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The Greek Church's
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Abstract

This article addresses the sensitive question of Church-State relations in Greece. Recent studies have suggested that the Greek Church's discourse was plainly incompatible with modern conceptions of liberal democracy. Populism and nationalism have been the two theoretical concepts used in relation with the Church. Discourse analysis based on public declarations of Church officials has been the main methodological tool. The Greek identity cards' crisis of the nineties has been its testing ground. Through an analysis of this "crisis" this article intends to show that these methods can offer only very limited perspectives of understanding the process for two main reasons. First, they show little interest for sociological analysis and especially for the internal functioning of the Church. Second, discourses are one outcome of the actors' strategies but have to be deciphered and not taken for granted. Analysts disregard one of the main presuppositions of semantics theory: discourses are produced within a specific socio-historical context and according to certain prefabricated schemes. This dual pattern of production allows for continuity as well as for change. Thus, this article also argues that a Church's conservative discourse may be closely related to the efforts of certain actors within this institution to renovate it. While refuting the "clash of civilizations" thesis, this article finally intends to suggest that the renewed interest for religion in general and orthodoxy in particular due to this thesis should be put to use by researchers in order to acquire new and more comprehensive socio-historical accounts of the Greek Church.

Résumé

Cet article aborde la question sensible des relations entre Etat et Eglise en Grèce. Nombre d'études récentes ont suggéré que le discours de l'Eglise orthodoxe grecque était incompatible avec les conceptions modernes de la démocratie libérale. Le nationalisme et le populisme ont été les deux concepts utilisés pour rendre compte de cette hypothèse et l'analyse du discours officiel de l'Eglise, le principal outil méthodologique employé. La crise de la mention de l'appartenance confessionnelle sur les cartes d'identité grecques durant les années 1990 a fondé des études de cas censées témoigner de l'attitude de l'Eglise. En entreprenant une analyse globale de cette "crise", cet article vise à démontrer que les approches mentionnées offrent des perspectives très limitées de compréhension du phénomène et des enjeux, pour deux raisons. Elles témoignent de peu d'intérêt pour l'analyse sociologique et tout particulièrement pour le fonctionnement interne de l'Eglise. De surcroît, les discours sont certes une manifestation des stratégies des acteurs, mais doivent néanmoins être pris pour une donnée brute nécessitant un décryptage. Or, ces analystes semblent ignorer l'un des apports fondamentaux de la sémantique: les discours sont produits dans un certain contexte socio-historique en fonction de schémas préfabriqués. Ce mode de production dual autorise aussi bien l'innovation que la continuité. Ainsi, le discours conservateur de l'Eglise peut-il être rapproché des efforts manifestés par certains acteurs internes pour la rénover. Tout en réfutant la thèse du "choc des civilisations", cet article suggère enfin que l'intérêt renouvelé qu'elle suscite pour la religion en général et l'orthodoxie en particulier devrait être mis à profit pour que soient menées plus d'études socio-historiques de l'Eglise grecque.

INTRODUCTION

This article addresses the sensitive question of Church-State relations in Greece. Recent studies have suggested that the Greek Church's discourse is plainly incompatible with modern conceptions of liberal democracy. Populism and nationalism are the two theoretical concepts used to talk about the Church. Discourse analysis based on public declarations of Church officials has been the main methodological tool. The Greek identity card crisis of the nineties has been its testing ground. This paper intends to show that these methods can offer only a very limited understanding of this crisis for two main reasons. First, they demonstrate little interest for sociological analysis and especially for the internal functioning of the Church. Second, discourse is one outward manifestation of the actors' strategies, but it must be deciphered instead of being taken for granted. Analysts disregard one of the main assumptions of semantic theory: discourses are produced within a specific socio-historical context and according to certain prefabricated schemes. This dual pattern of production allows for continuity as well as for change. Thus, this article also argues that a Church's conservative discourse may be closely related to the efforts of certain actors within this institution to modernize it. While refuting the "clash of civilizations" thesis, this article finally intends to suggest that the renewed interest for religion in general and orthodoxy in particular, precisely because of this thesis, should be put to use by researchers in order to acquire new and more comprehensive socio-historical accounts of the Greek Church.

Religion is back

It is reasonable to wonder where social studies on the Greek Church¹ would stand today had the "religious turn" of the nineties not occurred. Prior to the post-89 paradigmatic

¹ This work concerns only the Orthodox Church of Greece, hereafter referred to as the Church or COG. Readers should keep in mind that five different orthodox ecclesiastical statuses exist within the territorial limits of the Greek state: 1/ The semi-autonomous Orthodox Church of Crete; 2/ The Autonomous community of the *Aghion Oros* (Mt. Athos); 3/ The Dioceses of the Dodekanisos' islands which directly depend upon the Patriarchate of Constantinople; and the Orthodox Church of Greece, whose Dioceses do not all have the same exact status as regards their relations with the aforementioned Patriarchate: there is a difference between; 4/ the Dioceses of the "Old territories" and 5/ the Dioceses of the "New territories" (cf. *infra* note n° 56). For a good example of the practical implication of this diversity as regards law: Jean Konidaris, "Les monastères dans l'Eglise orthodoxe en Grèce," *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 75, July-September 1991, p. 11-22.

turmoil (in Thomas Kuhn's understanding of the notion),² studies on the Orthodox Church of Greece (hereafter COG) were scarce. Quite ironically, it is to Samuel Huntington that we owe the stimulus given to the field. His famous article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations"³ relegated Greece "to the other side of the new wall" because of its orthodox background. During the Cold War era, Greece was considered to belong to the Western world because of its free market economy and its liberal democracy. Huntington claimed that in the new post Cold War context, the block boundaries ran henceforth along fringes of civilizations. Therefore, Greece as an Orthodox country, did not belong to the Western block (i.e. descending from the Latin-speaking Roman Catholic *pars occidentalis* of the Roman Empire), but to the Eastern Slavic Orthodox one. Without a doubt, this assertion produced much controversy. Yet at the same time, the shock of the statement structured the debate. A new light was cast on religious difference, issues of inter-denominational conflict, the role of the Church and the respective political implications of these factors. The Greek identity card crisis, which has lasted almost a decade, is a perfect illustration of this new emphasis on religious themes as regards politics. Simultaneously, it is a good case study of the inherent methodological difficulties in dealing with such an agenda.

Greece's new "respectable" stance on the international relations scene⁴ renders necessary a rapid historical overview of our subject. Indeed, let us recall that the context was completely different back in 1993. At that time, Southeastern Europe was in the midst of political upheaval and military conflict. The European Union was desperately trying to adopt a coherent position as regards these issues. Meanwhile Greece had singled out itself by adopting a pro-Serbian stance in the Bosnian conflict and by desperately trying to oppose the international recognition of the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. Greece was diplomatically isolated and the European press was not particularly kind to it.⁵ Moreover, the

² "They implicitly define problems and legitimate methods of research for future generations of scientists." According to the same author paradigms have "two characteristics: remarkable accomplishments attracting a group of researchers from competing scientific activities; and sufficiently vast perspectives furnishing to this group all kinds of problems to resolve." Cf. Thomas Kuhn, *La structure des révolutions scientifiques*, Paris, Flammarion, 1983 [1962], introduction.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The clash of civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3), Summer 1993, p. 22-49. Huntington explicits his argument in terms of Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigm in his response to his critics: "If not civilizations, what? Paradigms of the post-cold war world," *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (5), November-December 1993, p. 186-194. The notion of "religious turn" and the "state of the art" concerning this debate will be extensively developed in the following pages. Cf. *infra*, p 5-8.

⁴ Although analysts during the nineties had been very skeptical about the capacity of the Greek economy to "modernize," Greece did finally manage to enter Euroland. Furthermore, the Greek presidency of the European Union during the first semester of 2003 has been saluted as positive. At the same time, Greece managed to have the U.N. Assembly vote – unanimously – a worldwide truce to be implemented during the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

⁵ Concerning the factual background of all these issues, see Thanos Veremis, *Greece's Balkan Entanglement*, Athens, ELIAMEP, 1995.

shift of focus within the academic field, which had already started in the eighties, aggravated this situation.

Indeed, minority issues and questions of cultural difference gained momentum in a post Cold War environment, which was looking for new explanatory frameworks. The study of national identities and nationalism became crucial as former blocks or states were entering a phase of disintegration. Hence, it was not surprising that the Yugoslavian crisis should trigger a renewed interest in Balkan history incorporating all these new theoretical perspectives. As politicians, journalists, intellectuals and academics tackled the new political situation in search for comprehensive answers, religion became a major factor of explanation of the on-going disorder. With regards to Greece, orthodoxy came to be seen as the main scheme of analysis.

In the milder version of this scheme, orthodoxy was seen as embedded in Greek national identity.⁶ It helped explain *certain* political decisions. In a more radical version, this scheme claimed that Orthodoxy with a capital "O" was the *dominant* factor in the decision-making process. Orthodoxy, as a historical reality, was the cornerstone of international alliances and conflicts on a constant basis ever since Late Antiquity.⁷ This latter version became extremely pervasive in the media during the Yugoslavian conflict. Old controversies and new phenomena were reinterpreted alike within the new frame of analysis.

The case study and its political context

The Greek political scene supplied a perfect example by which to demonstrate this thesis. In the spring of 1993, a minor political crisis broke out as the center-right⁸ government

⁶ Guy Hermet, *Histoire des nations et du nationalisme en Europe*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1996, p. 276. Alain Dieckhoff, *La Nation dans tous ses Etats*, Paris, Flammarion, 2000, p. 89-90. M. Blickehorn & T. Veremis (eds), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality*, Athens, ELIAMEP, 1990, *passim*. Elizabeth Prodromou, "Towards an understanding of Eastern orthodoxy and democracy building in the post-Cold War Balkans," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 5 (2), May 1994, p. 115-138.

⁷ Francis Thual, *Géopolitique de l'orthodoxie*, Paris, Dunod, 1993. George Kennan, *The Other Balkan War: a 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflection on the Present Conflict*, Washington D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993.

⁸ In 1990 the center-right party New Democracy (ND) came to power, after eight years of socialist (PASOK) rule (1981-1989) and one year of political uncertainty. Indeed, three general elections were necessary before the ND could obtain an absolute majority in Parliament. After PASOK's defeat in the indecisive election of June 1989, a red-rose-blue (Communists, Euro-Communists, ND) government briefly assumed power. When the general

of Prime Minister C. Mitsotakis tried to pass an amendment to the legislation regarding the data appearing on Greek identity cards, especially religion. The government's proposition aimed at making the declaration of denominational status optional in the new EU-compliant ID cards.

This was not the first time that the Greek Parliament had dealt with such an issue. As a matter of fact the discussion began back in 1986. Prior to this date the declaration of one's religion had been compulsory ever since the creation of ID cards during World War Two.⁹ But since 1986 a certain Left-Right political cleavage had been crystallizing around this debate. The Socialists had made the declaration optional in 1986, while the New Democracy had reinstated its mandatory status in 1991.¹⁰ In 1992, the European Parliament had issued a strong recommendation urging the Greek government to modify its legislation concerning issues of religious difference. This recommendation, along with the diplomatic isolation of Greece at the time, urged the New Democracy government to change its initial stance. It introduced a last minute bill aimed at re-instituting the *status quo ante* of 1986-1991. Logically, this bill should have been passed, given the fact that it corresponded to the position upheld by the Socialists in 1986, and again in 1991. Nevertheless, this was not the case. The context was different. Greece's isolation within the EU regarding the Macedonian question influenced political attitudes. The quasi-unanimous refusal of deputies from both camps to "give in to the blackmail of the European Union" (sic) forced the government to withdraw its bill. Given the new Balkan context, this outcome was intensely promoted through the media both on a national and an international level. The Greek diplomatic position became even more uncomfortable and things worsened as the new Socialist government of Andreas Papandreou¹¹ came to power. It took Greece several years before it could come out of its *splendid isolation*.

elections called in November 1989 also failed to produce a clear majority, a national coalition government was formed. It was in the spring of 1990 that the ND party did, at last, obtain its absolute but extremely fragile majority. See the chapter "Greece" in G. Hermet, J. Hottinger, D. Seiler (eds), *Les partis politiques de l'Europe de l'Ouest*, Paris, Economica, 1998. See also a rapid overview in Juan Linz & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 130-149.

⁹ See Nikos Alivizatos, *Uncertain Modernization*, Athens, Polis, 2001, p. 287-324 (in Greek) regarding the history of the controversy over identity cards.

¹⁰ Regarding the legal details of the issue and the parliamentary archives one can consult our *Nation orthodoxe ou Orthodoxie nationalisée : autour de la question de la mention de l'appartenance confessionnelle sur les cartes d'identités grecques*, DEA dissertation, IEP, Paris, 1996, prolegomena.

¹¹ The Mitsotakis government lost its majority in Parliament when a small number of ND deputies led by Mitsotakis' former Minister of Foreign Affairs (A. Samaras) formed a new party following the accusation that the government was becoming too conciliatory on the Macedonian question. The PASOK campaigned extensively and eventually won the anticipated general election on this issue. It advocated a stricter attitude towards the EU and Macedonia. Once formed, the new government adopted a particularly vehement foreign policy attitude.

The identity card issue was forgotten until the aftermath of the 2000 general elections. Costas Simitis, head of the “Modernizers” within the PASOK was renewed in his duties as Prime Minister after having the edge on ND. Meanwhile, Greece had been repeatedly condemned by the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, for non-respect of its legal obligations concerning minorities.¹² Simitis appointed a law professor – M. Stathopoulos – as Minister of Justice. The newly appointed Minister clearly announced his intention to pass a bill compliant with the indications of the Greek High Authority of Protection of Personal Data regarding identity cards. The declaration of denominational status as well as professional occupation were to be dropped. This declaration initiated a new phase in the identity card issue.

Opposing the government, the ND party moderately recommended the idea of an optional declaration. Unlike PASOK’s stance in 1993, ND’s leadership wished to avoid a clear-cut clash with the government on this issue, while a certain number of deputies from both parties were advocating once again resistance to the abandonment of “national sovereignty.” Even though the Church tried to orchestrate the opposition to the government, this time the reform did succeed in passing. The Greek Council of State validated the reform and the President of the Republic evaded the Church’s demands for a referendum on the subject. As a matter of fact, it was becoming clear that the Greek Church, which had managed to oppose the measure back in 1993, was incapable of staging a similar opposition front on the eve of Greece’s entry into Euroland. For some observers, the outcome of this political and legal confrontation – favorable to the government – was a significant victory of the Modernization-Secularization camp over the Orthodox-nationalist once embodied by the GOC.

However, doubt can be cast upon this positivist interpretation, if the “crisis” is examined from a more global perspective. For the time being, we have schematically presented only the factual background of our theme, without referring to the macro-level – historical as well as sociological. Nevertheless, before embarking on an analysis and eventual criticism of the aforementioned positivist *doxa*, let us first review the current academic debates regarding Church-State relations, modernization and secularization.

¹² For an extensive study of these issues: D. Christopoulos (ed.), *Legal Issues of Religious Otherness*, Athens, Kritiki, 1999 (in Greek).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

State of the Art

The traditional thesis as regards State-Church or State-religion relationships is the Modernization-secularization one. This twofold thesis was based on an observation of a decline of religiosity ever since the French and Industrial revolutions in Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries. On the one hand, it *retrospectively* explained Modernity as an exit from Christianity. On the other hand, the paradigm *prospectively* argued that economic modernization, development of communication networks, and diffusion of educational goods would have the same effects upon all types of society. In its *hard* version, the secularization paradigm foresaw the extinction of religion in an enlightened world.¹³ Needless to say, this paradigm was very popular at a time when the theory of development was at the height of its influence. More than a decade later, the *hard* version of the model came under attack. Economic modernization had failed to produce an enlightened world from which religion would simply fade out. Authors were obliged to recognize that secularization was not “an inevitable trend.” “Cultural filters” conditioned the final outcome in each and every society.¹⁴ The *hard* version was completely abandoned and a *soft* version accounting for the multiplicity of trajectories and outcomes became dominant.

However, the paradigm came under ever more aggressive attack as sociologists started asserting in the eighties that religious *counter-secular* movements were not the privilege of Third World countries trying to catch up with a more developed North. Counter-secular movements were becoming particularly visible in countries like the USA or Great Britain. This counter-secularization thesis has become especially widespread since September 2001. 9/11 was the consecration of the “religious turn” on the public sphere. However, the academic debate between *secularizationists* and *revisionists* remains very active and undecided. Provocative attitudes abound in the field. For instance,

¹³ For a detailed account of the paradigm at the time, see Peter L. Berger's classic work, *The Sacred Canopy*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1967.

¹⁴ David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978, p. 12.

secularizationist Bruce's Parthian shot was an article entitled *Christianity in Britain, R.I.P. Requiescat in pace!* A full-fledged attack against the *revisionist* camp.¹⁵

Secularization or counter-secularization? Let us be heretical. Could the secularization theory finally be convenient to the Christian churches? Secularization continues to claim Christianity's pertinence in spite of its failure to explain the world and its inability to expand and control each and every individual.¹⁶ Secularization interprets Modernity as a world which has "lost"¹⁷ its Christian mantle. This asserted *loss* is seriously challenged today. Religious sociologists and *microstoria* historians doubt that *Ancien Régime* British, French or Italians were more faithful just because they were *probably* more regular churchgoers. They doubt that church norms were applied in a stricter manner before the two Revolutions (French and Industrial) than after them. They suggest that strategic engineering of social practices by ingenious social agents was as frequent then – although less visible – as it is now.¹⁸ Moreover, it is obvious that Churches can benefit from the people's apparent loss of affection for the "holy."¹⁹ We would like to follow this thread as regards modern developments in the Greek Church. Beyond the simple descriptive and quantitative definition of secularization as a decrease of the Church's influence in a disenchanted world, is it possible to define secularization as a qualitative shift in the Church's social role? Could this be a fruitful insight for the analysis of the evolution of the Church of Greece during the 1993-2001 period?

¹⁵ For an overview of the debate and full bibliographical information, see Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Le christianisme en Grande-Bretagne: débats et controverses autour d'une mort annoncée", *Archives des Sciences sociales des Religions*, 116, October-December 2001, p. 31-40.

¹⁶ We draw this inspiration from the Blumenberg-Schmitt debate. See especially Hans Blumenberg, *La légitimité des temps modernes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999 [1966-1988]. Blumenberg argues that while the religious-philosophical crisis in Antiquity, which allowed for Christianity to take over as a new paradigm, ended with the latter refusing any legitimacy to the former, this is not the case with the legitimacy of Modernity. The latter is understood as "springing from" Christianity. Therefore this "spring" justifies, as the recently adopted preamble of the future European Constitution states, the "religious inheritance of Europe and its continuing pertinence." Quite automatically people refer to Christianity when interpreting this article. Few are those who would argue about the importance of pagan traditions for understanding European culture as well as Christianity. Arnaldo Momigliano and Peter Brown are among the few historians who dared to do so in a convincing way.

¹⁷ In the same way Man "lost" his privileged status after original sin and the fall from paradise. The theme of "loss" is a classic of Judaism and Christianity.

¹⁸ Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P. Rest in peace," *Sociology of Religion*, 60, Fall 1999, p. 249-273. G. Levi, *Le pouvoir au village : Histoire d'un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989 [1985], introduction.

¹⁹ The French Catholic Church became stronger as an institution after the French Revolution and the French 3rd Republic crisis than before. A careful reading of Max Weber's remarks concerning the American sects and capitalism shows that a Church's secularization can actually be analyzed as a response to the social demand of "disenchantment." The fact that churchgoing becomes rare is not automatically a proof of a decline. Ecclesiastical personnel was far more numerous, better trained, more loyal and thus politically more effective at the end of the 19th century than before 1789. As Georg Simmel has theorized, conflict can induce sociologically positive results for both parties in conflict. Georg Simmel, *Le conflit*, Paris, Circé, 1995 [1908], p. 19-23 & 37.

Scientific accounts about religion in Greece

Before tackling the question, it would be useful to present the state of the question by drawing up a list of works dealing with the subject. The last decade has witnessed the publication of a series of works about the Greek orthodox world. Authors usually challenge Huntington's aforementioned claim concerning Greece, or his general argument. However, they feel obliged (?) to abide to the criteria and the scientific categories used in relation to "culture" and political modernization. Therefore, the dominant use of the "traditional" dualistic models such as "Tradition versus Modernity" or "Orthodoxy versus Europe"²⁰ has impoverished the debate.²¹ We still lack substantial socio-historical research concerning the Church of Greece. To paraphrase Nietzsche's remark, we can say that part of the problem with the development of generalizing scientific literature is that we depend more and more upon *knowledge about books*, i.e. hearsay evidence.²² Therefore, talking about Christianity or Orthodoxy in general is far more "economical," although considerably less accurate than examining what being orthodox means, who is orthodox, and what this implies, if anything, for political action.²³

We do definitely have to take into consideration that the current interest concerning the Church, measured in terms of articles and books, is inversely proportional to the number of works produced about the functioning of the Church, its history since 1833, its agents and its internal and external balance of power.²⁴ Most authors base their analyses on the treatment of the Church's discourses as information-sources according to a prefabricated schema which has become a *weltanschauung* of Greek-relevant social theory: modernization. Even when an author recognizes the limits of these analyses in terms of "identities," "cultural

²⁰ For an example of this approach: Vassilios Makrides, "La tension entre tradition et modernité en Grèce," in Jean Baubérot (ed.), *Religions et laïcité dans l'Europe des douze*, Paris, Syros, 1994, p. 73-81 and Nikos Kokosalakis, "Orthodoxie grecque, modernité et politique," in Grace Davie & Danielle Hervieu-Léger (eds), *Identités religieuses en Europe*, Paris, La Découverte, 1996, p. 131-152.

²¹ A short and concise account of this thesis as well as of the relevant bibliography can be found in Nicephore Diamandouros, "Politics and culture in Greece, 1974-1991: An interpretation," in Richard Clogg (ed.), *Greece 1981-1989. The Populist Decade*, London, Macmillan, 1993, p. 1-25.

²² We suggest a reading of Friedrich Nietzsche's sixth part of *Beyond Good and Evil* as well as sections n° 279 & 289.

²³ Cf. Michel Dobry's criticism – following Bourdieu's scheme – of the "behaviouralist" school's fixist and mechanical use of expressions such as "the political attitudes of the Catholic" or in our case the "Orthodox." *Sociologie des crises politiques*, Paris, Presses de la FNSP, 1986, p. 241-243.

²⁴ Charles Frazee's book *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1852*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969, is the only work mentioned in bibliographies more than thirty years after its apparition. This contrasts amazingly with the development of historical and sociological works concerning churches and their agents in other countries.

dualisms,” “traditionalist attitudes”²⁵ etc. it becomes difficult to provide a convincing answer regarding the apparent “contradictions” in the Church’s discourse and acts short of reducing everything to complete post-modernist subjectivity.²⁶

Four tendencies can be identified as regards works about religion and the state in Greece.

- The *continuity thesis*. Using A. Smith’s terminology²⁷, we can suggest that the Greek war of Independence was the product of two visions of the Greek nation. An educated *élite*, influenced by democratic ideals, conceptualized an *ideological* nation descending from classical Greece. Modern Greeks shared the same language and political ideals with their classical ancestors, but they had lost contact with them because of the Byzantine and Ottoman imperial rule. Free education in a free state was supposed to bring about a renaissance of these ancient memories. On the other hand, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the organization of the *Rûm* community within the Ottoman Empire served as a framework for a *genealogical* vision of the nation. Each and every orthodox within the limits of the Empire, using the Greek *koine*²⁸ in church, belonged to the same community. During the nineteenth century, scholarly debate and political imperatives brought about a rapprochement of the two visions. This was masterfully put together by several nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians.²⁹ The Greek nation’s fundamental characteristic was the Greek language. However, this language had survived after the defeat of the Greek political entities thanks to

²⁵ Efthimios Papataxiarchis’ essay “La valeur du ménage: classes sociales, stratégies matrimoniales et lois ecclésiastiques à Lesbos au XIXe siècle”, in Stuart Woolf (ed.), *Espaces et familles dans l’Europe du Sud à l’Âge moderne*, Paris, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1992, p. 109-142, is a good example of how the Church can have a strategic interest in fighting a tradition cherished by social actors. Thus, it contributes to the appearance of a “modernity,” while upholding a discourse proclaiming the attachment to tradition and refusing innovation.

²⁶ For example, Stavrakakis’ critical account of the Diamandouros & Mouzelis thesis concerning cultural dualism stresses the importance of the apparent inability of this theoretical apparatus to explain what may appear as inconsistencies in the Church’s actions and discourse. However, he finally gives up trying to explain them and settles for affirming their existence. He cannot disentangle his analysis from the “populist discourse” *doxa*, although he does on numerous occasions sense the *véritable* sociological importance and context of Christodoulos’ discourse. *Religion and Populism: Reflections on the “Politicized” Discourse of the Greek Church*, London School of Economics Hellenic Observatory, discussion paper, 7, May 2002, (cf. footnote N° 31).

²⁷ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986.

²⁸ A version of the Greek language which became dominant during Late Antiquity and in the Byzantine Empire.

²⁹ The most famous one is K. Paparrigopoulos. He published an extensive history of Hellenism in numerous volumes and a 1-volume *Histoire de la civilisation hellénique*, Paris, Hachette, 1878.

the institutional framework of the Orthodox Church, which had adopted Greek as its sacred language. This thesis is still dominant in Greek society, politics, historical textbooks and of course within the Greek Church.

- Following the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and especially during the dictatorship of the colonels, a new thesis became prevalent among a generation of historians, political scientists and sociologists studying abroad. Challenging the colonels' motto of "Greece of Christian Greeks" became the leitmotiv of the genitors of the *Incomplete Modernization thesis*. According to them, the foundation of a Modern Greek nation state in 1830-1833 was the result of the Greek Enlightenment. They understood the declaration of the Greek Church as Autocephalous and separated from the Patriarchate in 1833, as another sign of political modernization aiming to bring about the subsequent separation of Church and State. However, this modernization was not completed. Why? The group diverged in its interpretations. Historians of ideas, such as K. Dimaras³⁰ or Ph. Iliou, explained the failure of the modernization efforts by the victory of the Romantics over Enlightenment during the 19th century. Religiosity became popular once again, while anticlericalism rolled back. On the other hand, political scientist N. Diamandouros³¹ identified two types of political culture in Greece: a modernizing political culture handed down from Enlightenment and an underdog culture having its origins in Byzantium, Orthodoxy and the Ottoman Empire. Greek political history was interpreted as an eternal struggle between these two cultures. The debates in the 1990s over identity cards were presented as obvious symptoms of this ongoing conflict. Last but not least, sociologist N. Mouzelis³² identified the persistence of archaic social structures and functions – such as clientelism – as the basis of explanation of the emergence of a populist discourse in the Greek political arena. According to him, the Church's reaction during the nineties was typical of a populist reaction to European integration and the sacrifices inherent in the modernization of Greek society. However, the most fundamental characteristic of this vision is that it considered studies about the Church as subsidiary, if not useless.

³⁰ K. Dimaras, *Greek Enlightenment*, Athens, Ermis, 1993 [1977] (in Greek).

³¹ N. Diamandouros, *Cultural Dualism and Political Modernization in Post-Authoritarian Greece*, Madrid, Instituto Juan March, 1994. This is an enlarged version of Diamandouros' aforementioned work.

³² N. Mouzelis, *Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment*, London, Macmillan, 1978.

- During the eighties, the Dimaras theory was challenged in the field of the history of ideas as P. Kitromilides³³ developed the *Irenist* thesis. According to this author, Orthodoxy should not be understood as a religion particularly favorable to nationalism. The Orthodox Church was supranational and fundamentally hostile to nationalism. The division of Orthodoxy in national churches opposed to one another and to the Catholic Church, was the consequence of the progressive gain of influence of nationalism within Southeastern European societies. The Orthodox church broke into numerous feuding national churches because the local societies became national(ist), and not the other way around. Therefore for Kitromilides, those who accused Orthodoxy of being a religion fundamentally supportive of nationalism were mistaken.

- Last but not least is what we can call the *postmodern thesis*. Its development being due to the debates in the 1990's, it opposed both the Continuity and the Irenist theses. Most of its adepts are based in England and are thus considerably influenced by Laclau & Mouffe's practices of discourse analysis. These authors have incorporated the latest developments in Greek historiography and therefore take for granted the refutation of the Continuity thesis. On the other hand, they wish to challenge Kitromilides' version by demonstrating the existence of nationalist tendencies within the Church independent of outside influences (especially as regards the Bulgarian exarchate case during the 1850-1880 period). Quite similarly, their explanation of the debates in the 1990's boils down to presenting a Greek Orthodox political discourse.³⁴ Very interestingly, the continuity of Greek Orthodox nationalism substitutes itself to the continuity of a Greek Orthodox nation!

Even though studies about the Greek Church are no longer perceived as useless, the field still lags behind compared to what has been done for other denominations. No complete history of the institution exists, nor does any sociological analysis of its functions. Popular and even scientific works indirectly dealing with these issues are still riddled with factual inaccuracies, since there is no reference book on these matters. Unfortunately, the recent monopolization of the field by the postmodernist thesis is harmful to its development.

³³ Paschalis Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe*, Brookfield (VT), Variorum reprints, 1994. This is the most complete and exemplary version of the author's viewpoints. It encompasses a series of articles and most notably the article "Imagined Communities." A more recent work containing studies of variable quality is P. Kitromilides & T. Veremis (eds), *The Orthodox Church in a Changing World*, Athens, ELIAMEP, 1998.

³⁴ Stavrakakis, *op. cit.*

(Re)interpretation of discourses, when nothing has been seriously established regarding the context or the author of the discourse, is akin to a Sisyphean task.

A methodological shift

We would like to suggest a triple methodological shift in dealing with an ecclesiastical institution. In this we are extending Ernst Troeltsch's constructive criticism of Max Weber's "protestantism" thesis,³⁵ as well as Reinhart Koselleck's efforts to combine social history with the conceptual history apparatus.³⁶ Therefore, we propose that discourse analysis need not consider discourses either as automatically informative³⁷ or performative,³⁸ but rather as responses to specific social demands. Furthermore, in these discourses, concepts are constantly used and reused while being re-semanticized in the long term. And finally, in order to understand this process, focus must be shifted from discourse to social practice.

The identity card "crisis" of the nineties is a good testing ground for this methodological hypothesis. Admittedly, during the 1993-2000 period Church-State relations in Greece went through their greatest phase of turbulence since the proclamation of the Autocephalous in 1833.³⁹ This turbulence definitely came to a head in the issue of indicating confessional status on identity cards. Nevertheless, it is the latent project of constitutional reform diminishing the role of the Church, which seems, as always, to be the apple of discord. Three methodological "illusions" are usually present –isolated or combined- in numerous analyses:

³⁵ Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantisme et modernité*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991 [1909-1913], p. 24-27.

³⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, *Le futur passé: contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*, Paris, Editions de l'EHESS, 1990 [1979], p. 19-36 & 99-118.

³⁷ Numerous linguists have noted that "it would be wrong to believe that the discourse's primary function is to inform." One of the most convincing accounts has been given by Mikhail Bakhtine, *Le marxisme et la philosophie du langage: essai d'application de la méthode sociologique en linguistique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1977 [1929], especially in chapter 6 regarding verbal interaction.

³⁸ Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, vol. 1, ch. XXII.

³⁹ At that time, the newly founded Greek Kingdom declared the independence of the Dioceses situated within its boundaries from the Patriarchate in Constantinople and the constitution of the Autocephalous Church of Greece. The best account of the socio-historical context, beyond Frazee's legal and factual book can be found in Paraskevas Matalas, *Nation and Orthodoxy*, Heraklion, Cretan University Press, 2000, (in Greek).

A/ The “etiological illusion,” which notes the resurgence of the latent “Orthodoxy-Enlightenment” opposition, not to mention the Byzantium-Occident one. Diamandouros’ history of modernization even identifies periods when either the first or second aspect of the antithesis prevails.⁴⁰ Therefore, for example, the Orthodox-nationalist dictatorship of Metaxas⁴¹ constitutes a conservative turn in Greek history after the liberal “modernizers” of the 2nd Republic.⁴² According to the most renowned law historian of the period, harassment of religious minorities is directly related to Metaxas’ legislation on proselytism.⁴³ In fact, a critical approach of the period reveals the development and continuity of religious strife in the aftermath of WWI (i.e. 1922 for Greece) and the progressive legislative implication of Greece’s 2nd Republic in favor of the Greek Church in order to ensure national cohesion. For some minorities, (i.e. the Salonica Jews), it is even flagrant that the Metaxas’ dictatorship is seen as a positive development saving them from the “homogenization-modernization” campaign of the Liberal republicans.⁴⁴

B/ The “heroïc illusion” usually follows not far behind since this archetypal opposition is supposedly exacerbated - in what becomes a “crisis” - by the “charismatic” aspects of the leaders of the two poles: on one hand, Prime Minister Costas Simitis, head of the “modernizers,” and on the other, Archbishop Christodoulos, expressing the voice of the “populists” or of an “underdog culture.” Let us suggest here that the first critical debate took place in 1993, in a period when questions of succession were opened within the Church and the PASOK. Could not the apparent crisis between two charismas also be perceived as the successful resolution of a long-lasting social debate that also consolidates the authority of new leaders within their respective institutions?

C/ Finally, the “natural history” illusion, which is the most treacherous of them, given its inclination towards comparisons. In this version, secularization, which is characterized in the beginning by a decline of religiosity, slowly moves to a second phase when new *élites*, new institutions and new concepts (which are secularized versions of the preceding

⁴⁰ Cf. Nikiphoros Diamandouros, *op.cit.*

⁴¹ Metaxas’ *pronunciamento* of August 4, 1936 put an end to the 2nd Greek Republic (1924-1936) and inaugurated the 1936-1940 “New State” dictatorial period.

⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴³ This is the crux of Alivizatos argumentation in the “identity card” debate. He stresses the Metaxas case. Nikos Alivizatos, *Uncertain Modernization*, *op. cit.*, p. 287-324 (in Greek). Nevertheless, the author’s major work, *Political Institutions in Crisis 1922-1974*, Athens, Themelio, 1995 [1979], p. 339-374, (in Greek), gives us a far more interesting, although incompletely problematized, insight about the continuity between republic and dictatorship.

⁴⁴ See Bernard Pierron, *Juifs et chrétiens à la Grèce moderne*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1996, p. 173-198 & 207-218.

period's)⁴⁵ try to evince the old ones. This usually provokes crises and the emergence of counter-secular movements. In the older version of the model, these crises were overcome and secularization triumphed. In the new, tree-shaped version of the model,⁴⁶ historical contingency allows for counter-secular movements to develop and even triumph over the secularization *partisans*.

However, these approaches cannot convincingly account at the same time for three recent and correlated phenomena in the Greek Church:

a/ the astonishing improvement of relations with the Vatican, especially since the Pope's visit in 2001;

b/ the rapid integration of the Church in the Europeanization process; and

c/ its increasing role in administrating Greek society thanks to a denser and more "modernized" charity-network.⁴⁷

Let us examine what the situation of the COG during the 1993-2001 period can suggest in this direction.

⁴⁵ One has to keep in mind Carl Schmitt's famous apophthegm from his Political Theology concerning "all important concepts of the modern theory of State are secularized theological concepts."

⁴⁶ Peter Berger's change of view is the most characteristic of this new version of the model. Cf. Peter Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, New York, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999.

⁴⁷ One could add the conflict between the Patriarchate and the Greek Church. Nevertheless, unlike the other topics, all of the preceding theories can explain this particular conflict. As a matter of fact, the main problem with most of these theories is that they focus on the Greek Church-Patriarchate conflict each and every time, without paying enough attention to other factors.

CASE STUDY: THE IDENTITY CARDS CRISIS IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

1993 : annus horribilis?

When Constantinos Caramanlis signed the Greece's accession to the EEC in 1979, he saluted the other European delegations by announcing that he was proud that "*at last the belonging of Greece to Europe, with which it shared a classical Greek and Christian heritage, was realized.*" No one made any objections at the time. The statement probably would not have raised any objections today either, as the draft European Constitution attests.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as we have seen, this was not the case ten years ago.

The year 1993 probably reveals the intrinsic antiphesis of modern Greek national ideology: belonging to Europe via the common Greek-Christian heritage.⁴⁹ At the same time, the Church of Greece has its own priorities for reactualizing its relations with the Greek state, and it would be simplistic to believe that it is just a plain case of "orthodox nationalism," whatever this label may imply.

A/ The opening of the borders initiated massive waves of immigration from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Now, whenever these refugees are orthodox, they are usually considered as more frequent churchgoers than native Greeks. This can be seen as a positive aspect if we consider that Church attendance was lagging at the time. It is generally agreed, despite the lack of relevant statistics on this specific issue, that following the dictatorship, there was a definite disaffection of the people for the Church.⁵⁰ "Sunday school" statistics can illustrate this point:

⁴⁸ This is a clear reference to the debates regarding the "*religious inheritance*" of Europe, whose values are "*still present*" as the drafted Constitution, presented in the Thessaloniki European summit on June 21st, suggests. See <http://european-convention.eu.int>.

⁴⁹ For an interesting analysis of Greek-European cultural ties see: Gregory Jusdanis, *The Necessary Nation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001; Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.

⁵⁰ This assumption has to be tempered by two observations. On a general level, churchgoing is not an automatic measurement of Church influence. And (point two) it is especially so in a church which does not attach specific importance to such issues. Cf. Nikos Kokosalakis, "The political significance of popular religion in Greece," *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 64 (1), July-September 1987, p. 37-52.

Fig. 1 Sunday school statistics of the COG (1980-1990)

	1980	1990
Teachers	5,346	4,344 (-18,74%)
Students	335,483	255,408 (-23,86%)

Source: Diptycha of the Church of Greece 1980-2000.⁵¹

However, most of the immigrants arriving originated from regions of Old-Calendar abiding Orthodox churches. Therefore, this can constitute a potential source of conflict. Let us recall the importance of this opposition. Western Christian churches have all adopted the Gregorian calendar. This is not the case with most Orthodox churches, which still abide by the Julian calendar. Nevertheless the COG is an original case in this matter. In 1922-1923, the Church's reformist leadership decided to "reform" the Old Calendar.⁵² The New calendar was adopted except for the celebration of Easter. A significant minority refused to accept this "western and papist deviance." However, the Greek state refused to recognize the Old-Calendarists as a separate denomination. Consequently Old-Calendar priests were persecuted for wrongful exercise of the Orthodox cult.

In 1993, the new immigrants enabled this persecuted minority to gain influence. Moreover, the Old-Calendarists are a very active and anti-western minority within the Church. Certain Metropolitans can be inclined to adopt a more intransigent stance in the Synod as regards the European Union.

B/ Starting that year, the succession of Mgr. Seraphim –Archbishop of Athens since 1974- was at stake. Given his age and his failing health, it became clear that he would be replaced within the near future. Therefore, candidates could start preparing the ground for the final sprint. Mgr. Christodoulos, at the time Metropolitan of Dimitriada, was the main participant in most debates concerning Church-related issues in the press. His contradictors usually account for this omni-presence without drawing any sociological insight from it.⁵³ Nevertheless, it is quite impressive to note that Mgr Christodoulos made regular appearances as an editorialist in such a well-known newspaper as the *Sunday Vima*, thus

⁵¹ *Diptych of the Church of Greece*, Athens, 2001.

⁵² It was a subtle way of adopting the New calendar without admitting it, while maintaining the Easter celebration according to the Old Calendar. Even today, observers are usually puzzled since Greek orthodox celebrate Christmas on the same date as Western Christians and two weeks before the other Orthodox, but celebrate Easter on the same day as every Orthodox, and consequently on a different date than Western Christians.

⁵³ N. Alivizatos, *Uncertain Modernization*, *op. cit.* The author often cites this "coincidence" without being astonished that Christodoulos was practically acting as an unofficial spokesman of the Church on all important issues from 1993 all the way up to his election as Archbishop in 1998.

earning a definite degree of celebrity. Should we be surprised that Christodoulos appeared as one of the most popular figures in Greece upon his election? Should we doubt that this popularity was at least partly and structurally based upon the conflicting debates in which he took part? If these debates had not occurred, how many Greeks would have known him prior to his election? And isn't this popularity a competitive advantage within the Synod on the eve of the election of a new Archbishop who will have to deal with one of the primary causes of concern: the public's indifference to the Church?

We have no trouble suggesting that it is. The Church's history provides plenty of examples corroborating this thesis, as well as the mental framework conditioning the importance of editorial activity.⁵⁴ In ongoing research concerning the COG's functioning as an institution at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, we have come across the following findings.⁵⁵ Participation in various para-ecclesiastical or church reviews during this period was a definite asset for clerics in boosting their career (ex. T. Anastassiou, I. Valanidiotis, P. Synodinos). The clerics acquired a network of supporters, while becoming familiar to numerous readers, albeit the most influential ones, the members of the clergy and para-ecclesiastical organizations. Nevertheless, this development was anything but natural. It draws its legitimacy from the necessary respect of the tradition of preaching within the Church. However, this tradition was absent within the COG in the mid-1850's as numerous well-informed authors notice.⁵⁶ It therefore had to be "invented," or rather reinvented. But for an invention to be accepted as legitimate within the Church, its innovative aspect must be denied. Therefore, and in the purest "tradition" of the Greek church, it was presented as a continuation of the traditions of the patristic period. Most accounts concerning preaching

⁵⁴ First we should mention the Homilies, which constitute an important aspect of patristic tradition defining the mental framework and the legitimacy of evangelical activity, i.e. preaching and proselytism. All religions do not inherently accept and practice preaching. Regarding the early 20th century Orthodox Church, let us just single out Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Archbishop of Athens and Greece from 1923 to 1938. He is the main reformer of the Church, the founder of numerous periodicals and the author of approximately 350 articles and books!

⁵⁵ Anastassios Anastasiadis, *L'Etat de la Nation grecque: La rénovation conservatrice de l'Eglise de Grèce et la formation du "Welfare state" national*, Ph.D. thesis in progress, Paris, Institute of Political Studies.

⁵⁶ Apostolos Makrakis, the most influential figure on the development of the Greek Church in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the author of the review *Anaplasis*, which is the first large scale association and review with a religious interest in the Greek kingdom. Preaching during that period was mostly an activity of the marginal competitors of the Church. Preaching, especially outside the temples by non-authorized figures, was violently repressed. Peter Brown's work *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981, illustrates convincingly how Christian churches, once solidly established, regulated the clerics' activity and disciplinized it in order to avoid ecstatic innovations, thus disarming the priests and making them incapable of countering the newcomers, i.e. the prophet's word. The same remark is made by Pierre Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux," *Revue française de sociologie*, 12 (3), July-September 1971, p. 295-334.

directly refer to the three Cappadocians.⁵⁷ Even better, the Cappadocians' orisons or homilies serve as the *exempla* to follow.

Thus, preaching becomes not only legitimate but also necessary from a religious point of view. Editorial activity is just a modern version of preaching necessary in this "new" world, especially when a new and competing pole of allegiance comes about given the international context.

C/ The Greek Church's relation with the Patriarchate of Constantinople was in fact a new source of anxiety for the hierarchy. The end of the Cold war meant a regain of importance for the Patriarchate. It reinitiated a policy of *rapprochement* with countries that had been under its zone of influence. This new situation often creates a *porte-à-faux* with the Church of Greece especially regarding Albania, but also the Dodecanese and the "New Territories"⁵⁸ whose canonic status is subject to controversy. As long as the majority of orthodox countries remained under socialist rule, the Patriarchate's aura was limited. The center of gravity of Greek Orthodoxy was located in Greece, which was the only clear support of the Patriarchate. Following the 1989 upheaval, this situation changed. Once again, such antagonism is not a novelty.⁵⁹

Ever since the self-proclamation of the Greek autocephalous in 1833,⁶⁰ relations between the COG and the Patriarchate have been ambivalent. During the late 19th century, the Patriarchate had to consider the gradual expansion of the Greek state. Every territory gained by the Greek state from the Ottoman Empire was also a territory lost by the Patriarchate in favor of the COG. During the Balkan wars and WWI, the Patriarchate apprehended the possible arrival of the Greek state in Constantinople. Which ecclesiastical authority was to be responsible for a Greek state extending from Crete to Eastern Thrace? Which was to be the political center of such a state? Athens or Constantinople? Was the

⁵⁷ We refer to the most renowned figures of the orthodox patristic tradition: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzen and John Chrysostom.

⁵⁸ Following the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars, the territory of the Greek state doubled thanks to the annexation of the "New Territories." Thus were named the parts of the regions of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace obtained from the Ottoman Empire. The Patriarchate ceded the dioceses of these territories to the Greek Church under certain conditions in 1928.

⁵⁹ For one example of the trajectory of this antagonism in the 19th century, see Matalas, *op. cit.* Quite interestingly, between the first and final draft of this paper, this antagonism once again became salient. The Greek Church has challenged the Patriarchate's prerogatives regarding the election of bishops in the dioceses of the "New Territories." See the Greek daily press of November and December 2003.

⁶⁰ The Patriarchate did not recognize the self-proclamation of the Autocephalous. It "declared" the Greek Church autocephalous in 1850.

Patriarch to become a prisoner in his own city, much as the Pope has been forced by the Italian state to be a prisoner in Rome ever since 1870? For these reasons, the Patriarchate did not wish to yield all of its authority over the dioceses of the New Territories, Crete and the Dodecanese to the COG even after the Greek defeat in the Greek-Turkish war of 1922. The appearance of national borders had progressively dispossessed it of most of its territories, and therefore of its influence.

On the contrary, the European integration process following 1989 set up a new framework, more favorable to the Patriarchate. The perspective of an enlargement to Eastern and South-eastern Europe helps reinforce the Patriarchate's prestige and sphere of influence, especially since the breakup of the Soviet Union has set a number of Orthodox Churches free from the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. This has been, for instance; the case of Estonia and Georgia. It is now the COG's turn to fear the evolution of integration on a supranational level. The Greek state aims at being the pilot country of the integration in southeastern Europe. Might not it be tempted to abandon the COG and get closer to the Patriarchate in order to reinforce its position? Moreover, who would be the representative of the Orthodox in the European Union? The Greek Church or the Patriarchate? All these questions demonstrate the instability of the balance of power within the ecclesiastical field.

A new leader had to be found, in a new context and within a new social audience. This is a period of potential internal strife and disunion, the Church's worse enemy, particularly given the fact that the dynamics of disunion were already present. A group of Hieronymist⁶¹ ex-bishops has filed a complaint against the COG with the Greek supreme administrative court: the Council of State. The plaintiffs demanded the recovery of their metropolitan Sees, claiming the illegality of their deposition by the Archbishop Seraphim Tikkas during the last phase of the dictatorship. The plenum of the Council of State was supposed to deliver a decision during the summer of 1993. Given this interference of secular Justice in Church affairs, the Synod had to acquire the support of the legislator in order to shield itself from further intrusions of this type. Contrary to the *locus communis* assertion, the Church is aware of the complications which may arise given its legal status within the Greek State. The Hieronymist case is a good demonstration of the potential consequences of non-separation, especially if we consider that the legislator is solicited by other actors (external and internal) to abolish the COG's monopolistic status.

⁶¹ Supporters of Mgr. Hieronymous, Metropolitan of Athens during the Papadopoulos' period of the dictatorship (1967-1973), who was replaced by Seraphim during Ioannidis' dictatorship and was *in fine* maintained in his function by Caramanlis after the restoration of democracy in 1974.

Putting discourse into sociological context: What is a conservative renewal?

As Pierre Bourdieu has put it, modern Churches function somewhat like businesses,⁶² a business that does not speak its name, but a business all the same, with a gradually dropping subscriber rate and a steadily growing occasional client rate whose fidelity depends upon the Church's monopolistic status alone. Furthermore, the COG's personnel are numerous but usually not very well-trained, gradually attracted by a centrifugal doubt, and quite ill-prepared to deal with competition. The end of the protectionist period of the Greek state and the arrival of an era of merchandising and free competition in the symbolic goods market has been the COG's nightmare ever since the foundation of the Greek state.

This is especially true during the periods when the "national market" becomes elastic (when Greek society expanded or was deeply modified, the best example being the 1912-1930 period). This competition could be fatal given that the competitors are often better equipped and used in this game. Max Weber stated that a Church is an organization claiming the monopoly of the goods of salvation. The COG could agree with this statement under one condition: the addition of "within a specific territory." For the COG, the current constitutional system had and has to last, because it guaranteed the Church a monopoly. This status provides it with a clientele, otherwise tempted by the competitors. Concomitantly, this allows the Church the time necessary to invest society and become competitive. Paraphrasing Bourdieu, we could note that "by a curious inversion of ends and means, what appears to be a battle over the orthodox unity of the Greeks in the case of the 'identity cards', is in fact a battle over the positions that allow the Church to maintain its clientele and thus exercise its influence upon the orthodox unity of the Greeks."⁶³

However, the COG does understand the importance of the fundamental changes in the legal framework taking place within the European Union. The Church's aggressive discourse towards Europeans in a period when Greece has been criticized on several occasions for its treatment of religious minorities, and when Orthodoxy is becoming the regular object of mockery and assaults, disappeared when the Orthodox Churches manage to obtain a status of recognition within the Community. In fact, the EU-Orthodox dialog began in 1996 and, surprise, surprise!, during the second dialog of 1997, the Greek Church was

⁶² Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1994, p. 215-218.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 215, (our translation in English).

represented by Metropolitan Christodoulos. The same Metropolitan, who upon his election as Archbishop in 1998, finally opened an office representing the COG in Brussels, almost 20 years after the accession act.

Therefore, once the COG was ensured of the probable constitutional *status quo* and the EU's benevolent collaboration, it abandoned the identity card issue. The end of that issue in 2000 compared to the one in 1993 reminds us of Marx's paraphrase of Hegel: "History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce."⁶⁴

As W. Reinhardt has suggested concerning the role of nepotism in the 17th century papal state, "*it would be naïve to believe that it disappeared because of the attacks of a progressive élite. It disappeared because its latent function within the papal system – i.e. allowing the pope to act as a decision-maker while protecting him from the strife of Roman family fractions – became obsolete. The institution disappeared, the practice continued.*"⁶⁵

In our case, isn't it naïve to believe that the identity card issue, which had lasted since 1993, vanished just because the Greek President declared it to?⁶⁶ Could a case involving the Archbishop's prestige and having mobilized the Church apparatus in the petition process be halted instantly by a single declaration. Or couldn't the Church's discourse on identity cards fulfill a latent function within the Church? Is it possible that the acceptable resolution of other issues renders this "crisis" useless? Let us thus examine the other points of contact between the State and the Church during this period.

Putting the pressure on the Greek government regarding the possible liberalization of the symbolic goods' market, lobbying and fund-raising within the EU have been the main axes of the COG's action during the period at hand. The discourse has often been very aggressive, but this should not surprise those who keep in mind the aforementioned tensions within the Church. The Church's renewal and innovation efforts can only be fruitful and accepted by the most hostile elements of the institution if they seem to be as directly attached to tradition as possible.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See the opening lines of Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York, International Publishers, 1964 [1852].

⁶⁵ Cf. R. Descimon's "Introduction," p. 6 to W. Reinhard, *Papauté, confessions, modernité*, Paris, EHESS, 1998 [1975], and particularly "Nepotisme," p. 68-98.

⁶⁶ This is the case of many writers, including Alivizatos, Diamandouros, Mouzelis, Sotirelis, etc.

⁶⁷ As Halbwachs has noted in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, it is an error to believe that people accept, and can easily accept, innovations, since they have not experienced the results of this innovation. Therefore, a successful innovation has to appear as non-innovative as possible. A Church is the archetype of an institution

It is no secret that an ecclesiastic reformer's nightmare consists in being accused of being a heretic. Christodoulos' aggressive discourse is the symmetrical institutional counterweight to his renewal of the Church. The fact that he was slapped by an Orthodox zealot in connection with the Pope's visit to Athens should not surprise us. We should keep in mind that a fanatic barber attacked Archbishop Chrysostomos in 1924 in front of the Metropolitan temple. He wanted to shave the Archbishop in order to protest against the instauration of the new revised Calendar. Although Chrysostomos' discourses regarding the Uniats⁶⁸ were not particularly kind, this did not prevent him from being called a "papist."⁶⁹

In our case, the COG has clearly decided to improve its relations with the Catholic Church for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it must avoid being the victim of a drastic amplification of the relations between the Patriarchate and Rome. Secondly, the European integration process requires a stronger collaboration among Churches in order to lobby successfully within the EU. Informal meetings of Church representatives are organized on the eve of every European summit much in the same way as meetings of trade union representatives are. Christian Churches have lobbied together as regards the draft of the European Constitution. They have also cooperated in terms of defining a role for church volunteer/charity activities within the EU. Nevertheless, the same Greek Church which has been developing these innovating activities, surprises us every now and then by upholding particularly conservative and intolerant views.

Why does a renovating party have to side with or tolerate the conservative elements of the Church? A provocative answer would be: "Blame it on secularization." In fact, a detailed analysis of the Church's network and the exact positions and dispositions of the Church's agents and organizations would be necessary, in order to answer this question precisely. But if we proceed by analogy, we can observe what happened when the COG underwent its most serious transformation in the 1920's. Under the combined pressure of the social chaos of the post-war era, the diminishing number of faithful, and the reformist camp,

where this theorem is regularly verified. Another attitude is that of the heralds of "novelty," "reform" and "change," so characteristic of Modernity as Blumenberg has depicted. In their case Lampedusa's famous phrase: "If we want everything to remain as it is, it will be necessary for everything to change" applies.

⁶⁸ The Uniats were, and still are, priests of Catholic faith using the Orthodox ritual. Mostly trained in the Pontifical Oriental Institute, they have been a source of conflict among the Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church especially since Leon XIII's encyclical *Apostolicae Curae* of 1897, which aimed at developing the missionary activities of the Catholic Church. It coincided with the reform of the St. Athanasius Greek College in Rome.

⁶⁹ The editorials and chronicles of the Church periodical *Ecclesia* from 1923 to 1930 are particularly constant and eloquent in this matter.

the COG proceeded to develop a social network capable of securing a new legitimacy for the Church. This network was entrusted not to clerics but to laymen, the only ones capable of a new spirit within the Church. But their legitimacy within the Church was fragile. Moreover, they had to oppose similar efforts of “proselytism” by other social groups (i.e. political parties, missionaries, voluntary associations etc.). Therefore, those who succeeded were those who developed a specific, morally conservative discourse that discredited opponents outside the Church while guaranteeing for themselves tolerance on behalf of the Church’s original possessors of legitimacy, i.e. the clerics.

The Greek Church is unquestionably treated as an ideological monolith by analyses merely based on what is perceived as an archaic discourse. Instead, much could be learned through the comprehensive analysis of its relation to the state as one of antagonistic interdependence, linked to its proper internal equilibrium of tensions, as M. Bax,⁷⁰ inspired by N. Elias, has put it. The Greek State has indeed mobilized the “orthodox” resource in order to ensure its legitimacy on several occasions. Simultaneously, the Greek secular clergy has depended upon the State in order to establish a centralized and hierarchical organization of the Church. Despite this cooperation, antagonism may arise whenever the delimitation of their respective social intervention fields is at stake, especially given the growing importance of social intervention for the Church. Let us thus make a rapid and non-exhaustive overview of this case during our period.

The importance of praxis: The Welfare Church

As we have seen, European integration has been perceived as a threat for the Church’s monopoly. Therefore, its agents are obliged to react and develop strategies allowing them to remain “competitive” in a “free” religious market.

We will examine a few aspects of this activity. The Greek Church has not always been very active on the social level in modern times. In fact, the Church’s charity action clearly gets moving only after WWI. It developed considerably during the inter-war period.

⁷⁰ Mart Bax, “Marian apparitions in Medjugorje: Rivalling religious regimes and state-formation in Yugoslavia,” in Eric Wolf (ed.), *Religious regimes and State-Formation*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1991, p. 29-55.

But most importantly, it has become legitimate and intrinsically choice-worthy for the Church to do charity.

We must acknowledge that a new phase of development has started since 1998. It is interesting to note, in the first place, that while Mgr Christodoulos was about to be elected and Church-State relations were not at their best, law 2646/1998 was passed. Article 8 of the law confirms that the Church is a *de jure* member of the Greek Council of Social Welfare, thus reaffirming all previous legislation that acknowledged the Church's role in this field. At the same time, while the Church gave up the battle over identity cards, law n° 2873 of December 28, 2000 increased the tax-free limit on donations to the Church from about 300 euros to 3000 euros. These are not pure coincidences. All over Europe can be noticed an increasing involvement of religious organizations in the development of their charity and welfare networks, while the public welfare systems are being dismantled and progressively privatized.

A visit to the Church's website helps understand not only the new impetus given to charity work and volunteer movements but also the theoretical and political implications of this activity regarding the future of the nation-state. Blumenberg has described how Patristic Christianity adopted certain premises of Greek philosophy by de-legitimizing its claim to autonomous development.⁷¹ In a similar movement, the Greek Church has adopted all the modernizing postulates of civil society, decentralization and privatization of the welfare sector, by proclaiming the Christian origin of the tradition of voluntary organizations and philanthropy.⁷² Its claim is not always historically accurate but after all, is it not true that the most pertinent concept in European jargon is borrowed directly from Catholic social theory?⁷³

Social action within a new institutional equilibrium where the Welfare state comes under attack in the name of "subsidiarity," thus becomes the Church's new hobby. New, but of course "traditional." This turn authorizes specific developments within the Church:

⁷¹ The philosophers having taken their knowledge from Moses, thus not having invented a thing. See H. Blumenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 11-120.

⁷² The articles of Georges Dellas available in Greek and English in the Church's website <http://www.ecclesia.gr> are completely representative of this tendency. We should suggest at this point the importance of the ambiguity in Greek and in English of the use of the word *volunteer*. The French language uses two words, both of Latin origin: *volontaire* and *bénévole*, to render the difference between what is done "by free will" (i.e. "under no constraint") and what is done "by free will and for no reward." In English and Greek, this distinction is not made.

⁷³ A reference to the notion of "subsidiarity," which developed as a concept under Leon XIII (1878-1903) and especially Pie XI (1922-1939).

- the development of a philanthropic and redistributive network facilitates the central authority's (i.e. the Synod) intervention in the affairs of local actors. A crucial point, if we consider that the COG has always been a very loose federal structure lacking a particularly efficient centralized bureaucracy;
- the development of such a network provides the Church with a bureaucracy and a network that is dependent upon it for its survival. Therefore, there is a network which has a strategic interest in defending the Church.

We will illustrate these two points with two examples taken from recent developments. In the first case, we will consider the Synod's decision to implement a "family planning" policy in Thrace since Christodoulos' arrival in power in 1998.⁷⁴ An allocation currently of 120 euros per month has been granted to Orthodox families having a third child. Such a systematic redistributive policy is a break from the Church's traditional functioning. Ordinary charity work is normally assumed by each Metropolitan on an independent local level. Extraordinary appeals to a regional or national solidarity effort have, undoubtedly, always been possible in the event of an earthquake or some disaster but remain a specifically limited event.

On the contrary, the allocation of a regular family subsidy requires funding from sources outside the Thracian metropolitans jurisdiction. The only institution that can intervene beyond a metropolitan's jurisdiction is the Synod of the COG. Therefore, it is not surprising that five years after launching the program, the Synod published the Encyclical n° 2768 of April 4, 2003. Considering that the program has been a "success," and that this "success" justifies pursuit of the program, the Synod tackled the financial question. The growing "success" means an increasing financial burden and thus the need for new resources. Therefore the Synod decided to "tax" three kinds of income-sources under specific conditions:

- General Poor Funds of each and every Metropolitan See;
- Monasteries and the holy pilgrimage foundations;
- wealthiest parishes of each Metropolitan See.

The way this third income-source is organized is exemplary. The Synod has decided that the 10 wealthiest parishes (the "central" ones) of the Sees of Athens and Thessaloniki (20 in all), as well as 10 other parishes of the Attica See will participate in this fundraising.

⁷⁴ Thrace is a region located on Greece's border with Turkey. It has a high percentage of Muslims since it is inhabited by the Slavic-speaking "Pomakoi" and mostly by an important Turkish-speaking minority. Due to immigration (Thrace is the poorest region of Greece) and Greece's low birthrate, discourse about the progressive de-Hellenization of the region flourished in the nineties.

Moreover, each medium-sized Metropolitan See “supplies” 3 parishes, and small-sized ones participate with one parish. The procedure allows the Synod to intervene directly in the financial aspects of intermediary-level and local-level bodies and reinforces its role as a centralizing agent within the Church. In the meantime, the Metropolitan’s role in the hierarchical pyramid of the Church has once again been reinstated, as has regularly been the case since the Church decided to become an administrator of society in the 1920’s.

Becoming an administrator of society requires implementing programs and recruiting staff. But sometimes personnel recruitment may be even more fundamental, because it guarantees that a number of followers have a strategic interest in defending the Church. We will examine the importance of summer camps for the COG, one of the oldest activities:

Fig. 2 Summer camp statistics in Greece (1992)

	Camps	Participants	Budget
Total	79	86,992	8,751 (Million drs)
State	28 (35%)	12,051 (14%)	844 M. (9.6%)
Church	34 (43%)	13,600 (15.6%)	1,800 M. (20,5%)

Source: Diptycha of the Church of Greece 1980-2000.

Now, authors who cite these numbers usually settle for describing the importance of the Church in terms of volume.⁷⁵ On the contrary, what we would like to point out is the disproportion of volumes in terms of budget and facilities. The COG, as well as the Greek state, has numerous camps for relatively few and approximately equal number of participants. Although they administer almost 80% of the facilities, they only have 30% of the participants. Yet the COG’s budget is twice that of the Greek government’s! Does the number of camps (43% of the total for 15.6% of the participants) explain this? It is likely. The inflationist tendency in terms of camps may be explained by the fact that law 1700/1987 regarding the Church’s domain specified that all Ecclesiastical lands used for its philanthropic activity were not subject to potential nationalization. And this tendency has not been reversed, since in 2001, the COG opened 68 summer camps.⁷⁶

More camps mean more staff and therefore greater expenses. This generates a discourse requesting more financial support for the Church both from individuals and public

⁷⁵ It is notably the case of the works presented by Georges Dellas of the University of Athens in the Church’s website, www.ecclesia.gr regarding welfare.

⁷⁶ Church of Greece Interior Mission Service, *The Testimony of Love (I Martyria tis agapis)*, Athens, Apostoliki Diakonia, 2002, p. 39, (in Greek).

authorities. This discourse, which cannot be self-legitimized solely by reference to financial needs, has thus to express itself in terms of a “real” social demand: the need for social cohesion within a society under tension; the need for social equality as the Welfare state is being completely revisited and income gaps are becoming more visible. But this need is explained in terms of a religious framework, which is part of the Church’s “repertory”⁷⁷ of discourses: social distress is a consequence of man’s estrangement from God.

The apparent oxymoron in this case is that the need for Church development is directly proportionate to man’s estrangement from God, i.e. to man’s diminishing interest in the Church. Therefore, the decrease of Church members may as well be collateral to an increase in better trained and more active Church personnel. Let us reconsider the Sunday school statistics and the way this might work:

Fig. 3 Sunday school statistics of the COG (1980-2000)

	1980	1990	2000
Teachers	5,346	4,344 (-18,7%)	3,942 (-9,3%)
Students	335,483	255,408 (-23,8%)	198,590 (-22,2%)

Source: Diptycha of the Church of Greece 1980-2000.

Now, we note that although the steady downward trend in student influx has not been reversed, the number of teachers is no longer decreasing at the same rate. The 1/60 professor/student ratio in 1980 has become a 1/50 ratio in 2000.

Pursuing this angle, we espouse H. Blumenberg’s criticism of the quantitativist illusion of the secularization paradigm. There are fewer faithful, but more church personnel and church activities, just as social scientists have observed for many Christian churches in the XIXth and XXth centuries. The identity card “crisis” indicates a shift in strategy and a new drive in this direction. Can we seriously talk about a crisis and a “defeat” when we consider Encyclical 224 of February 11, 2002 on the welfare activities that the Church proposes to develop with the agreement of the Greek state and financed by the 3rd Community Support program:

⁷⁷ In Mikhail Bakhtine’s terms. *L’œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au moyen âge et sous la renaissance*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970.

Fig. 4 COG subsidiary welfare propositions for EU financial support (2000-2006)

	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total Cost
Child care units	40	132,000 €	5,280,000 €
Open Centers for treatment of the disabled	6	734,000 €	4,404,000 €
Senior citizens' Tele-alarm networks	2	500,000 €	1,000,000 €
Network of preventive medical and psychological action for the youth	40	100,000 €	4,000,000 €
Integrated Complete Social Security centers	4	1,500,000 €	6,000,000 €
Renovation of Geriatric institution	20	800,000 €	16,000,000 €
Renovation of Psychiatric & special needs units	8	800,000 €	6,400,000 €
Pilot Childhood and Women abuse centers	2	2,900,000 €	5,800,000 €
Total			48,884,000 €

Given the fact that these propositions are not exhaustive, they are nevertheless substantial. The 3rd Community support program (2000-2006) is supposed to attribute 385 millions euros (1,7 of the total package) for health and welfare measures.⁷⁸ The COG's part would be almost 13% of this package, notwithstanding the financial support to other church projects. Will the Church obtain this package?

The development of the Church's network, in compliance with current theories about the assumption of welfare policies by "private" actors, is not just supposed to strengthen the ties of the "flock" to the Church, but also contributes to strengthening the ties of the Church and Church personnel. More than 60% of Church welfare institutions are managed by clergymen. 53% of the managers have a theology degree.⁷⁹ All this personnel is definitely more eager to support the Church in its battles, as Bourdieu has shown with regard to the French Catholic Church.⁸⁰ However, this personnel is also more inclined to adopting an aggressive attitude towards other social competitors in a "free market," as the Uniat/Orthodox school battle of the 1920's has shown.

⁷⁸ EU figures.

⁷⁹ Church of Greece Interior Mission Service, *op. cit.*, p. 320-321.

⁸⁰ P. Bourdieu, "Genèse et structure du champ religieux," *op. cit.*

CONCLUSION: TENTATIVE REMARKS AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS

The Church now stresses the importance of more effective and useful action of a substantial leading minority, rather than the passive allegiance of the whole. But at the same time it has become dependent on the structural tendency of this minority to adopt aggressive strategies and a conservative religious discourse in a free-trade environment. These are the characteristics of a conservative renewal. On an external level, the Greek state having used “religion” as a necessary resource by which to define its citizens during the 1830-1930 period, it became dependent upon the Church. On the other hand, the Church is dependent upon the State. Indeed, the latter guarantees the existence of a closed market of symbolic goods. The Greek legal framework is very protectionist in terms of denominational liberty. While anticipating the probable removal of legal barriers regarding the functioning of this market due to European integration, the COG has started building a new network of alliances including the Catholic Church and counterbalancing the Ecumenical Patriarchate. At the same time, it has played upon the identity card issue in order to gain time and a competitive edge in bargaining with the state.

Is it a case of orthodox nationalism? Definitely not. As N. Elias would have put it, it looks more like a case of interdependent antagonism among institutions and actors trying to obtain the indispensable allegiance of the society in which they act and exist. For the COG, the main problem is its relation within the orthodox community, not with the non-orthodox. The simultaneous integration of other Orthodox countries and Turkey within a supranational EU poses the problem of the supreme Orthodox authority. Just as Southeastern Europe passed from an imperial to a national era in the 19th century, the Greek State had to deal with two different religious regimes: the COG and the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Finally, the former was preferred to the latter. Nowadays the dynamics have been reversed. As Southeastern Europe prepares to integrate the European Union in the 21st century, Greek economic and political circles intend to play a leading role in this process. In this case, Greek politicians seem to prefer the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a symbol of supranational unity. The COG seems to have perceived the threat.

Is there a clash of civilizations? Not between Latin-Catholic and Greek-Orthodox Europe in any case. Never before have relations between the COG and the Roman Catholic Church been so good. The draft European Constitution has provided a formidable impetus to launch discussions among the major Christian Churches to present a common front and obtain a reference to Christianity. Old networks have been reactivated. New lobbying

strategies have been adopted. Common positions among religious leaders in European foreign policy or welfare policy issues are nowadays frequent.

Is there a clash of civilizations regarding Islam? Even though the GOC still upholds a very conservative attitude as regards the freedom of *institutionalized* worship exercised in Greece, this is not so for individual freedom of worship. In a recent speech, Archbishop Christodoulos even expressed his support for the Muslim girls in France who wish to wear the veil. He manifested his hostility to the new bill recently drafted by the French government on this issue.⁸¹ This attitude should not surprise us. As we saw in this article, ever since the 19th century, Christianity's main enemy has been the "loss of faith." It seems, and future research should help us illustrate this, that the Greek Church has more to fear from the potential "spillover" of plans for a drastic, French-inspired separation of Church and State (for example in the European constitution) than from the existence of substantial Muslim minorities in Europe. Will the motto be: "Clerics of the world unite?"

⁸¹ *Eleftherotypia*, January 22nd, 2004.

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