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# Nationalism and religion: Historical aspects of the relationship

*Ioanni Kyriakantonakis*

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# NATIONALISM AND RELIGION: HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP

*Ioannis Kyriakantonakis*

Abstract: Religion and nationalism are conventionally considered as the forces par excellence that have shaped, respectively, the traditional and modern worlds. This article presents the eclectic affinities between religion and nationalism, but it also goes beyond the historical dichotomy of religious pre-modernity versus nationalist modernity. It suggests that their relationship is not one-dimensional, rejecting the idea that nationalism is constructed solely with modern fabrics while religion only relates to the context of traditional society. Rather, it argues that the relationship between tradition and modernity is a dynamic one; this builds on a methodological framework that makes use of varied and even opposing theories of nationalism. The relationship is studied in different national and confessional contexts and eras, but it is mainly the association of Greek ethnicity/nationalism and Orthodox Christianity that provides the empirical evidence for the theoretical argumentation.

## *A Theoretical Outline*

The relationship between religion and nationalism can be examined in two schematic, conventional ways. On the one hand, it may be considered in a positive way, viewing religion as a defining, cementing element of national identity; on the other, it might be taken negatively, stressing the destruction of the religious ecumenical order,[1] or of the "imagined community" of the church (in the case of Christianity), as a consequence of and, at the same time, presupposing an emerging loyalty to the nation. In the latter case, one can also refer to internal developments within Christianity with groundbreaking political and ideological implications. This article mainly discusses the branches of Christianity and the ways that nations existed through cultural, dogmatic and ideological substrata – how modernity emerged from traditional society by incorporating previous languages and old meanings into new contexts and modern historical circumstances. In some cases ruptures and breaks with tradition occurred, while in several other cases continuities were more visible.

[1] Roger G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 49–52.

After all, it is the dialogue between continuity and change that constitutes the essence of the course of history and its philosophies.

Nationalism and religion are complex subjects of historical sociology that permeate each other in various ways depending on the historical context. Here, we may follow Eric Hobsbawm's acknowledgement that their relationship can be elusive and diverse, "certainly resisting simple generalization".[2] Reducing national and religious identity to a relationship of general and specific – whereby religion would be a constituent part of a whole (national identity), always playing an instrumental role – would be in a sense short-sighted, despite the fact that religion played this role to a significant extent in several historical cases. In the same way, we should doubt the existence of a clear-cut dichotomy in historical sociology distinguishing between religious pre-modernity and the secular modernity of the era of nationalism.

Hobsbawm argued that the relationship between religion and national identity became operational when nationalism evolved into a powerful movement and ideology, and not during its initial stage, when it was confined to a minority movement of pioneers and disciples (intellectuals, merchants, bourgeois).[3] From a Weberian perspective, this assessment could be viewed as a plausible Marxist hypothesis, which reserves to religion the instrumental role within a political and economic system of authority that is expected in such an approach. The structure of this proposition is that of an ideal type – a non-restrictive analysis of religion and the church as grand repositories of symbols, cults, rites and sacred icons.[4] These repositories, an immense concentration of meaning and a renowned method of communication through rituals, were not disregarded by nationalism; on the contrary, they were integrated in the "imagined community" that came to replace the old one.[5] Nationalism, though in several of its aspects a revolutionary movement, did not renounce ancestral rites and the idea of sacred faith; ecclesiastical authorities accepted the nation as a convenient or necessary partner in order to reinstate religion in the circumstances of modernity and to

[2] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 71.

[3] Ibid., pp. 67–68.

[4] See also Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 193.

[5] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 68, 71–72. Anderson proposed that nationalism "has to be understood by aligning it […] with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being." See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1995, p. 12.

perpetuate in this way its significance in shaping "fraternities and affinities of men, who, otherwise would not have so much in common".[6]

A relevant question could be addressed in the present context: whether and in what sense nationalism constituted a religion, a cult in its own right, and whether it required and thus introduced its own "theology". In several cases of national emancipation, national churches were established, but according to Benedict Anderson, nationalism also constituted a version of soteriology, and responded to humankind's drive for salvation. Indeed, nationalism had its own rites and festivals and relied on its martyrs, who had suffered for the nation (and, perhaps, simultaneously for their religious faith); this "religion" also had a kind of "priesthood", consisting of an intelligentsia gifted with a particular charisma or "revelation" and prone to utter the "prophecies" of nationalism. Above all, nationalism responded to the quest for salvation and constituted "a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning" and "chance into destiny".[7] However, contrary to religious (mainly Christian) dogmas, nationalism did not claim an ecumenical truth and revelation. By definition, it had to exclude the vast majority of the human race from its rites and prophecies, which were usually the privileged realm of a chosen people.[8]

It has been pointed out that religion was linked to the nation within a concrete historical context, a social reality remote from most of its pre-modern metaphysical features.[9] It is difficult to argue that the old sacred communities of Christianity continued to exist in the same way after the emergence of nationalism, perpetuating their sense of uninterrupted time and identity. On the other hand, the Ecumenical Church was also a historical construct, and in reality, schisms and ecclesiastical discords had prevailed since the Middle Ages. Still, the (canonically) legitimised breakup of the church into several national churches should be regarded as an ideological development of fundamental

[6] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 68.

[7] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 11–12, Carlton J.H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion*, New York: Macmillan, 1960, pp. 15, 16, 18.

[8] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 176. Judaism is, of course, a distinct case and the idea of a chosen people derived from its religious discourses, cf. Anthony Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, particularly chaps. 3 and 4; Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 1, *Israel and Revelation*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001; Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, 1985, p. 71f.

[9] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 27–28.

significance.[10] Moreover, Anderson has suggested that the nation, "as an imagined community", was not a mere substitution of previous religious communities and dynastic states, but a dramatic change of worldview, which is relevant to radically novel conceptions of time and the reconceptualisation of history as a linear sequence of causes and consequences as well as evolutionary stages.[11] This relatively schematic and unhistorical analysis of the emergence of modernity as an estrangement from previous modes of thought focuses on phenomena of secularisation. Anderson's secular time can be related to his comparison between the language of truth and revelation of the church and the several vernaculars of "the era of printed capitalism" which led to nationalism. Language, like time, lost its metaphysical aspect, or rather what was abandoned was the conviction that only a sacred language ensures knowledge of God's word.[12]

The translation of the Gospel became a critical cultural presupposition of nationalism, not only because it provided vernaculars with an elevated status, but also because it was an important aspect of the Reformation, which, it could be argued, contributed significantly to the demise of traditional religious communities.[13] The Reformation essentially abolished the church and the sacraments and replaced them with individual access to God's word through the Bible (*sola scriptura*).[14] Textual authority, the resulting legalistic spirit (similar to that in Judaism), the undermining of ecclesiastical mediation and the transformation of religion into a

[10] However, since the Middle Ages, a number of doctrinal schisms have been attributed to the distinct character of ethnic groups. For example, the filioque controversy, that is, the addition to the Creed of the double procession of the Holy Spirit (from the Father and the Son), was regarded by Byzantine and even Roman theologians as a "Frankish novelty" relating to simplified views that the Franks held on Christian dogma. Other heresies, such as Arianism and Monophysitism, were also identified with concrete ethnicities and geographical regions; see John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1983, pp. 91–101; Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 220ff, 426–428, 439–444.

[11] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 22, 36, 194. Perhaps the concept of the "discovery of history", or of historical consciousness, would not be accepted by scholars of intellectual history such as Arnaldo Momigliano, who argued in favour of continuity in traditions of history writing, suggesting that ecclesiastical history in fact influenced the emergence of modern historical science: see *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 132–156.

[12] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 14–15.

[13] Ibid., pp. 39, 40; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 51, 53–54; Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 35–65.

[14] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Unwin, 1965, pp. 104–105, 123.

code of practical moral precepts and duties are some of the elements that may be relevant to a study in the sociology of religion in the era of nationalism.

Max Weber did not explicitly refer to the nation and nationalism in his essay on the Protestant ethic.[15] But other authors, such as Liah Greenfeld, have clearly stressed Protestantism and the Reformed faith as critical factors in the birth of nationalism. Apart from England, where Protestant and national causes initially intermingled, it appears in general that nationalism and national identity could not emerge ex nihilo as radical rifts that disregarded preexistent cultural structures and persisting religious allegiances of ethnic groups.[16] The theory of types of nationalism, that is, of Western and Eastern models, posits those preexisting elements of culture as the causes of distinct roads to modernity, and it thus highlights religion as a decisive factor in the formation of either a secular/rational nationalism (if such a species ever existed), or an "organic" and ethnic version characterised by elements of mystique.[17]

Rationalisation is indeed central to the assessment of the position of religion within a modern society, in comparison to its influence during the Middle Ages or antiquity. Weber analysed the disenchantment of the world due to bureaucratic systems of legitimate authority, the routinisation of charisma and the rationalisation of religion. He traced the origins of these historical processes to the emergence of prophecy as a consistent religious plan, part of broader godly providence revealed to a chosen people only; he also cited the idea of religion as a normative and moral system, the observation of which was the only means of salvation.[18] Later on, Jewish-type legalism re-emerged in the context of puritan moralism, which Weber related to the spirit of capitalism and the rational plan in enterprises and offices that constituted the core of modernity.

Rationalisation as a historical phenomenon did not escape the attention of authors interested in the emergence of nationalism in "God's firstborn"

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[15] Weber's perception of social reality as *essentially symbolic* is of primary importance for theories on nations and nationalism. Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, pp. 17, 18; for a more complex interpretation of social reality, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 2, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, pp. 394–398, 921–926.

[16] Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, New York: Blackwell, 1988, pp. 24, 35.

[17] Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 139, 141–142, 146; Hans Kohn, "Western and Eastern Nationalism", in *Nationalism*, ed. Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 165. For a critical approach to theories of civic/Western and Eastern nationalisms, see Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

[18] Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, pp. 117–118, 123.

nation, sixteenth-century England.[19] And the significance of the concept and self-image of a chosen people received extensive comments from scholars working according to the ethno-symbolic approach that insisted on religious self-depictions of ethnic groups, long before the emergence of nationalism as a basic element of modernity.[20]

## *Chosen Peoples*

Ethnic or early national[21] history was very often identified with religious or ecclesiastical history. In some cases, constitutive myths of descent referred to heroic ancestors who were also the founding fathers of religious congregations.[22] The case of the Jews is, of course, the most characteristic.[23] According to Anthony Smith, Jewish people indicate the significance of religion as a condition of ethnic persistence; that is, religion is instrumental in the formation of national identity, mainly through ancient symbols, memories and myths. Ethnic entities have thus survived through religious customs and rites. In the case of Christianity, they existed in congregations, ritual communities of the Eucharist centred around bishops. Smith has analysed the way in which ethnic groups preserved their identities and the reasons for which some of them managed to survive whereas others vanished.[24] His analysis is not confined to the Jews, but among others, the author mentions the Greeks and the Armenians as examples of peoples who, through the Middle Ages and early modern era, attributed their continuing existence to their churches, particularly when they faced captivity, immigration or exile.[25]

As far as the Greeks are concerned, this idea is very significant. Indeed, it was for the most part through religion and the church's leading role in education,

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[19] Greenfield, *Five Roads to Modernity*, chap. 1. For a critical view on Greenfeld's and other modernist approaches, see Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood*, p. 89.

[20] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, p. 58.

[21] From a historical perspective, the term "ethnic" may raise some questions. It is not clear whether the distinction of ethnies to nations is historically grounded, in the sense that historical peoples do not seem to have conceived of it. In general, there is a conceptual confusion of terms such as national identity, nationalism, ethnicity and ethnie that should not be overlooked: Anthony Smith, "Nationalism: A Trend Report and Bibliography", *Current Sociology* 11 (1973), 25–26: Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 21–46.

[22] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, pp. 64, 131–132.

[23] Several Greek neomartyrs were canonised by the church, but their sufferings at the hands of the Turks also made them symbols of early (and later) Greek patriotism. See Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 121–164.

[24] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, p. 60.

[25] Ibid., p. 128, 134.

ideology and communal life (ethnarchy) that Hellenism was preserved as a distinct cultural entity vis-à-vis the Ottomans.[26] Linguistic differentiation shared a similar role, but when it comes to the masses of the Greek rural population, historical evidence indicates that religion's cohesive power was far stronger.[27] The idea of linguistic purity as a kind of essence of a nation was part of a classicist vision projected by intellectuals of the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century romanticism, although it was not unknown to Greek intellectuals of previous centuries.[28]

Smith approached medieval and early modern national identity as cultural patterns centred on religion. Indeed, he argued that it was only after the adoption of Christianity that Hellenism acquired a unifying "moral pattern"; this developed after the schism between the Latin and Orthodox churches and particularly after the Latin atrocities of 1204 and the experience of the subsequent Venetian and "Frankish" rule in Greece.[29] In the face of the expansionist policies

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[26] One should of course focus on who was Greek (Hellene) and on the identity that this name (or its alternatives Romios and Graikos) referred to from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. These questions are relevant to the definition and history of the nation as well as to early modern Greek concepts of ethnicity. Obviously, collective consciousness depends on historical circumstances. Historians have addressed these questions repeatedly, but it seems that a unanimously held view on Greek identity cannot be provided to students of nationalism. The relevant historical context was approached in rather politicised and ideological ways and in my opinion few works could partially shed light on it. See Athanasios D. Angelou, "'Who am I?' Scholarios' Answers and the Hellenic Identity", in *Φιλέλλην: Studies in honour of Robert Browning*, ed. Costas Constantinides, Nikolaos Panagiotakes, Elizabeth Jeffreys, Athanasios Angelou, Venice: Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1996, pp. 1–19. Dimitris Livanios, "Pride, Prudence and the Fear of God: The Loyalties of Alexander and Nicholas Mavrocordatos (1664–1730)", *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review* 7 (2000), 1–22. Livanios approached the question of Greek identity in a rather contested way in his article "The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism and Collective Identities in Greece (1453–1913)", *The Historical Review* 3 (2006), 33–70. Recently, a conference held in Athens by the Department of History of the University of Athens focused on collective identifications of the Greeks: "Έλλην, Ρωμηός, Γραικός: Συλλογικοί προσδιορισμοί και ταυτότητες", Athens, 19–21 January 2017.

[27] Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 410–411.

[28] That is the case of the Phanariots: a purified, archaic Greek language was a constituent of this elite's cultural and political identity: Livanios, "The Loyalties of Alexander and Nicholas Mavrocordatos", pp. 1–18.

[29] The seizure of Constantinople by "the Latins" (the army of the Fourth Crusade and the Venetians) has been proposed as the dramatic incident after which the Byzantine sense of a "Roman" identity changed radically and henceforth revolved around a Greek ethnic community.

of the reformed papacy, the Greeks assumed the role of protecting Orthodoxy, which granted them an elect status and a special cultural and political mission.

The notion of a sacred people endowed with the mission to guard a "true faith" prevailed among ethnic groups, as well as the idea of a God-given or promised land or city (as in the case of the Jews, Greeks or Turks).[30] Many symbols and motifs that later became popular among nationalist intellectuals and poets, such as the adoration of sacred landscapes or cities, had been previously used in popular contexts. The rediscovery of folk traditions (like folk songs) by modern intellectuals in order to serve ideological or educational requirements of newly established nation-states can be assessed as a specific condition of the romantic movement and its quest for articulating national character – a quest that presupposed a return to cultural identities that were based on elements of popular faith and cult. Now the belief in a special revelation, that is, in a special relationship with and assignment by God, is relevant to the notions of national supremacy. In several cases, elect peoples elaborated missionary or crusading programmes, preaching expansion in the name of God either by holy wars or by merely enlightening those "who lived in darkness".[31]

Hobsbawm referred to the role of ideas about salvation and that of religious cult in Russia. There, the image of a holy land and bulwark of Orthodoxy was popular among the masses and was not invented or imposed from above.[32] Orthodoxy and Holy Mother Russia constituted the quintessence of ethnonational identity, together with the vision of the Third Rome, which incorporated a missionary aspect previously attributed to the Byzantine Empire.[33]

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See Stephen G. Xydis, "Mediaeval Origins of Modern Greek Nationalism", *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968), pp. 1–20. Other historical accounts traced this shift in ideology back to the reign of the Comnenian dynasty. For an alternative account of *Romanitas*' persistence, see Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[30] Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, 127, 135. See Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece*, New York: Pella, 1986, pp. 53–72; Robert Shannan Peckham, *National Histories, Natural States: Nationalism and the Politics of Place in Greece*, London: Tauris, 2001, pp. 21–35, 49–60.

[31] Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, pp. 130, 135. It is interesting that this enlightening agenda was pursued by Greek intellectuals of Constantinople during the era of reforms in the Ottoman Empire. In the context of what seems to be a nationalist rhetoric, they assumed an illuminating role among "the peoples of the East". See Germanos Aphthonidis, "Πρόλογος του εκδότου" [Editor's introduction], Athanassios Comnenos-Ypsilantis, *Εκκλησιαστικών και πολιτικών των εις δώδεκα βιβλίον Η΄ Θ΄ και Ι΄ ήτοι Τα Μετά την Άλωσιν* [Books 8-10 from the 12 books on ecclesiastical and political events: the events after the conquest], Constantinople: Vretos, 1870, pp. α΄–λα΄[i-xxxi].

[32] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 50.

[33] Ibid., p. 49.

The Russian land, the sacred icons and the liturgy of the church, but also the tsar and his state, were tangible elements of holiness. In the present context, it is interesting to point out that the dividing line between the religious and national spheres was not clear. The idea of the nation as a bulwark of faith could not be disregarded by intellectuals of the nineteenth century, as the Slavophile movement indicates. The latter reacted to previous reformative efforts of the tsars using motifs of ethnic identity, of the ancient *Rus* counter to the official *Rossiya*.[34]

The important role held by religion in the initial phases of the European nations has also been assessed in the case of what Smith has termed "aristocratic ethnies". In this case, religious elements related mainly to political calculations and the legitimacy of autocratic rulers within a dynastic state.[35]

France exemplifies the practice of deifying a ruling house, through the cult of royal blood and the worship of the most Christian king; originally, he was framed as the protector of the Catholic Church and he later initiated the adoration of his person and France in a fervour that can only be compared to religious devotion. It was this special role and mission of the kings of France within the Catholic world that assured for their people the elevation to a chosen people, similar to the case of their Frankish ancestors, whom the popes hailed as a new kingdom of David.[36] The Capetian kings combined their claim to the Frankish imperial inheritance with the role of those emperors, that is, the defence of the church and papacy. Divine appointment (and right) of the king – the deification of his authority and realm – were manifested in his royal symbol, the fleur de lys, which was also the symbol of the Virgin Mary, as well as in the coronation rite at Reims.[37] Greenfeld has referred to "sacralization by definition", which reaffirmed the direct bond of the king with the Lord Jesus and fused the cult of Mary and the cult of royalty.[38]

The exceptional Catholicism of France permitted its emancipation from the papacy, which was nevertheless expressed and justified in religious terms.

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[34] Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, p. 134. Hobsbawm referred to an essentially demotic and folk perception of the holiness of Russia that was identified with the head of the church. In that respect, the cleavage between official state nationalism and demotic nationalism is interesting. The Russian man remained a *Russky*, whereas no word originating in the vocabulary of *Rossiya*, a neologism established by Peter the Great, succeeded in becoming prevalent as a description of the Russian people. Being Russian was thus identified with the dualism *krestianin-christianin* (peasant-Christian), and with being a member of the Orthodox community. *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 50–51.

[35] Smith, *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, pp. 134, 136.

[36] Ibid., p. 134.

[37] Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, p. 95.

[38] Ibid., pp. 95–96.

The basic argument was that France was more Catholic than the pope, that it constituted a sacred realm and a church in its own right.[39] That is, as in many cases of shaping early national identity, renunciation of faith was unthinkable. Before the Enlightenment and era of revolutions, the world order depended on religious tenets and political ideas were articulated in religious language, taking into account the crucial importance of theological arguments.

By this token, the Hundred Years' War was both a religious conflict and a clash between nations.[40] England became the first modern nation through its essential rivalry with the papacy, because of its identification with a religious community that was distinct and contrary to Rome (and to France and Spain). England's otherness could not, especially in the early stages of its national history, manifest itself in an absolutely innovative and modern way. It had to be intelligible, and apparently the most effective way for such an argument to be accepted was to construct a religious cause and to imagine England as a sacred realm and the stronghold of piety.[41] That is why the Reformed faith became crucial for national identity and England became the Protestant nation.[42] However, the significance of Protestantism in the emergence of nationalism transcended the English case.

The fundamental transformation of Christianity from sacramental religion to rationalised faith bore with it a series of concepts, phenomena and moral and philosophical reflections that shaped the foundation of the modern world.[43] In the context of modernity, nationalism emerged as a result of the reshaping and reorientation of pre-existing values and languages. In this respect, new readings of the Old Testament highlighted the historical role of chosen peoples, on the grounds that the elect took part in a covenant with God, entitled to direct access to His Word.[44] This direct relationship derives intellectually from the substitution of papal supremacy with the authority of the Bible (*sola scriptura*). Protestantism rejected most mediatory ecclesiastical institutions, including metaphysical mediation of the church through the sacraments and the clergy, as well as sacred tradition at large.[45] There was no more a privileged strata regarding otherworldly

[39] Ibid., p. 97.

[40] Ibid., p. 95.

[41] Ibid., p. 63.

[42] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of its Origins and Background*, New York: Macmillan, 1961, pp. 171, 174.

[43] Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, p. 52.

[44] Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, p. 168.

[45] With the significant exception of Augustine: "Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas." Charles Taylor, *The Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*,

issues, and only individual piety (no matter how humble in theological training) could lead to salvation through ascetic and legalistic patterns of life more reminiscent of Judaism than traditional Christianity.

There must be a connection between this religious pattern and the rise of nationalism.[46] In antiquity, Judaism (and sectarianism) was the most fertile cultural ground for ideas of ethnicity to emerge, and these were provocatively similar to nationalism. Accordingly, on the eve and outset of modernity, reformed religion (and revived sectarianism) provided the necessary intellectual vehicle for the spirit of the chosen people, that is, the germ of nationalism. In England this spirit was not collectivist and did not derive from the sacralisation of monarchy, but it was founded on individualism, which led to the elevation of the people to the status of an elite. This exalted position originally depended on the language of the Old Testament, and it was not something that "pious simple men" did not fight for. The existence of some hundreds of martyrs who faced religious persecution from scholastic inquisitors during the reign of Mary was immediately appreciated and functioned to cement a long-term identification between Protestant and national causes.[47] The virtually unprecedented individualism behind their martyrdom, their disregard, even contempt, for theology and complex metaphysics, and their conviction that their dignity as pious simple men entitled them to read and interpret the Bible and speak out against the intellectual pretensions of their oppressors[48] became the symbols of what was later described as a Western, rational type of nationalism. From a theological point of view, such individual interpretations were perhaps simple-minded, having little to do with theology as an intellectual tradition; that is, their metaphysical-philosophical references were ill-founded,[49] being reduced to practical inferences of a legalistic, utilitarian and rationalised nature. This break with metaphysics became very important for the secularised English version

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Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 129 and 127–142. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, pp. 104–105.

[46] "The three main ideas of Hebrew nationalism dominated the consciousness of [Cromwell's] period: The Chosen people idea, the Covenant, the Messianic expectancy […] The whole thought and style […] was deeply colored with Hebraism." Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 168–169, 176.

[47] Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, pp. 55, 60–61.

[48] See, in another context, Carlo Ginsburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, pp. 8–13.

[49] Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, p. 56. This proposition may apply to English martyrs or the Friuli miller but of course not to the leaders of the Reformation like Martin Luther, who was one of the best theological minds of his time and intellectually superior to most of the traditional Roman Catholic hierarchy.

of nationalism and, of course, for the spirit of rationalism, which was about to distinguish Western modernity.

On the other hand, previous religious idioms did not vanish. England's religious idiosyncrasy was thus viewed as the foundation of national distinctiveness. God's providence for His people was expressed by the rule of a charismatic, God-sent Virgin Queen. The central position occupied by religion in the nascent English nationalism, and generally in the early stages of every national movement, could be viewed as a more or less linguistic-communicative issue: people had been using religious vocabulary for centuries and they conceived the world order in religious terms. Secularisation was a historical process that could not be completed in a day. Nationalism could not emerge ex nihilo; on the contrary it rephrased previous idioms and reintroduced ancient rites and perennial credences, though in a different environment and for different purposes.[50] In fact, Protestantism and individualism were the real novelties in English culture. On the contrary, the idea of the monarch as the token of godly love[51] and that of the chosen people were of an ancient/medieval fabric, being reused in the early modern context. There is nothing essentially modern in the belief in Elizabeth's God-sent charisma, being viewed as a sign of divine election, as a verification "that God was English".[52]

### *Religion in the Ideological Context of Modernity*

Having briefly touched on the role of religion in the emergence of nationalism, we may proceed to look at religious influences in the revolutionary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We may consider the ideological context relevant to the French and American revolutions, as well as to one of the first national uprisings, that is, the Greek Revolution. Religious motivations behind political incidents have often been obscured, as with the Jansenist contribution to the ideological preparation for the French Revolution.[53] The ideological line that brought together Puritan nationalism with the Enlightenment and French republicanism was not highlighted by nineteenth-century French historiography.

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[50] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 68.

[51] Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, p. 64.

[52] The Protestants concentrated on the idea of election. The urgency to recognise the signs of election shaped their spiritual and social existence on the basis of predestination. However, there were several medieval or even ancient precedents for this ideology (Byzantium, France). Even the idea of predestined nations, endowed with a special mission, was a historical schema already outworn in the sixteenth century; see Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, pp. 60, 64.

[53] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *God Land: Reflections on Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 44–45.

Republican national historians constructed their own historical narrative, within which the religious conservatism of Catholic Puritans found no place.[54] However, the Jansenists' opposition to and struggle against the papacy and especially the Catholic international corps d'elite, the Jesuits, were also influenced by the Enlightenment. Apart from their common enemies, the philosophes and the Puritans had little in common, but they shared an anti-Jesuit, anti-papal and, eventually, anti-monarchical stance, which at some point became part of French national discourses.

Radical Enlightenment thinkers ultimately argued that the ecumenical community of the church and the traditional societies being ruled by powerful priesthoods relied on superstition and oppression. It would be better to have a church ruled by the state and belonging to the nation. This idea became one of the most influential – and one of the few implemented – political agendas of the Enlightenment. In this respect, Greek adherents of the Enlightenment who were also pioneers of nationalism adopted the idea of a national church, following, to a large extent, Protestant and English precedents.[55] In regard to nationalism, Protestantism and the Enlightenment followed parallel ideological courses because they both reserved for the nation a position superior to the church. In fact, Republican France seems to be the most extreme case of the nation becoming the absolute supreme being and, if we follow Jules Michelet's explanation, the nation replaced God "who escaped us". The motherland filled within her children "the immeasurable abyss which extinct Christianity has left there".[56] As Abbé Sieyes, influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, put it: "The nation exists before all, it is the origin of everything […] it is the law itself."[57] But even in the early Enlightenment, the elevation of a political body to the sphere of the divine was apparent, for example, in Spinoza's assertion that "devotion to the country is the highest form of piety a man can show".[58]

Deification of the nation and the romantic stream that originated from Rousseau could in the present context be compared to Anglo-Saxon and Puritan ideas referring to the nation and religion. As already mentioned, English national identity was enhanced by religion, though Puritan thought was more conservative

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[54] Cruise O'Brien, *God Land*, pp. 45–46.

[55] Richard Clogg, "Anti-clericalism in Pre-independence Greece, 1750–1821", in *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), pp. 258, 262.

[56] Michelet, as cited in ibid., p. 50.

[57] Sieyes, as cited in ibid., p. 50.

[58] Spinoza, as cited in ibid., p. 49; see Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 206.

in relation to the elevation of the nation into the position of God.[59] Rousseau initiated a Romantic emotionalism, referring to the adoration of landscapes, the country and its natural beauty (which were among the foundations of national consciousness). He longed for natural life and liberty, for a spirit and emotion freed from the oppression of void pretensions and rationality.[60] His naturalistic "proto-nationalism" focused on the unconstrained expression of national idioms, manners and customs. On the other hand, the spirit of Puritanism did not endorse emotional life. Nature and its relevance to the flesh were often viewed as corrupt deviations from the ascetic ideals of a life detached from sentimental exaltation and love of this-worldly issues. Patriotism could be regarded such a deviation, a distortion of true faith, since it led its disciples to love the creature more than the Creator. Moreover, religious and philosophical individualism, propounded by John Locke and David Hartley, were not a fertile soil for totalitarian nationalism. The persistence of individualism and utilitarianism with their libertarian consequences constituted the basis for the distinct type of English nationalism, which has been characterised as rational and individualistic.[61]

An analysis of the contrast between individualistic Lockean rationalism and the continental intellectual tradition of cultural relativism and romanticism cannot be attempted in the present analysis. A comprehensible schema regarding this matter should compare and contrast Puritanism (which led to an individualistic and rational type of nationalism) and Pietism in combination with romanticism, which produced the ethnic-organic (German) nationalism.[62] This contrast could be significant for understanding Western and Eastern types of nationalism. In a consistent Protestant (that is, individualistic) view, community was not a value per se but only as far as it was significant for individuals. The privileges of the nation were not derived from its nature as an organic-ethnic and metaphysical bond, but from its use as a guarantee of individual liberty.[63] An unconditional loyalty to the nation could not flourish in this context. Puritan patriotism implied that England should be loved "in a rational way", as a bulwark

[59] Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 158, 166.

[60] Maurice Cranston, *The Romantic Movement*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp. 8, 13, 15.

[61] Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 180, 182–183.

[62] Kohn, "Western and Eastern Nationalism", p. 165; Cranston, *Romantic Movement*, p. 15; Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, pp. 315, 317, 322.

[63] According to John Locke, government is a moral trust dependent on the free consent of the governed, whereas the individual's liberty, dignity and happiness remain the basic elements of all social llife. See Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, p. 182. For an alternative historical view on individualism's ontological foundation, see Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014, pp. 349–363.

of rational liberty and, above all, because of its Reformation of the Christian faith.[64] Although English patriotism, as expressed, for example, by Hartley and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, abandoned the Calvinist rejection of natural emotion, other important Protestant aspects of English nationalism remained intact; freedom of conscience came before love of country and the true patriot ought to venerate English Protestantism – namely the cause of his national identity – and its grand battles, the overthrow of papal authority, or the revolution of 1688.[65]

The considerable role of emotion as acknowledged by romanticism was opposed to puritan conservatism. Coleridge, however, was an important adherent of national character, which he approached with a devotion and intensity (therefore with a kind of emotionalism) common to the Germans (like Johann Gottlieb Fichte) and to Rousseau. He reserved a high position for culture, viewed from the standpoint of national relativism as residing in the nation. But this culture, the nation's distinct way of existence, had to be preserved and could only flourish within the institutions of the church, which for this purpose had to become a national church.[66] Here, Coleridge departed from religious individualism and argued that truth could only be discovered and conveyed by the national church. Its indispensable role could be a counter-argument to Protestantism but only on a superficial level. This reasoning derived from nationalism, not from Christianity in its ecumenical and metaphysical sense. The church was called to transform itself into a national or even a state agent that would preserve national interests and was expected to carry out a moral and political mission. Religion and its institutions were bound up with the nation, in order "to form and train up the people of the country to obedient, free, useful, organizable subjects, citizens and patriots, living to the benefit of the state and prepared to die for its defence".[67]

In the context of "national churches", traditional Christian virtues were transformed and otherworldly ideals were substituted with national heroism and the self-sacrifice of patriots. The sanctification of death for country, its elevation to a supreme social value (*schönes Blut*), had been common in the context of

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[64] William Stafford, "Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism in England at the Time of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars", in *Religion and National Identity*, ed. Stuart Mews, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982, p. 386.

[65] Ibid. For a related discussion see also Jeremy Black, "Confessional State or Elect Nation? Religion and Identity in Eighteenth-century England", in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c.1650–c.1850*, ed. Tony Claydon, Ian McBride, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 55–56.

[66] Stafford, "Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism", pp. 392-393.

[67] Coleridge, cited in ibid., p. 393.

German Pietism, which constituted one of the pillars of German nationalism. In this case, religion was used as practical philosophy, taking the form of *certitudo salutis* in *praxis pietatis*.[68] But this praxis pietatis was not devoid of emotion and, in this way, it provided a sui generis language and legitimacy for national identity.[69] The eventual emergence of these ideas even in the individualistic and utilitarian English environment is indicative of a tendency of "rational nationalism" to shift towards more organic, "German" concepts: "Depend upon it, whatever is grand, whatever is truly organic and living, the whole is prior to the parts".[70] Despite this call to the English nation, individualism persisted in the English self-image.

Religion was very important in shaping revolutionary politics and early nationalism on the opposite side of the Atlantic.[71] In America, Christianity persisted, perhaps because it had already been essentially reformed in such a way that it could speak the new language of nationalism.[72] Puritanism reigned within the discourses of nationalism, as opposed to France, where Christianity was essentially substituted with patriotism and the nation after the delegitimisation of the ancient regime of kings, cardinals and popes. An important religious question existed among the Puritans,[73] which influenced their political aspirations and eventual disloyalty to the king of England after he was presented as a papal ally and consequently a religious rival. It was not possible for the English to realise the degree to which the millenarian expectations of the Puritans and their concern for the Grand Design (that of the imposition of the papacy on America) could determine the latter's stance.[74] Indeed, for the Puritans, any negotiation and concession regarding their mission would betray their status as the elect. That revolutionary America entered into alliance with the Catholic French king, and also its later tolerance of Catholicism (a tolerance for which the English were previously derided by the Puritans), may, on the other hand, indicate a selective, instrumental use of religion on the basis of changing circumstances in politics.[75]

The latter argument opens the discussion of historical materialism, that is, a historicist group of theories and interpretations derived from Marxism

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[68] Greenfeld, *Five Roads to Modernity*, p. 316.

[69] As it had happened in England with Protestantism, ibid., pp. 317, 322.

[70] Coleridge, cited in Stafford, "Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism", p. 394.

[71] "The whole destiny of America is contained in the first Puritan who landed on these shores." Alexis de Tocqueville, cited in Cruise O'Brien, *God Land*, p. 43.

[72] Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 268–289; see also Bruce C. Daniels, *New England Nation: The Country the Puritans Built*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

[73] Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 269, 278.

[74] Cruise O'Brien, *God Land*, pp. 54, 56.

[75] Ibid., p. 59.

(and especially from Marx and Engels' *German Ideology*); this approach has regarded both religion and nationalism as parts of the "superstructure", as "epiphenomena" that only conceal the real – material – causes of human behaviour.[76] For the purposes of the present essay (and perhaps for those of nationalism studies in general), a theory that rejects the significance of cultural values as motivations of social behaviour would be of little use.[77]

An ideal-type analysis would suggest that in America, religious rivalry, manifested as antipopery, was particularly strong and influenced politics at the original-revolutionary stages of the national movement; later, particularly after the acquisition of independence, it became milder due to many factors, such as the administrative needs of a state that obliged it to follow a more tolerant religious policy.[78] In America, as previously in England, religious conflicts declined and religious politics were routinised, after they contributed to cementing national identity. In the later stages of their history, both English and American national identities turned into civic-political models, after an original religious exaltation had functioned as a rite of passage from one allegiance to another; that is, after that exaltation had determined the legitimacy of resistance and revolution and the corresponding failure of the kings (the Stuarts and George III) to retain their status as legitimate sovereigns. "Rebellion to Tyrants is obedience to God." For the pious Puritan, religion continued to play the role of an ultimate criterion of political legitimacy, but even in America its importance declined after the fulfilment of its most important calling.

### *Greece*

Now, although it may be argued that in Eastern Europe and the Balkans nationalism emerged in a distinct way and within a different social and cultural milieu, its consequences for Orthodox Christianity can be compared to the process of secularisation that marked Western modernity. The case of Greece evinces a tendency towards Westernisation, an adherence to aspects of European life and an attempt to accommodate rationalised models and ideas into societies of a different cultural and political historical background.[79]

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[76] Karl Marx, "The German Ideology", in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, New York: Norton, 1978, p. 157.

[77] A classic counter-argument to Marxism's pure determinism remains that of Max Weber. See "Author's Introduction", *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 27.

[78] Cf. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 67–68.

[79] Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, p. 164. Smith has argued that what distinguished nations from *ethnie* are, in some sense, Western features and qualities, a strong Western cultural imprint. *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 144.

A major part of Greek Enlightenment and Greek republican thought could be understood on the basis of the above Westernisation scheme, given that these intellectual and political movements were primarily characterised by the admiration for France and the condemnation of the backward state of Greece.[80] In the view of such thinkers, a decadent present was usually contrasted to a glorious past, that of ancient Greece and particularly of Athenian democracy.[81] But ironically, the main realm in which the Enlightenment project managed to be actually implemented was that of religious life and, particularly, the institutional and ecclesiastical aspects of Orthodoxy. In the realm of politics, the republican aspirations of the Greek intelligentsia did not come to pass, as the independent state was, at least originally, ruled by a totalitarian, non-constitutional monarchy and a Bavarian regency. This regency effectively cooperated with a part of the remaining intelligentsia, which had espoused nationalistic and essentially secular ideas for the organisation of the church deriving from the Enlightenment.

Until the nineteenth century and before the national uprisings in the Balkans, the organisation of the Orthodox Church had preserved a great number of its medieval characteristics. Its structure, sustained by the Ottomans, was founded on a reduced version of ecumenicity, on a kind of supernational, post-Byzantine commonwealth in which identity was primarily defined by religion. It has been argued that the Greek character of this commonwealth was not defined by national ideals, but by the cultural function of the Greek language in which the evangelical word was recorded.[82]

It is very important that the above concepts are correctly understood and historically clarified. The idea that all Christians should form a single nation was mainly an early ecclesiastical notion that was not borne out in later historical reality.[83] Moreover, ethnic and national differentiation is not absent from early

[80] "Where once governed the wise laws of Solon […] now reign ignorance, malice, force, wickedness", Korais, cited in L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London: Hurst, 2001, p. 149. See also Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Republican Aspirations in Southeastern Europe in the Age of the French Revolution", in *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994.

[81] This comparison was not only a question of the Enlightenment. Almost all learned Greek men, particularly those who were familiar with Western admiration of ancient Greece, could refer to similar historical considerations. See, indicatively, Andreas Rhoby, "The 'Friendship' between Martin Crusius and Theodosios Zygomalas", *Medioevo Greco: Rivista di storia e filologia bizantina* 5 (2005), pp. 249–266.

[82] See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Orthodox Identities in a World of Ottoman Power", in *An Orthodox Commonwealth*, Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007, pp. 3–11.

[83] Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, pp. 444 ff.

modern Greek texts coming from Constantinople. And although historical analogies should be taken into account, it seems possible to discern the existence of Greek ideology at least since late Byzantium. In the Ottoman period, Greek historical consciousness was shaped on the basis of Byzantine memories among the learned but also among the popular strata. On the other hand, it must be admitted that Greek culture preserved elements of universality and Greek education was prevalent among Balkan intellectuals of every ethnic background. Even Dositej Obradović, the founding father of Serbian literature, attended a Greek school.[84] The Patriarch of Constantinople was still at the centre of an ecumene as the bishop of the most important city of the Orthodox Christian world. Normally, he had to be "Greek" or at least be educated in Greek learning and theology, which was regarded as a great intellectual virtue. Sixteenth-century chronicles of the church present a Serbian occupant of the patriarchal throne as a historical mistake, a caricature, unable to read the Scriptures and attend the liturgy.[85]

Nevertheless, the spirit of a *respublica christiana* was identified, or at least preserved within the imperial administrative schema; even after the collapse of Byzantium, Ottomans respected this ecumenical character of Christianity by recognising the Patriarch of Constantinople as the leader of the Orthodox religious group, in which most Christian populations were gradually absorbed. Of course, this was for the most part an administrative and spiritual leadership that did not abolish ethno-linguistic boundaries and diverging historical memories. For most of the Orthodox clergy, but also for a large part of the Greek population, Ottoman rule prevented the papacy from prevailing in Byzantium, particularly after the two churches had been reunited due to the edict of the Council of Florence. The Latinisation of the Greek Orthodox Church was regarded as the worst possible scenario for Greek otherness and identity, so the Greek hierarchy of Constantinople regarded the Ottoman Empire as a convenient historical circumstance for the survival of "Byzance après Byzance", at least in spiritual

[84] Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 148; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 23–26, 29–50.

[85] "Historia Patriarchica Constantinopoleos", *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* vol. 28, ed. Emmanuel Bekker, Bonn: Weber, 1849, pp. 112–115. Greek eloquence was a great intellectual virtue for the polyglot Phanariot upper class. See Demetrios Procopiu, "Επιτετμημένη Επαρίθμησις των κατά τον παρελθόντα αιώνα λογίων Γραικών" [A concise catalogue enumeration of Greek scholars of the previous century], *Bibliotheca Graeca*, vol. 11, ed. Albert Fabricius, Hamburg: Christian Liebezeit, 1722, pp. 770ff.

affairs.[86] Not only did the Patriarchate survive under the Turks, but it was also granted more power over the Christian populations.[87]

Given the above clarifications, it is understandable that even as late as the nineteenth century there could be a fundamental antinomy (varying according to which social or intellectual context we refer to) between Orthodoxy and nationalism, as the "imagined community" of the nation could be destructive for the "imagined community" of religion.[88] Now the above-mentioned antinomy was concretely (and perhaps by way of a historical paradox) expressed in the conflict between an Enlightenment version of nationalism and Orthodox ecumenicity. Adamantios Korais opposed the preservation of the authority of the Patriarchate in the independent Greek state, the intellectual life of which he had considerably influenced. On the other hand, Constantinople had been clearly opposed to the political acts and ideas that derived from nationalism and republicanism, including the Greek Revolution.[89] For the followers of Korais (mainly Theoklitos Farmakidis, who was responsible for the first ecclesiastical reformation in independent Greece) ecclesiastical ecumenicity was a concept devoid of meaning.[90]

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[86] This view is generally held by recent historians to a degree that it can be regarded as a historiographical orthodoxy. However, there are certain indications that should make us cautious. The Ottoman advance resulted in a series of violent war incidents in a number of important Byzantine cities (Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Euripos) and islands such as Cyprus, Crete and Corfu, not to speak of Serbian resistance against the sultans. Greek resistance cannot be regarded exclusively as a result of Venetian enforcement, as it was alleged in some sources of the time and has been repeated by modern historians. Overall, Ottoman expansion from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries (and in a few cases to the seventeenth century) could hardly be described as a substitution of one administrative elite by another. It comes closer to the medieval historical idea of the collapse of a world and the birth of a new one, although continuities should not of course be excluded from the whole picture.

[87] Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, pp. 149–150, 281.

[88] As Stavrianos put it, it was "the Age of Theocracy superseded by the Age of Nationalism". *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 222.

[89] Modern historians have regarded this policy of the Patriarchate as a clear indication of the non-national ideology of the church. It has become a commonplace to state that the Orthodox Church opposed the Enlightenment and Revolution, but in both cases the issues seem to be much more complex. One has to examine the circumstances of these policies, whether they were the result of a free choice or not, and also to bear in mind the retaliations that the Greek people of Constantinople suffered in the aftermath of the rebellions in the Danubian principalities and the Peloponnese. For several aspects of the relationship between the church and the Enlightenment, see Paschalis M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion in the Orthodox World*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016.

[90] Elli Skopetea, *Το "Πρότυπο Βασιλείο" και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα: Όψεις του εθνικού προβλήματος στην Ελλάδα (1830–1880)* [The "model kingdom" and the Great Idea: views of the national question in Greece (1830–1880)], Athens: Polytypo, 1988, pp. 119–134.

According to this nationalist vision, a radical reformation in religion was projected as indispensable in satisfying the needs of the national state. As a result, this time the prevailing criteria for the organisation of the church were not religious and ecclesiastical, but national. Consequently, a national autocephalous church had first of all to be established, that is, a church in secession from the traditional axis of Orthodoxy headed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and secondly, the monasteries and their influence had to be weakened. Theological instruction was to be modernised on the basis of Enlightenment ideals and nationalist requirements. Evidently, this reformation consisted in an essential "Protestantisation" of the church,[91] which was also pursued by the Bavarian regency (the tendency of enlightened intelligentsia to adopt Protestant positions in religious matters, namely the merging of Enlightenment and Protestant causes, has already been noted above).

This administrative and ideological framework was determined by the necessities of state nationalism and political power.[92] Secession from the Patriarchate was not a mere administrative act, but a radical break with the

[91] In this context, one can refer to the emphasis on religious "consciousness" at the expense of tradition (which was Byzantine); the tendency to regard the church as a mere bearer and repository of dogmas and the administrative system of a permanent synod presided over by the king. See Christos Yiannaras, *Ορθοδοξία και Δύση στη νεότερη Ελλάδα* [Orthodoxy and the west in modern Greece], Athens: Domos, 1999, pp. 266–271; Skopetea, *Το "Πρότυπο Βασιλείο"* [The "model kingdom"], p. 129. To a certain extent, the polemics against episcopal authority and monasticism and the tendencies of rationalisation in dogma and ecclesiastical practice could be regarded as recurrent religious and ideological phenomena. After all, reformation ideas in Christianity, despite the different historical circumstances in which they emerged, should generally share at least some common demands. In this respect, the cases of Plethon Gemistos and Cyril Lucaris are exemplary. Both belong to the type of humanist and reformer, sharing a number of ideas about the need to change the Orthodox Church and Greek society in general. These ideas were later on espoused by Adamantios Korais. For Plethon, see Vojtech Hladky, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2014, pp. 11–19; Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 327–403. For Lucaris' reformation agenda, see Gunnar Hering, *Ökumenisches Patriarchat und europäische Politik, 1620–1638*, Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968; Vassileios Tsakiris, "The 'Ecclesiarum Belgicarum Confessio' and the attempted 'Calvinisation' of the Orthodox Church under Patriarch Cyril Lucaris", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 63 (2012), pp. 475–487.

[92] In a similar way, church and nation became one in every nation-state in the Balkans, and in most cases (Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria) this identification reached the level of the elevation of the regional churches to patriarchates, a fact that was regarded as a critical affirmation of national identity and autonomy. Kitromilides, "Imagined Communities and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy*, pp. 183–184. In the case of Bulgaria, the struggle against Turkish political domination was paralleled by a

Byzantine tradition of ecumenicity, presupposing the articulation of a different ecclesiastical history and the rejection of Byzantium as an image of the Greek past. Korais, influenced by Voltaire and Montesquieu, was rather hostile to Byzantium, regarding the Byzantine period as a decadent phase of subjugation in Hellenic history, not really distinct from Ottoman rule. His position constituted the mainstream ideology of the classicist state during the first decades of its existence, and it was never fully abandoned.[93] In fact, after the canonical relations of the Church of Greece with the Patriarchate of Constantinople were reestablished (with the Patriarchal Decree of 1850), Byzantium was restituted as one of the three pillars of national history and unity.

Moreover, anti-clericalism was prevalent among the Greek intelligentsia because it was inherent in their ideology of the Enlightenment and nationalism, on the one hand, and because of the policy of the church during Ottoman rule, on the other. It should be admitted that the hierarchy was prone to condemning revolutionary movements (as the text of the *Paternal Exhortation* characteristically indicated),[94] and that many of its members enjoyed high social and economic status at the expense of the Greek population. Simony and corruption were common phenomena among the highest ranks of the ecclesiastical structure.[95] However, the anti-clericalism of such intellectuals as Korais, Rhigas and the anonymous author of *Hellenic Nomarchy* was not always paralleled by the prevalence of such attitudes among the masses of the Greek people, and it must be noted that there exists little evidence of actual religious unbelief.[96] This fact is crucial for understanding the

struggle against Greek ecclesiastical control. The first victory for Bulgarian nationalism was the establishment of a national church. Stavrianos, *Balkans*, pp. 371, 375.

[93] Alexis Politis, "From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors", in *Byzantium and Modern Greek Identity*, ed. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, pp. 1–14. See also George Huxley, "Aspects of Modern Greek Historiography of Byzantium", in Ricks and Magdalino, *Byzantium and Modern Greek Identity*, pp. 15–23; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea", in Ricks and Magdalino, *Byzantium and Modern Greek Identity*, pp. 27–33; Fotios Dimitrakopoulos, *Βυζάντιο και νεοελληνική διανόηση στα μέσα του δεκάτου ενάτου αιώνος* [Byzantium and modern Greek intellectual life in the middle of the nineteenth century], Athens: Kastaniotis, 1996, pp. 59–70, 72–74, 77–79 and passim.

[94] The *Paternal Exhortation* was an encyclical letter condemning revolutionary ideas and asserting that the Ottoman Empire was ordained by God. Clogg, "Anti-clericalism in Pre-independence Greece", pp. 258–259. In view of the radical policies of the French Revolution, it is unsurprising that this condemnation was issued. It would be paradoxical to expect the ecclesiastical leaders to adhere to ideas preaching atheism and the very abolition of the church.

[95] Stavrianos, *Balkans since 1453*, p. 150.

[96] Clogg, "Anti-clericalism in Pre-independence Greece", p. 272.

religious allegiance of Greek combatants in the war of independence – the battle cry "fight for faith and motherland" – and the way in which the Greek population defined its identity, even in the nineteenth century.

The question of Greek identity and its religious, ethnic and national constituents is a complicated one, particularly when it concerns the masses of anonymous people. The modernist position has approached the issue by proposing a historical dichotomy, or a dualism of the religious and the pre-modern vis-à-vis national and modern identities. According to this theory, the tenet that Orthodox Christianity and the church had played a major role in preserving collective identity under the Ottomans is modified to suggest that the preserved identities were religious and not national. I believe that such a distinction can be transcended. Of course, the identity to which the church was linked was not national in the sense in which we currently understand the term (that is, related to the character of modern societies). But in the same way it was not strictly religious; it was not limited to religious dogmas and rites. One could regard religious identity at this time as containing, or perhaps concealing, many of the elements that nowadays refer to national consciousness. Pre-modern religious identity was much more profound and comprehensive than modern religious identity. The Orthodox Church was not only a religious institution of the Ottoman state serving spiritual life, but also a historical institution antedating the Ottomans and conveying a cultural tradition of its own. For the Greek people, Orthodoxy was a fundamental way to preserve and manifest their culture and exist as a nation before nationalism. In a durée perspective and in order to avoid anachronisms, the Greek nation should be distinguished both from a modern nation and a modern religious group.

Upon entering a revolutionary struggle for an independent state, the Greek people referred to religion as the main pillar of their identity. In the first revolutionary constitutional assembly, held at Epidaurus in 1821–1822, that identity was primarily defined as Christian Orthodox. "All the indigenous inhabitants of the territory of Greece who believe in Christ are Greeks." One could add innumerable religious ideals and symbols of the revolt that testify to the existence of a "demotic model" of nation deriving from Orthodoxy (contrary to the "civic model" of nationhood that Greek intellectuals had borrowed from the French Revolution). "What mattered to the Orthodox clergy, artisans, shepherds and peasants […] was their Greek Orthodox descent and local cultures, their popular revolts […] and local histories which opposed Orthodoxy to Islam."[97]

Clearly they were two distinct ideological realms in nineteenth-century Hellenism: on the one hand an Orthodox-Byzantine one and, on the other, a

[97] Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 145.

neoclassical one, which was originally adopted by the Greek state. Subsequently, Orthodoxy and the nation were presented as each other's guardians, inseparably coupled in a way that departed both from the secular ideals of the Enlightenment and the ecumenical character of the church.[98] Unfortunately, the uses of Orthodoxy by the state were often petty and banal, as demonstrated by the Helleno-Christian ideals of the military regime of 1967–1974, or by some caricaturesque figures of contemporary Greek party politics.

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This article has focused only on Western examples and Christianity, suggesting their primary importance in the studies of nationalism. It has tried to describe a process of historical transformation, that is, to show in what ways religion was integrated into national identity as a vehicle to achieve secular aims. All in all, it was religion that was modified by and incorporated into the discourses of nationalism. This does not mean that the historical relationship was not complicated: a more comprehensive consideration of particular examples would be needed, given that the recurrence of historical phenomena permits a certain degree of generalisation in the social sciences. On the other hand, there will always be elements of the larger picture to consider in greater depth.

*National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*
*Hellenic Open University*

[98] Skopetea, *Το "Πρότυπο Βασιλείο"* [The "model kingdom"], pp. 122–123.