the point of view of canon law. The episcopate in the revolutionary territories and many other bishops who had fled their dioceses for fear of Ottoman reprisals and had taken refuge in areas under the control of the

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revolutionaries, stopped commemorating their canonical ecclesiastical head, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who had remained subject, or captive, as they considered him, of the oppressor of their people. This was a very critical ecclesiastical development because it meant interruption of communion of the Orthodox Church in revolutionary Greece with the canonical order in the Orthodox Church at large. This too was an important step on the way to the construction of a national church.

The situation on the ground stimulated some serious reflection on the question of Church and State on the theoretical level. The most unequivocal statement of the need to think and put in place a modern arrangement concerning the Church in the new political order-in-the-making, came from the foremost liberal thinker in the Greek Enlightenment, Adamantios Korais. In the very first year of the Revolution, 1821, in the prolegomena to his edition of Aristotle's *Politics*, Korais argued that the Orthodox Church in liberated Greece should be declared independent of the Patriarchate of (p. 88) Constantinople and be placed under the governance of a synod of clergymen to be elected by clergy and laity together (Kitromilides, 2019: 33–35).

This was a very radical proposal, which revolutionary authorities did not take up, and thus the question of the status of the Church in the new state was left unclear. The revolutionary assemblies at Epidauros, Astros, and Troezen, nevertheless, in the constitutional documents they voted in 1822, 1823, and 1827 respectively, proclaimed unequivocally by their very first article the doctrine of the Orthodox Church as the 'dominant religion' in the new state, at the same time recognizing the principle of religious toleration and freedom of worship in regard to all other 'known' confessions and faiths.

The recognition of a state religion elicited Korais's strong criticism in his *Notes on provisional constitution of Greece* and this essentially opened the debate on Church-State relations in Greek political thought—a debate that still goes on (Korais, 2018: 85–9, 135–8). This debate, however, and the important issues of toleration and religious freedom immanent in it, were somehow overshadowed by another debate that was soon to emerge over the administrative condition of the Orthodox Church in Greece. This second debate developed with much greater intensity and ignited strong passions, which obscured the more fundamental issues of religious freedom and freedom of conscience that were preoccupying the broader European debate on Church-State relations for most of the nineteenth century.

The issue of the administrative status of the Church, left unresolved by the revolutionary assemblies and by the first head of state of free Greece, Governor Ioannis Capodistria, for the most part out of respect for the Patriarchate of Constantinople, was taken up by the Bavarian regency that arrived in Greece with the new King Otho in January 1833 and ruled the country during the young sovereign's minority until 1835. The architect of the solution to the ecclesiastical problem of the new state was the member of the regency Professor G. L. von Maurer, a scholar trained in law at Heidelberg and a Calvinist, who judged as the appropriate model for the resolution of the ecclesiastical question in Greece the adoption of the pattern of Church-State relations prevailing in the Protestant

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German states. This fundamentally meant the establishment of a state church, under the control of secular authority and completely independent administratively from its former canonical reference to Constantinople. This is how autocephaly was introduced in the Church of Greece by a royal decree dated 23 July 1833 and with total disregard to the formalities of canon law (Petropoulos, 1968: 180–92; Frazee, 1969: 89–124).

Inevitably, there was an important if unstated diplomatic dimension to the ecclesiastical question. Of Greece's so called 'protecting powers', which had guaranteed the country's independence, Russia was hesitant and viewed autocephaly rather reluctantly for fear of weakening Orthodox feeling in the country (Frary, 2015: 93–122). On the contrary, Britain favoured autocephaly as one more factor conducive to the containment of Russian influence in Greece (Troianos and Dimakopoulou, 1999: 122–3).

The announcement of autocephaly provoked an intense and wide-ranging debate in Greek public life, a debate that went much beyond the substantive ecclesiastical issues (p. 89) connected with the administrative status of the Church of Greece and touched upon truly existential worries and sensitivities over the prospects of the Greek nation and its identity. The debate proved passionate and enduring over the following two centuries and was often rekindled, suggesting that the option of autocephaly exercised by the regency in 1833 did not really address the deeper issues in Church–State relations in the country. As late as the second decade of the twenty-first century the debate is still going on and it invites a critical and rational appraisal of the full range of issues posed by the relation of religion and politics in Greek society.

The most vociferous supporter among the Orthodox clergy of the ecclesiastical settlement introduced by the Regency was Theoklitos Pharmakidis, a theologian trained at Göttingen, deeply influenced by the thought of the Enlightenment and a follower of Korais. Pharmakidis had been the strategic mind on the committee set up by Maurer to advise him on the ecclesiastical question and he was the main architect of the solution that was finally adopted and imposed on the Greek Church. The major motivation of his attitude on the ecclesiastical question was its significance for the independence of the country rather than the subtleties of canon law.

Pharmakidis's views were not, of course, shared by all. The significant conservative part of Greek society, in fact a majority in the country, perceived the settlement imposed on the ecclesiastical question as a serious breach in the traditions of Orthodoxy and a threat to the sense of identity defined in these terms. The response was articulated with great power by the other leading theologian in nineteenth-century Greece, Constantine Oikonomos. A follower of the Enlightenment in his early career like Pharmakidis, Constantine Oikonomos was an accomplished scholar not only of religion but of the classics as well. He returned to Greece after a long residence in Russia in the 1820s during the Greek War of Independence and brought back with him a deepened Orthodox conviction and devotion to tradition. This attitude led him to oppose the ecclesiastical settlement. To the claim of liberating the Greek Church, Oikonomos argued that the new regime imposed on the Church in fact meant a worse form of subjection and enslavement by the

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secular state. Furthermore, Oikonomos objected to the drastic change in Greece's ecclesiastical regime because he considered it a mechanism for imposing Western models on the Orthodox Church and through them exposing the Orthodox community to all the pathologies of the West (Papaderos, 2010: 121-6; Troianos and Dimakopoulou, 1999: 102-7; Stamatopoulos, 2014).

To a contemporary observer, familiar with cultural debates in Greece in the early twenty-first century these arguments will not sound strange or arcane. It becomes thus evident that the ecclesiastical question posed a whole range of issues, not simply of a religious nature, but referring to much broader concerns, cultural and political, connected with historical and social change, which still preoccupy Greek social and cultural thought.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, from whose jurisdiction the regency had unilaterally detached the Greek Church, refused to recognize these actions and the ecclesiastical entity that emerged from them. Communion was interrupted and the autocephalous Church of Greece was considered schismatic by Constantinople. Conciliatory openings by the hierarchy of the Church of Greece were rejected by successive patriarchs, until in the early months of 1850 the formalities required by canon law were finally followed by the government of the Kingdom of Greece, which appealed to Patriarch Anthimos IV through the Greek ambassador to the Sublime Porte, to accept a letter from the Greek Council of Ministers asking for restoration of communion and recognition of the Church of Greece. The Russian minister to the Porte also lent the support of the Tsar to the request for recognition (Frary, 2015: 244-5). Eventually, the Synod of Constantinople accepted the request of Greece for the recognition of its Church as autocephalous and the restoration of the unity of Orthodoxy. Thus on 29 June 1850, the feast day of Apostles Peter and Paul, after the celebration of the liturgy in the patriarchal Cathedral of Saint George, a Synodal *Tomos* was signed and officially read, re-establishing relations between the Orthodox Churches and the Church of Greece and recognizing it as autocephalous under its own Holy Synod to be presided by the Metropolitan of Athens (Metallinos, 1989: 123-58, 223-77).

What emerges from the story of the question of Greek autocephaly is obviously the deeply political nature of ecclesiastical issues in Greece since the earliest history of the Greek state. That is why Church-State relations have remained a sensitive subject which needs to be handled with great political delicacy and with a broader historical and cultural understanding. The subject has received extensive attention by canon lawyers and theologians, and some of this literature is quite enlightening, both for understanding the intricacies of the Greek case and for placing it in a comparative European perspective of state- and nation-building.

6.2 One Nation-State, Multiple Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions

Autocephaly restored the unity of Orthodoxy and strengthened religious feeling in Greece. The expected liberation of the Church from its administrative subjection to the State, however, as required by the *Tomos* of autocephaly, was not achieved. The tight control of the State over the Holy Synod and over the administration of the Church was re-asserted by two laws passed in 1852 (Laws Σ´ and ΣΑ´). These elicited strong criticism from proponents of the autonomy of the Church and of the canonical order provided by Orthodox tradition (Papadopoulos, 2000: 394–435). This has remained the main issue in Church–State relations in Greece ever since. Although subsequent legislation and constitutional provisions have repeatedly revised the structure of Church–State relations and on the basis of a new (late twentieth century) consensus have attempted to move the relation from one in which ultimate control rests in the hands of the state (*νόμω κρατούσα πολιτεία*) to a system of a ‘mutual solidarity’ (*συναλληλία*), (p. 91) guaranteeing the autonomy of the Church under canon law, problems, tensions, and conflicts have often arisen, either as a consequence of ecclesiastical intervention in politics on critical occasions or as a result of attempts by the state to impose its own policies and options on the Church.

Autocephaly and the restoration, to a significant degree, of Orthodox canonicity and administrative homogeneity in the internal life of the Church contributed to another important development in the Church of Greece. It made possible the introduction and cultivation of uniformity in ecclesiastical life which became part of the broader process of social and cultural integration that was an essential component of the nation-building process in the Greek state (Kitromilides, 2013: 322–35). The Church of Greece was organized in a network of twenty-four administrative units covering the whole territory of the Kingdom of Greece, that is the Peloponnese (Morea), continental Greece (Rumeli), the islands of Euboea, Cyclades, and Northern Sporades (Papadopoulos, 2000: 420–1).

When the frontiers of the kingdom were extended with the cession of the British protectorate of the seven Ionian islands in 1864 upon the accession of King George I and again in 1881 with the cession of Thessaly and the area around the city of Arta in southern Epirus by the Ottoman Empire following the Congress of Berlin, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, under Patriarchs Sophronios III and Joachim III respectively, on its own initiative transferred the dioceses of these regions to the autocephalous Church. Thus, by 1882 the Church of Greece reached its definitive geographical coverage that has remained unchanged ever since.

Further expansion of the borders of the Kingdom of Greece after the Balkan wars of 1912–1913 and after the First and Second World Wars brought considerable new territories into the Greek state covered by ecclesiastical jurisdictions belonging to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. These new ecclesiastical jurisdictions included the dioceses of Epirus, Macedonia, and Thrace and those of the large islands of the Eastern Aegean,

Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos, and Icaria. These formed the so-called 'New Lands'. The new territories also included the semi-autonomous Church of Crete and the monastic republic of Mount Athos. The Greek defeat in Asia Minor and the subsequent exchange of Greek-Turkish populations imposed by the Lausanne Convention of 31 January 1923, which meant the depletion of its flock in the Turkish Republic, further led the Patriarchate of Constantinople to handle differently the status of its territorial jurisdictions which had latterly passed to the Greek state. With a 'Patriarchal Act' (*Praxis*) of 4 September 1928, the administration of the dioceses of the 'New Lands' was transferred to the Church of Greece, but the spiritual dependence of these dioceses, which included very important sees like Thessaloniki and Ioannina, was retained by Constantinople. This new hybrid administrative status meant that the dioceses of the 'New Lands' would participate on an equal footing in the governing organs of the Church of Greece (having six members in the twelve-member permanent Synod governing the autocephalous Church), but their incumbent bishops would commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch at services along with the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece (Troianos, 1984: 186–243).

(p. 92) The status of the semi-autonomous Church of Crete had been determined under the transitional period when Crete was an autonomous principality (1898–1913). The architect of that ecclesiastical regime was Eleftherios Venizelos, the future prime minister of Greece. The Cretan ecclesiastical regime provided for autonomy and self-government under the local Synod, which elected the bishops of the island, while the metropolitan, later archbishop, of Crete was to be selected from a three-person list by the Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Patriarchate retained its spiritual authority over the Church of the island, which has remained a devoted patriarchal territory to this day (A. Nanakis in Kitromilides, ed., 2006a: 346–52; Troianos, 1984: 522–37; Konidaris, 2017: 67–170).

The monastic republic of Mount Athos, the beacon of Orthodoxy, with its twenty self-governing sovereign monasteries, came under Greek sovereignty in 1913 with a unanimous vote of its governing body, the 'Holy community', composed of the representatives of the sovereign monasteries. The representative of the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon was absent on that occasion, but the representatives of the Serbian monastery of Hilandar and the Bulgarian monastery of Zographou duly signed the document of union of Mount Athos with the Kingdom of Greece. Thus, the historic monastic republic, which in the later part of the twentieth century went through a remarkable revival, came under Greek sovereignty, while ecclesiastically remaining directly dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Troianos, 1984: 463–521; Konidaris 2017: 173–280).

A fifth ecclesiastical regime emerged in the Greek state with the incorporation of Rhodes and the other Dodecanese islands in 1947. The dioceses of the islands had remained directly dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople during the period of Italian occupation (1911–47) and the same regime continued following union with Greece. The five local metropolitans are elected by the Synod of the Patriarchate and they participate periodically in that Synod (Konidaris, 2017: 13–64).

On the face of it, the five jurisdictions that make up the ecclesiastical geography of the Greek state today might be seen as a cause of occasional confusion and tension in the public role of religion in the country. It is true that occasional tensions have sprung up, especially over the administration of the dioceses of the 'New Lands' and the respect of the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as set out by the Patriarchal *Praxis* of 1928 and recognized by the Greek constitution. The Patriarchate is particularly zealous of its rights and this from time to time has caused problems with the autocephalous Church of Greece, most recently during the reign of Archbishop Christodoulos (1998–2008), when things got to the point of temporarily interrupting communion between the two Churches in 2004.

On the level of Church–State relations, the multiple ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the Greek state have not in fact in any way obstructed national and political integration. On the contrary, the fact that all ecclesiastical entities, regardless of jurisdictional dependence, are public institutions under Greek law and have to abide by constitutional rules, has contributed to the cultivation of uniformity and homogeneity in the various expressions of religious life.

(p. 93) 6.3 The Church of Greece as a National Church

The emergence of autocephalous national churches in south-eastern Europe, following the Greek precedent, marked a major turning point in the history of the Orthodox tradition and posed many challenges to the Orthodox communion. These issues have been discussed extensively elsewhere (Kitromilides, 2006b). Here the focus is on the broader issues posed for the critical relation of politics and religion by looking at the consequences of nationalization for the Orthodox Church in Greece. Turning the Church into a component of the public sector in the national state essentially meant subjecting it to the vagaries of secular politics and the disorders and indignities this meant for ecclesiastical life.

Three examples from the relevant experience of the Church of Greece could illustrate this claim. In 1915, Greece experienced the so called 'national schism', that is to say the conflict between royalist and anti-royalist forces over Greece's participation in the First World War that incited former Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos to set up in October 1916 a splinter Greek government at Thessaloniki that eventually took the country into the war on the side of the 'Entente' powers. These developments immediately made plain how susceptible the Church had become to pressures from secular politics. The autocephalous Church of Greece, under Metropolitan of Athens Theoklitos Minopoulos, was dominated by royalist feelings and, under the extreme pressure of royalist paramilitary groups, especially the organization of reserve officers, proceeded to pronounce an ecclesiastical censure on Venizelos for his political actions. This took the form of excommunication which escalated further on 12 December 1916 with a demonstration in which clergy

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and a religiously motivated populist multitude heaped a mass of stones at the Athens *Champ de Mars* as a protest against Venizelos.

Matters took a different course when Venizelos and the Thessaloniki Government, with the support of the Western allies, managed to oust King Constantine and take over the government of the country in 1917. The new government, through a special ecclesiastical tribunal, brought the protagonists of excommunication to trial for uncanonical actions and dethroned the Metropolitan of Athens Theoklitos in July 1917. A new Venizelist bishop, Meletios Metaxakis, a Cretan prelate of the Church of Cyprus, was elected as Metropolitan of Athens in February 1918. Metropolitan Meletios did not last very long either. He was ousted by the royalist government that emerged from the election of 1 November 1920 and Metropolitan Theoklitos was restored only to be definitely removed in December 1922 following Greece's Asia Minor disaster and the overthrow of the king and the royalist government during that eventful year (Tsironis, 2010: 67–170).

All these disorders in ecclesiastical life caused by political intervention in the operation of the Church involved very serious costs for religious life and for the credibility of the official Church in Greek society. That was a major factor in the growth of religious (p. 94) brotherhoods outside the direct control of the official Church as agencies of an alternative religiosity. The brotherhoods developed important activities in religious education and catechism of the laity and gradually assumed very influential roles in the religious, but also in the political, life of Greek society. Eventually, they even managed to exercise influence in the Church, especially over the election of bishops and archbishops. The most important such brotherhood was 'Zoi', which had been founded in 1907 but grew exponentially in public influence following the protracted crisis in the Church during the second decade of the century. 'Zoi' cultivated a conservative ideology and promoted a system of values expressed by the slogan 'Motherland-Religion-Family' as a bulwark against social change and as a means of instilling pietism, puritanism, discipline, and docility toward entrenched forms of inequality in Greek society (Gazi, 2011: 261–309).

The need for reconstruction was deeply felt in the official Church as well, and motivated the hierarchy to attempt to bring the Church out of the crisis by electing a new leader of impeccable ecclesiastical credentials and free of political attachments. This led to the election of a great scholar of theology and ecclesiastical history and professor in the University of Athens, Archimandrite Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, as Metropolitan of Athens on 8 March 1923. Under Archbishop Chrysostomos (1923–1938)—so retitled under the new Charter—the Church of Greece entered a period of moral recovery and reconstruction. A new Charter of the Church, voted on 31 December 1923, attempted to restore canonical order and peace and to free the Church from the tight grip of the state. The Pangalos dictatorship two years later, however, brought back in force the old laws 200 and 201 of 1852 which solidified state control on the Church.

Despite the constructive work of Archbishop Chrysostomos in many domains, including the economics of the Church and the clergy and popular religious education and evangelization, the basic problems in Church–State relations remained unresolved. The Church

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remained exposed and vulnerable in periods of political anomalies, which punctuated the Greek twentieth century. It is characteristic that all cases of deviation from the rule of law in the country were also marked by crises in Church-State relations expressed specifically with the emergence of 'archiepiscopal questions'. Thus, the drama of the period of national schism was re-enacted twice in later periods. In 1938 the dictatorial regime of General I. Metaxas intervened and forced the newly elected Archbishop Damaskinos out of office through a decision issued under duress by the Council of State rather than by a canonically constituted ecclesiastical organ. Damaskinos was a man of democratic convictions and thus undesirable to the dictatorship. He was replaced by a distinguished prelate, the Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Trebizond, who enjoyed the trust of the dictator. Chrysanthos did not last very long either because he was forced out of office in April 1941 for refusing to swear in the quisling government established by the German occupation. Damaskinos was restored by a major Synod later that year and through his activity during the occupation and as regent after liberation emerged as a major national leader during a very difficult period in Greek history.

(p. 95) Major archiepiscopal questions also arose in connection with the other period of deviation from the rule of law, the dictatorship of 21 April 1967 (Andreopoulos 2017). Wishing to bring the Church under its control, the dictatorship forced the resignation of Archbishop Chrysostomos II (1962-7) and engineered an obviously uncanonical election of the royal chaplain Archimandrite Ieronymos Kotsonis by a special synod handpicked by the government. Archbishop Ieronymos I, who acted as a loyal agent of the dictatorship, was in turn displaced by the counter-coup of November 1973. In this case, however, the dictators took the precaution to have a new head of the Church elected by a Synod of canonical bishops and thus the new Archbishop Seraphim, formerly Metropolitan of Ioannina, managed to hold on to the throne after the collapse of the dictatorship on 24 July 1974. Archbishop Seraphim ruled the Church of Greece until his death in 1998, and his tenure of the throne, which coincided with a period of major political change, ushered in a sustained effort to restore canonical order and normalcy in the Church and heal the wounds of the past.

In the aftermath of the dictatorship and of the calamities it had brought to the country, both State and Church seemed to be learning their lesson that respect for the rule of law and the ways of democratic government offered the only outlet in view of the multiple problems facing the nation. Against this background, in almost half a century since the restoration of democracy, Church and State relations have been transacted in the constitutional framework provided by the 1975 Constitution of the Hellenic Republic and the new Charter of the Church of Greece adopted by Law 590 in 1977. The 1977 Charter, after more than a century since autocephaly, established on a secure legal basis the autonomy and self-government of the Church according to the holy canons and Orthodox tradition. This is also guaranteed by Article 3 of the Constitution. Article 105 provides for the status, autonomy, and self-government of the monastic republic of Mount Athos under Greek sovereignty.

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The new conditions of normality and respect in Church–State relations were reflected in the two archiepiscopal elections, in 1998 and 2008 respectively, which were impeccably conducted by the hierarchy of the Church of Greece without any form of political interference. While the state and the political world have generally treated the Church with respect and abstained from intervention in its internal affairs, occasional tensions in Church–State relations in this period have arisen on account of pronouncements and interventions by ecclesiastical leaders or even by the Church of Greece as an organized body in public affairs and debates.

The attitudes adopted and voiced by members of the hierarchy or even officially by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece on these issues have been generally conservative and marked by a broad concern over the dangers for the integrity of Orthodox tradition or of the Greek nation, dangers seen to emanate from all initiatives or policies in the direction of modernization. Whenever such issues arise, the most audible public pronouncements usually tend to come from some of the most conservative members of the hierarchy, who tend to voice extreme anti-liberal views on various national or social questions. This in turn creates the misleading impression of a monolithic opposition of the Church to the modernization of Greek society and its identification with (p. 96) anachronistic positions, which appear to turn religion and ecclesiastical institutions into brakes on social change. The impression is inaccurate because, in the ranks of the hierarchy and in the ecclesiastical communion more generally, there have been dissenting voices and alternative perceptions of what is needed and should be done for the renewal of faith and religious life. These dissenting voices and attitudes tend to be overshadowed by the vociferousness of the arch-conservatives, abetted by popular media.

The phenomenon has shaped the public image of the Church on many occasions since 1974 and especially since 1981 when political change in the country and the policies and rhetoric of the socialists (PASOK) appeared to confirm the concerns and insecurities of the most conservative elements in the hierarchy, in the monastic communities and also among the laity. These attitudes were reflected in reactions to initiatives to modernize family law with the introduction of civil marriage in 1982 under the socialist government of Andreas Papandreou, and again in reactions to legislation recognizing gay rights under the government of the Left in 2017. On both occasions, the Synod of the Church of Greece issued statements expressing reservations and appealing to the traditions of a Christian society, but despite individual reactions on the part of members of the clergy and laity, both issues were defused in large measure thanks to the moderation shown by the top leadership of the Church. Greek society has been learning to live with the pluralism of values required by the times and membership in the European community of nations.

Events appeared to take a different turn in Church–State relations on only one issue, which escalated in a major public confrontation. The conflict arose over the issue of the statement of religion on identity cards and came to a head in the year 2000. The issue had arisen originally as a consequence of the Schengen Convention of 1995 on the free movement of persons within the EU, a development which posed the requirement of issu-

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ing new bi-lingual identity cards. The subsequent introduction in 1997 of the privacy protection law, which prohibited the inclusion of sensitive personal data, including religion, on state documents added further urgency to the need to issue new ID cards. When in the year 2000, following its re-election, the socialist (PASOK) government announced its intention to issue new ID cards removing religion from them, a major reaction was precipitated on the part of the Church under Archbishop Christodoulos. Initially, the Church demanded that the inclusion of religion on ID cards should be maintained as a means of protecting Greek national identity. In the course of the debate, the Church modified its position and demanded that the inclusion of religion on ID cards should be made optional to enable all Greek citizens who so wished to publicly declare their faith.

In order to affirm its position, the Church of Greece organized public rallies in Athens and elsewhere in the country that drew huge crowds protesting against threats to the Christian identity of the country. To add drama to the rally in Athens, the sacred standard of the Greek Revolution was brought from the Monastery of Agia Lavra near Kalavryta in the Peloponnese and was raised by the archbishop in a gesture of great symbolic significance regarding the role the Church was claiming in national life. (p. 97) Beyond the rallies and the official statements of the Holy Synod, which insisted on the need to safeguard the 'special national physiognomy' of the Greek people, the Church also organized a form of national referendum with the collection of signatures at parishes in the dioceses under its jurisdiction. More than three million people signed, demanding the optional declaration of religion on ID cards.

All this constituted a dynamic show of strength on the part of the Church of Greece. The government, however, stood firm and responded that the issue was closed and that the law of the state was going to be applied. The president of the republic and the Council of State upheld the policy of the government as constitutional. Senior members of the hierarchy, such as the Metropolitan Theoklitos of Ioannina and others, also disagreed with the Archbishop and counselled obedience to the laws of the state. By September 2001, the Holy Synod in a statement invited the government to collaborate with the Church for the protection of the distinctive national personality of the Greek people and their cultural tradition, called for national unity and, while stating that for the Church the issue was not closed in view of the millions of citizens who had signed the appeal, it made clear that its foremost priority was the avoidance of confrontation between the top institutions of the nation.

In retrospect, the ID cards crisis appears as in fact the only major conflict in Church-State relations in the post-1974 period. As such it can be seen as rather exceptional, but at the same time characteristic of another political phenomenon that had been sweeping Greek politics since 1981: the rise of populism. The ID card crisis acquired the intensity that characterized it for more than a year exactly because Archbishop Christodoulos gave in unconditionally to the temptations of populism in the belief that in this way he was enhancing the power of the Church and serving the authentic Orthodox tradition of Greek society (Alivizatos, 1999; Makrides, 2004). In a period in which all other major political leaders appeared to be taking their distances from populism, the archbishop, himself a

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warm and expansive personality, appeared as the genuine successor to Andreas Papandreou in the public life of the country —with the difference that while Papandreou's tactical acumen had prevented him from a head on conflict with the Church over family law and over the controversial law transferring Church and monastic landed properties to state ownership in 1987 (Konidaris, 1991), Christodoulos with his fiery rhetoric against globalization and secularization was identified with unrealistic positions which had a very serious cost to the Church and himself (as the rumours about scandals and corruption in 2005 made clear).

The flirtation with populism on the part of senior members of the hierarchy surfaced as well in reactions to the question of the official name of Greece's northern neighbour, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. When that country acceded to independence upon the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation in 1992 and claimed as its official denomination the name 'Republic of Macedonia', there were strong reactions in Greece, motivated by fears of irredentism at the expense of Greek Macedonia. These fears were recorded in a statement by the Holy Synod on 5 June 1992. Huge public rallies in Athens but especially in Thessaloniki offered fora to senior members of the hierarchy to voice their objections to the use of the geographical term 'Macedonia' in (p. 98) the name of the new country as a threat to the heritage of the Greek nation. The issue has remained very sensitive in northern Greece and two successive metropolitans of Thessaloniki have repeatedly criticized the governments as not being militant enough on the subject. When the issue resurfaced with urgency on the occasion of negotiations between the two countries in early 2018 on the name and related questions, the Holy Synod issued a statement repeating the objections of the Church to the concession of the name Macedonia to the country's northern neighbour. No major tension between Church and State arose, however. When the Prespes agreement was signed in June 2018 there had been symbolic protests and rallies in Athens, Thessaloniki, and elsewhere in northern Greece at which bishops and other clergymen spoke, but no crisis in Church and State relations broke out, primarily because the government had kept the archbishop, Ieronymos II, informed, and secured his support in keeping things under control. The archbishop abstained from rallies or other manifestations of protest.

These interventions of the Church in politics represent residual expressions of a self-understanding of its role as guardian of national identity and of the integrity of the Greek nation, an attitude that had been deeply ingrained by the whole process of the nationalization of the Church connected with autocephaly. There are, of course, voices of dissent within the Church and the hierarchy on these and similar questions, visualizing a modernized role for the Church of Greece in the broader context, and consonant with the principles of European integration, but these views have remained minority opinions and are expressed with considerable timidity.

Serious public and academic debate on the role of the Church and on Church-State relations in contemporary Greece focuses primarily on two issues: the issue of separation of Church and State and the issue of religious freedom. Separation of Church and State is not officially favoured by the Church for political and financial reasons, primarily the con-

tinued inclusion of the clergy on the payroll of the state, but also because of its self-understanding as a national church and guardian of Hellenism. There are minority voices in the Church and in theological scholarship, however, which argue for separation as a final and necessary step in the definitive liberation of the Church from state tutelage and in the recovery of its authentic spiritual traditions, which are considered to have been adulterated by the long years of state dominance. On the secular side, separation is favoured naturally by all those who judge it necessary for the final construction of a modern liberal democratic state in Greece. Dissenting voices and reservations are heard on this side too, inspired by concern lest the disestablishment of the Church, as an institution of the public sector and the removal of some form of public accountability under the constitution, might make the Church vulnerable and more receptive to the pressures of populism and fundamentalism, which are not absent from its ranks.

The debate on religious freedom arises from the juxtaposition of Article 13 of the Greek Constitution, which asserts the complete freedom of conscience, religion, and worship for all to Article 3 which affirms the place of Orthodox Christianity as the 'dominant' religion in the country. The recognition of Orthodoxy as the 'dominant' (ἐπικρατούσα) religion has been present in all Greek constitutions since the very first (p. 99) constitution of revolutionary Greece. As noted above, the constitutional provision of a 'dominant' religion was severely criticized by Adamantios Korais as incompatible with the principle of religious freedom. The debate is still going on and it has given occasion for the expression of very interesting suggestions and subtle distinctions that fundamentally converge on an appeal to strengthen the institutional foundations and moral temper of civil society in Greece by disentangling religion from the public sphere (Stathopoulos, 2007: 275–438).

The appeal for strengthening civil society includes the fuller integration of the Church and religious life into the broad space of the private sector, in which individuals and groups engage in pursuits that make their existence meaningful and free from state control or political interference. Arguments for religious liberty as a decisive condition of the liberation of the Church itself from various forms of state bondage, are basically supporting this position. In its history, the Church of Greece has proven its strength, tenacity, and moral authority as a fundamental constituent of civil society and, most recently, it has done so by basically managing almost single-handedly through its network of dioceses and philanthropic organizations and bringing under tolerable control the humanitarian crisis that resulted from the economic collapse following the financial crisis and the influx of large numbers of refugees from the Middle East and Africa. This achievement and its noticeably replenished spiritual resources at the dawn of the twenty-first century point to a promising new phase in the millennial history of an ancient tradition of culture and faith with an inexhaustible potential to adjust, survive, and renew itself.

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