

The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 20, No 1 (2023)

The Historical Review / La Revue Historique

The *H*istorical Review
La Revue *H*istorique



VOLUME XX (2023)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

The Great Church in the Sixteenth Century

Youli Evangelou

doi: [10.12681/hr.40067](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.40067)

Copyright © 2025



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Evangelou, Y. (2025). The Great Church in the Sixteenth Century: Challenge Management and Politics. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 20(1), 277–292. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.40067>

THE GREAT CHURCH IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: CHALLENGE MANAGEMENT AND POLITICS

Youli Evangelou

ABSTRACT: The Early Modern period was a period of dense religious developments in Western Europe, which contributed to major historical events (Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Thirty Years' War). Throughout this period, religious identity was also particularly crucial for the Orthodox Christian populations living in the East within the Ottoman Empire, where the predominant agent of religious relations was the patriarchate of Constantinople (the Great Church). Since its re-establishment in the beginning of 1454, the patriarchate's mission comprised the ecclesiastical administration of the empire's Orthodox Christians, along with the preservation of their faith; at the same time, the patriarchate had to fulfil its political, financial and institutional obligations towards the Ottoman state. Therefore, the patriarchs usually had to decide on multidimensional issues, which repeatedly posed new challenges to the Great Church. This article examines the entangled nature of patriarchal actions and reactions to specific issues that emerged during the sixteenth century.

I

In May 1611, Patriarch Neophytos II of Constantinople, a key figure in the Eastern Christian Church in the early seventeenth century, issued a synodal act stating, among others, that:

To maintain and preserve and safeguard the divine and sacred laws and canons, and to keep them unwavering and unaffected, has been deemed necessary and irrefutable. But then also for the synod of hierarchs to have the authority to bring changes and adjust to the times, so as to avoid the destruction of soul, this is also acknowledged and indisputable.¹

His mandates (December 1601–January 1603, 15 October 1607–October 1612) fell within the Early Modern period, an era of dense religious developments

¹ “Τὸ μὲν φυλάττεσθαι καὶ διατηρεῖσθαι καὶ περισώζεσθαι τοὺς θεῖους καὶ ἱεροὺς νόμους καὶ κανόνες, καὶ ἔχειν αὐτοὺς τὸ ἀπαρασάλευτον καὶ ἀμεταποίητον, ἀναγκαῖον πάντως καθέστηκε καὶ ἀναντίρρητον· τὸ δὲ ἐξεῖναι πάλιν τῇ ἀρχιερατικῇ συνόδῳ καὶ ἄδειαν κεκτήσθαι μεταβαλεῖν τὰ πράγματα, καὶ ἐξοικονομεῖν κατὰ τοὺς καιροὺς, ἵνα μὴ τις ὀλεθρὸς ψυχικὸς γένηται, καὶ τοῦτο ὁμολογοῦμενὸν ἐστὶ καὶ ἀναμφίβολον.” See indicatively the publication of the synodal act (*συνοδικὸν σημείωμα*) of Neophytos II of May 1611 by Georgios A. Rallis

and confrontations in Western Europe, which led or contributed to historical events of grave impact, such as the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years' War. Throughout this period, religious identity was also particularly crucial for the Orthodox Christian populations living in the East within the Ottoman Empire, where the predominant agent of religious relations was the institution of the patriarchate of Constantinople (the Great Church, as it is often designated in Greek ecclesiastical sources) and its clergy.

From the above quotation, it is evident that Neophytos was chiefly preoccupied with, on the one hand, preserving the sacred laws and canons and, on the other, adapting to the prevailing conditions. In so doing, he was following the main principles of governance that were consciously observed by those who had ascended to the patriarchal throne since the beginning of the new era in the history of this Byzantine institution, an era that began in mid-fifteenth century, approximately seven months after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (29 May 1453).

It was in early 1454 that the patriarchate of Constantinople was re-established, and it was henceforth required to function amid a new political reality, in which the secular authorities were non-Christian. Therefore, its mission was twofold: it had the duty to ecclesiastically administrate the Ottoman Empire's Orthodox Christians, with a more wide-ranging jurisdiction compared to that of the Byzantine period, while preserving the doctrinal purity of the Orthodox Christian faith; at the same time, the patriarchate had to fulfil its obligations towards the Ottoman state, which were initially political in character, but soon acquired a strong financial and institutional aspect as well. Besides, it is well known that the reasons that led Sultan Mehmed II to re-establish the Great Church were political, as were the ambitions of his Christian advisors. Therefore, since the first years of this new beginning, the foundations had been set for the new role of the patriarchate as a ruling institution of Orthodox Christian society.²

Due to the complexity of its role, the patriarchate was obliged to deal with matters that were not strictly religious. On the contrary, the patriarchs usually

and Michail Potlis, eds., *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων τῶν τε ἁγίων καὶ πενευφήμων Ἀποστόλων, καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν οἰκουμενικῶν καὶ τοπικῶν Συνόδων, καὶ τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἁγίων Πατέρων*, vol. 5 (Athens: Typ. G. Chartophylakos, 1855), 156–59, specifically 158. I wish to thank my colleague Nikolaos Livanos for translating this paper's Greek quotations into English.

² Among the extensive bibliography on the institution of the ecumenical patriarchate and its status within the Ottoman Empire, see indicatively a selection of mainly recent studies, with previous literature: Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos, ed., *Ὁ "Ἱερὸς Κῶδιξ" τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως στὸ Β' μιστὸ τοῦ ΙΕ' αἰῶνα: Τὰ μόνὰ γνωστὰ σπαράγματα* (Athens:

had to take decisions about multidimensional issues, where the religious-confessional element was interwoven with the social and political issues, the political with the financial, etc. Thus, its main objective was the survival of the institution and of that which it represented amid a fluctuating and occasionally hostile political and religious environment. The administration of so many complex and delicate issues repeatedly posed new challenges to the Great Church. This article examines the entangled nature of patriarchal actions and reactions to specific issues that emerged during the sixteenth century.

II

In early 1593, an authoritative, plenary synod was convened in Constantinople. Patriarch Hieremias II of Constantinople, patriarchs Meletios Pigas of Alexandria (representing Ioakeim of Antioch) and Sophronios of Jerusalem, along with approximately 41 other prelates, gathered to deal with issues that were crucial for the Orthodox Church. The most critical among the duties of the hierarchs was to confirm formally, and thus legitimise, a very important development in terms of ecclesiastical administration that had taken place four years earlier, in January 1589. At that time, Ecumenical Patriarch Hieremias II, who was visiting Moscow to seek financial support from Tzar Fyodor I (1584–1598), consented to the elevation of Moscow's metropolitan see to the

NHRF, 1992); Paraskevas Konortas, *Οθωμανικές θεωρήσεις για το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο, 17ος–αρχές 20ού αιώνα* (Athens: Alexandria, 1998); Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "The Great Church in Captivity, 1453–1586," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5, *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 169–86; Tom Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Hasan Çolak and Elif Bayraktar-Tellan, eds., *The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution: A Study of Early Modern Patriarchal Berats* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2019); Phokion Kotzageorgis, ed., "The Newly Found Oldest Patriarchal Berat," *Turkish Historical Review* 11 (2020): 1–27; Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos, "Continuity and Change: The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 1. The Survival of a Byzantine Institution," in *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, ed. Christian Gastgeber, Ekaterini Mitsiou, Johannes Preiser-Kapeller and Vratislav Zervan (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 103–17; Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, "Continuity and Change: The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 2. Institutions and Administration: Continuity and Rupture," in Gastgeber et al., *Companion to the Patriarchate*, 118–29; Eleni Gara and Ovidiu Olar, "Confession-Building and Authority: The Great Church and the Ottoman State in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century," in *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th–18th Centuries*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2022), 159–214.

rank of patriarchate and consecrated Metropolitan Job as the first patriarch of Moscow. Indeed, the plenary synod of 1593 confirmed the establishment of the new patriarchate, stipulating that it would occupy the fifth rank in the hierarchy, after Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.³

This decision was recorded in a synodal act issued in February 1593 by Hieremias II.⁴ The official act also included stipulations regulating various matters concerning the Orthodox Church. On this occasion, the synod proclaimed once more the Great Church's decision to follow the holy canons, rejecting any innovation regarding the celebration of Easter, an issue that had originally been posed to Hieremias II in 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII inaugurated a calendar reform, introducing the so-called Gregorian calendar.⁵

³ On the establishment of the patriarchate of Moscow, see indicatively Constantine Tsirpanlis, "Church Relations between Moscow, Constantinople and Alexandria towards the End of the 16th Century," in *Studies on the Slavo-Byzantine and West-European Middle Ages: In Memoriam Ivan Dujčev* ([Sofia]: Ivan Dujčev Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies and Dr Peter Beron State Publishing House, 1988), 79–83; Christian Hannick, "Le métropolitaine Hiérothée de Monembasie et son rôle dans l'érection du patriarcat de Moscou," *Revue des études slaves* 63, no. 1 (1991): 207–15; Constantin G. Pitsakis, "À propos des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople concernant la proclamation de l'Empire en Russie (XVI siècle): Survivances et souvenirs de la terminologie et de l'idéologie impériale constantinopolitaines," in *L'idea di Roma a Mosca, Secoli XV–XVI: Fonti per la storia del pensiero sociale russo* (Rome: Herder, 1993), 87–138, specifically 111–29; Boris A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform: The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Cambridge: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1998), 168–87; Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, "Χρυσόβουλλον πατριαρχικόν: Τὰ παράδοξα τῆς διπλωματικῆς καὶ ἡ ἱδρυση τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας," in *Mockhovia. Problemy Vizantijskoj i Novogrečeskoj Filologii. K 60 Letiju B.L. Fonkiča / Προβλήματα βυζαντινῆς καὶ νεοελληνικῆς φιλολογίας γιὰ τὰ 60 χρόνια τοῦ Boris Fonkič* (Moscow: Indrik, 2001), 1:335–45; Christian Hannick and Klaus-Peter Todt, "Jérémie II Tranos," in *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2, XIIIe–XIXe s., ed. C. G. Conticello and Vassa Conticello (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 551–615, specifically 572–75; Dan Ioan Mureșan, "Rome hérétique? Sur les décisions des conciles de Moscou et de Constantinople (1589, 1590 et 1593)," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* 126, no. 2 (2014): 275–87.

⁴ Due to the significance of the synodal act for the Orthodox Church, its text has been widely disseminated and underwent multiple publications; see among them the one given by Boris Fonkič, "Akt Konstantinopolskogo sobora 1593 g. ob osnovanii Moskovskogo patriarkhata," *Grečeskie rukopisi i dokumenty v Rossii v XIV–načale XVIII v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 391–98, from the MS Gosudarstvennyj istoričeskij muzej (ГИМ) no. 339/198 CXCIX.

⁵ For the stance of the Orthodox Church on the calendar reform, see Hannick and Todt, "Jérémie II Tranos," 563–66; Giorgio Fedalto, "Il patriarca Geremia II Tranos, l'arcivescovo Gabriele Severo e la questione del calendario," in *Gavriil Seviros, arcivescovo di Filadelfia a Venezia, e la sua epoca* (Venezia, 26 settembre 2003), ed. D. G. Apostolopoulos (Venice:

Three months later, in May 1593, Hieremias II issued a second official letter, containing further decisions of the plenary synod, regarding the regular convening of plenary synods in Constantinople, the infliction of punishments on metropolitans, the election of a new patriarch, the establishment of stauropegial monasteries, etc.⁶

Subsequent patriarchal letters, however, testify to the fact that the above official documents of February and May 1593 did not contain the plenary synod's acts in their entirety. According to letters issued from 1593 to 1596, the synod of 1593 had dealt with one more – blazing – issue, the finances of the Great Church. Specifically, they decided that the prelates should help the church pay off its enormous debt, and therefore they recorded in an ad hoc register the specific sum of money assigned to each prelate. Besides, it was stipulated that hierarchs who failed to pay their contribution on time be defrocked, and this synodal decision was recorded in a patriarchal document (*ἔγγραφος ἀπόφασις*).⁷ The aforementioned document is not extant, but later patriarchal acts inform us that it was a synodal *τόμος*, an official text of normative character.⁸

The punishment of defrocking dated back to the first centuries of Orthodox Church history. It was the strictest among the punishments imposed on

Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 2004), 59–69, and Vassiliki C. Tzoga, ed., “Un sigillion inédit du patriarche de Constantinople Jérémie II et d’Alexandre Sylvestre sur la réforme du calendrier,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107, no. 1 (2014): 221–52.

⁶ Among the publications of the synodal document, see the one given by Gennadios M. Arampatzoglou, ed., *Φωτίειος Βιβλιοθήκη: ἤτοι ἐπίσημα καὶ ἰδιωτικά ἔγγραφα καὶ ἄλλα μνημεῖα σχετικὰ πρὸς τὴν ἱστορίαν τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Typ. Fazilet Tassou Vakalopoulou, 1933), 131–34, based on the MS Lincoln College gr. 10, f. 126r, which, according to his opinion, preserved the most accurate version of the text (109–11).

⁷ The earliest references to this decision of the synod of 1593 are found in the patriarchal acts issued by Hieremias II in: 1593/1594 (*indictio* 7th: from September 1593 to August 1594), stipulating the defrocking of the bishop of Kernitsa; September 1595, regarding the tour of patriarchal exarchs for the collection of ecclesiastical contributions; 1595/1596, for the defrocking of a prelate from the Peloponnese who is not named in the text. See the publication of the texts by K. N. Sathas, ed., *Βιογραφικὸν σχέδιασμα περὶ τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἱερεμίου Β΄ (1572–1594)* (Athens: Typ. A. Ktena and S. Oikonomou, 1870; photomechanical reproduction, Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras, 1979), 172–73, 194–95, 197–98 respectively, from the MS Athens, EBE 1474.

⁸ Posterior sources often mention this act as a synodal *τόμος*; see for example the synodal letter of Patriarch Matthaios II, issued around 28 February 1601 (see the publication of the text by C.G. Patrinelis, ed., “Πατριαρχικά γράμματα καὶ ἄλλα ἔγγραφα καὶ σημειώματα τοῦ ΙΓ΄–ΙΗ΄ αἰῶνος ἐκ τοῦ κώδικος τοῦ Ἱερακος (Εθν. Βιβλιοθ. Ἑλλ. 1474),” *Ἐπετηρὶς τοῦ Μεσαιωνικοῦ Ἀρχείου* 12 (1962–1965): 127–28; and a synodal letter issued in 1623 (the text is preserved in MS Athens, ΜΠΤ 2, f. 199v); see the summary in D.G. Apostolopoulos

clergymen, as it entailed the deposition from holy orders, the loss of all powers deriving from them and the return to the original rank one possessed before his ordination, namely to that of layman or monk. Subsequently, the defrocked lost the right to bear the clergyman's insignia, to officiate and to receive the financial benefits of his position.⁹ According to canon law, the offences that were punishable through defrocking fell conventionally into three general categories: insults against the Christian faith and Orthodox dogma, violations of the ecclesiastical canonical *τάξεις* or of the sacerdotal obligations (for example schism, simony, negligence of pastoral services, cohabitation with a woman, marriage after ordination, activities irrelevant to the priesthood, etc.), and an unethical life.¹⁰ Therefore, in terms of ecclesiastical law the 1593 decision was essentially a milestone in the history of the punishment, as it was mentioned explicitly, for the first time, in a synodal *τόμος* that noncompliance with financial obligations was henceforth a reason for defrocking prelates.¹¹

As head of the Orthodox Church, the ecumenical patriarch was responsible for the preservation of the holy canons. Nevertheless, with the agreement of the three patriarchs of the East, in 1593 Hieremias II introduced the above decision, which was a remarkable novelty from an ecclesiastical law perspective. Which was the exact nature, though, of Hieremias' apparent inconsistency?

and P. D. Michailaris, *Η Νομική Συναγωγή τοῦ Δοσιθέου: Μία πηγή και ἓνα τεκμήριο*, vol. 1 (Athens: NHRF, 1987), no. 481). The term *τόμος* was used by the patriarchal chancellery for the patriarchal and synodal canon law provisions of superior formal status, mainly for those that modified an ecumenical synod's canon, or that under normal circumstances would require the issuing of such a canon; see C.G. Pitsakis, "Βυζάντιο: Κανονικό και εκκλησιαστικό δίκαιο," *Μεγάλη Ορθόδοξη Χριστιανική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 4 (Athens: Strategikes Ekdoseis, 2011), 376.

⁹ On the punishment of defrocking, see Panagiotis I. Panagiotakos, *Σύστημα τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ δικαίου κατὰ τὴν ἐν Ἑλλάδι ἰσχὺν αὐτοῦ*, vol. 3, *Τὸ ποινικὸν δίκαιον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας* (Athens: Myrtidis, 1962), 264–95, and Anastasios P. Christophilopoulos, *Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν δίκαιον* (Athens: Ang. and Pan. Ath. Kleisiounis, 1965), 276–77, with previous bibliography. Regarding the loss of the clergyman's status, see Spyros N. Troianos and Georgios A. Poulis, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸ δίκαιο*, 2nd ed. (Komotini: Ant. N. Sakkoulas, 2003), 242–43 (cf. Panagiotakos, *Σύστημα*, 278–80).

¹⁰ See Panagiotakos, *Σύστημα*, 341–667, and, more specifically, Pierre L'Huillier, "Καθαίρεσις," *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ ἠθικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 7 (Athens: A. Martinos, 1965), col. 153.

¹¹ For more details on the procedure that lead to this development, see Youli Evangelou, "Ένας νέος λόγος καθαίρεσης θεσμοθετεῖται τὸ 1593," *Ὁ Έρανιστής* 28 (2011): 95–119, a study that examines the use of the punishment of defrocking in the historical context of the last quarter of sixteenth century, an examination that led to the dating to autumn 1594 of a patriarchal letter of Hieremias II convening the prelates of the West and the Peloponnese in a synod in Thessaloniki.

The new reason for defrocking must have been latent for more than a century, specifically from October 1474, when the patriarch of Constantinople acquired for the first time an annual fiscal obligation towards the imperial treasury. In their effort to usurp the patriarchal throne from the incumbent, Symeon I, his accusers had proposed to the sultan to impose an annual tax on the patriarch of 2,000 gold florins. Symeon was forced by the Porte to assume this fiscal obligation and the prelates accepted to pay it jointly. This tax is henceforth mentioned in the Greek sources as an annual due (*ἐτήσιον τέλος*) or *χαράτζιον*.¹²

The aforementioned tax was not the only fiscal obligation on the patriarchs, since around 1464/1465 the new patriarch usually paid the sultan an amount of money, the *pişkeş*, a customary gift for his appointment to the patriarchal office or for the enthronement of a new sultan.¹³ Through the dual taxation,

¹² According to Greek chronicles of the sixteenth century though, the first Christians who paid a sum of money to the sultan to overthrow the incumbent patriarch Markos II Xylokaravis and impose their candidate for the patriarchal throne were the supporters of Symeon I, during his first mandate (mid–end 1466); see Spyridon P. Lambros, ed., *Ecthesis Chronica and Chronicon Athenarum* (London: Methuen, 1902), 28–31; Immanuel Bekker, ed., *Historia politica et patriarchika Constantinopoleos: Epirotica* (Bonn: Weber, 1849), 39–42. Nevertheless, the patriarch and the synod officially acknowledged this fiscal obligation eight years later, and their decision was recorded in a synodal act of 10 October 1474; for a recent publication of the text, see Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou and D.G. Apostolopoulos, *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: Τὰ σωζόμενα ἀπὸ τὴν περίοδο 1454–1498*, 2nd rev. ed. (Athens: NHRF, 2016), 126–29; for commentary, see Apostolopoulos, *Ὁ “Ἱερὸς Κῶδιξ,”* 94–97. The first official Ottoman document to mention this annual payment is the oldest known patriarchal *berat* to date, which was issued in 1475 for Patriarch Raphael I (Kotzageorgis, “The Newly Found”). For the annual due (*ἐτήσιον τέλος*) or *χαράτζιον*, see also Paraskevas Konortas, “Les contributions ecclésiastiques ‘patriarchikè zèteia’ et ‘basilikon charatzion’: Contribution à l’histoire économique du patriarcat œcuménique aux XVe et XVIe siècles,” in *Actes du IIe Colloque International d’Histoire (Athènes, 18–25 septembre 1983): Économies méditerranéennes, équilibres et intercommunications, XIIIe–XIXe siècles*, vol. 3 (Athens: NHRF, 1986), 221–32; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, ed., *Δέκα τουρκικά έγγραφα γὰ τὴν Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ (1483–1567)* (Athens: NHRF, 1996), 79–86. The Greek term *χαράτζιον* originates from *haraç* (*kharāj*), a term that denoted two special taxes paid by the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, a land tax and a poll tax (Phokion Kotzageorgis, “Haraç,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2022): 43–44). Although the new financial obligation of the patriarch introduced in 1474 did not belong to either category, it was henceforth an extra tax charged on Christian subjects of the empire through the ecclesiastical administration, and for this reason it was named *χαράτζιον*.

¹³ On the *pişkeş*, see Konortas, *Οθωμανικές θεωρήσεις*, 167–70, and Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, “Socio-economic Aspects of a Tax: The Metropolitans’ and Bishops’ *Pişkeş*,” in *New Trends in Ottoman Studies: Papers Presented at the 20th CIÉPO Symposium, Rethymno, 27 June–1 July 2012*, ed. Marinos Sariyannis, Gülsün Aksoy-Aivali, Marina Demetriadou,

the Great Church was more deeply integrated into the Ottoman administrative framework. In fact, due to the patriarchs' financial tasks, the status acquired by the patriarchal office within the Ottoman legal order had similarities to an Ottoman fiscal practice, the tax-farming system (*iltizam*).¹⁴ On the other hand, these tasks, and particularly the annual tax, posed a constant threat to the patriarch's position, because he was personally liable for its payment. Therefore, in the event that the prelates did not fulfil their financial obligations, the current patriarch had to turn to lenders to avoid losing his see to his competitors.

For this reason, there is no doubt that the prelates' noncompliance with financial obligations put every patriarch in a very difficult position, aggravating the patriarchate's vicious cycle of borrowing. The fact that the patriarch who decided to bring this unpleasant situation under control through the aforementioned measure was Hieremias II was not in the least incidental.¹⁵

Specifically, the official devaluation of the akçe, the Ottoman silver currency, in around 1585–1586 lead to a fiscal crisis and monetary instability, and to social and political upheaval.¹⁶ This conjuncture exacerbated the effects of the Orthodox Church's internal conflict over the control of the patriarchate, causing an acute financial crisis in the Great Church: financial obligations towards the imperial treasury accrued while its debts ran up.¹⁷ To cover the new obligations, Hieremias II aimed to increase the ecclesiastical income; for example, from around 1590 the once-optional *πατριαρχική ζητεία* contribution became mandatory.¹⁸

Yannis Spyropoulos, Katerina Stathi and Yorgos Vidras (Rethymno: University of Crete; FORTH, 2014), 207–22.

¹⁴ On the relation of the Orthodox Church's status with the *iltizam* system, see Konortas, *Οθωμανικές θεωρήσεις*, 344–47, and Kotzageorgis, "The Newly Found," 8–10; cf. Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan*, 139–75.

¹⁵ On this prominent ecumenical patriarch of sixteenth century (5 May 1572–mid November 1579, August 1580–end of February 1584, April 1587–end of 1595), see Hannick and Todt, "Jérémie II Tranos," 551–615.

¹⁶ See, among others, Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 131–48; Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Monetary Crisis of 1585 Revisited," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52 (2009): 460–504.

¹⁷ Paraskevas Konortas, "Ἡ ὀθωμανικὴ κρίσις τοῦ ἱστ' αἰῶνα καὶ τὸ οἰκουμενικὸ πατριαρχεῖο," *Τὰ Ἱστορικά* 2, no. 3 (May 1985): 45–76.

¹⁸ On *πατριαρχική ζητεία*, see Κονόρτας, "Les contributions," 223–34. For *ζητεία* as a tour for the collection of financial aid on behalf of patriarchs, prelates or monasteries in the Orthodox East, see Eleni Angelomati-Tsougaraki, "Τὸ φαινόμενο τῆς ζητείας κατὰ τὴ μεταβυζαντινὴ περίοδο," *Ἰόνιος Λόγος* 1 (2007): 247–93. Cf. Stefano Saracino, "Greek

Moreover, in this period the patriarchate made more frequent use of a clause included in the patriarchal *berats*, which allowed the patriarch to resort to the Ottoman administration's assistance to secure the collection of the ecclesiastical contributions.¹⁹

This was the highly pressing context of the decision Hieremias II took in 1593, with the blessing of the plenary synod, to introduce prelates' noncompliance with financial obligations as a new reason for defrocking. This decision terminated a long period during which the punishment of defrocking had been enforced for various instances of misconduct, but the underlying reason had probably been financial.²⁰ Henceforth many patriarchs issued similar decisions, usually in the form of a synodal *τόμος*, aiming to facilitate the collection of ecclesiastical contributions. The new reason for defrocking was widely used and this procedure moderated in practice (through the repeated cycles of defrocking and acquitting certain prelates) the strictness that previously characterised this ecclesiastical punishment.²¹

III

The patriarchate of Constantinople was, however, the innate safekeeper of multiple sections of Byzantine law and tradition. As head of the Orthodox Church, the patriarch was by definition responsible for matters related to doctrine, worship and liturgy, namely for whatever referred to the core principles of the faith and to the practice of religion by his flock.

Besides, the Great Church also had authority over broader fields of life of the Christians within the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, while it traditionally regulated

Orthodox Alms Collectors from the Ottoman Empire in the Holy Roman Empire: Extreme Mobility and Confessionalized Communication," in *Confessionalization and/as Knowledge Transfer in the Greek Orthodox Church*, ed. Kostas Sarris, Nikolas Pissis and Miltos Pechlivanos (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2021), 79–108, who examines the practical aspects of Greek Orthodox alms collectors' mobility in the Holy Roman Empire and their contribution to interconfessional dialogues with Christians of different denominations.

¹⁹ Κονόπρας, "Les contributions," 250–54. On the aforementioned clause see, for example, the *berats* of the ecumenical patriarchs Symeon I (1483) and Hieremias I (1525) in the recent publication of the texts by Çolak and Bayraktar-Tellan, *Orthodox Church*, 196, no. 7, and 199, no. 6. We know that Patriarch Hieremias I resorted in 1544 to the Ottoman state, which subsequently addressed decrees to local Ottoman officials, asserting Hieremias' rights as patriarch to collect taxes, either in person or through representatives, and forbidding specific individuals from withholding taxes from him (Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan*, 126–27 (no. 5–12), 134–35).

²⁰ For more details, see Evangelou, "Ένας νέος λόγος καθάιρεσης," 103–8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 109–15.

issues of marriage and inheritance, in the new Ottoman reality the matters that fell under the church's jurisdiction multiplied. Specifically, the synodal court of the ecumenical patriarchate acquired – explicitly or implicitly – the power to settle civil law disputes that arose between clergymen or laymen, and to deal with cases referring to its arbitration, as well as disputes related to dowry.

In making decisions about the various matters of the Christians who were under his jurisdiction, the overriding duty of the ecumenical patriarch was to keep them in the Orthodox faith, a task that required an equal measure of strictness and flexibility.

Amid the often extraordinary circumstances, it was essential to deal with canonical and liturgical matters with open-mindedness and flexibility, using the ecclesiastical principle of *οικονομία*, namely indulgence.²² From this point of view, the early testimony of the first patriarch after the Fall of Constantinople, Gennadios Scholarios, is impressively eloquent. In a patriarchal letter he issued on 6 February 1455, the patriarch responded to the questions posed to him by the monastic community of Saint Catherine of Sinai, formulating explicitly his opinion: “When Christians from East to West suffer for the faith of Jesus and endure endless sorrows, must we debilitate someone or deplore that they have mistaken the number of the morning Gospel, reading the ninth in place of the seventh?”²³

The need for the use of the ecclesiastical principle of *οικονομία* had indeed become more than obvious at that time, especially concerning matrimonial law. As the prevailing circumstances constituted a crisis, the strict enforcement by the church of Byzantine legal regulations entailed the risk of pushing Christians to convert to Islam. Theodoros Agallianos, the scholar appointed by Gennadios Scholarios to the office of *megas chartophylax* of the patriarchate – the official in charge of marriages, among others – was well aware of the subtle balances he had to maintain. Therefore, in the performance of his duties he gave permission for the

²² In ancient Greek the word *οικονομία*, from which derives the word “economy”, initially meant “household management”. In the ecclesiastical-theological context, it acquired, among others, the meanings “prudent handling, consideration for special circumstances, concession”. On the concept of *οικονομία*, see the study of Amilkas S. Alivizatos, *Ἡ οἰκονομία κατὰ τὸ Κανονικὸν Δίκαιον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* (Athens: Astir, 1949), and the bibliography cited by Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges Gennadios-Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472): Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 2008), 149n60.

²³ “Οἱ χριστιανοὶ ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ τῇ δύσει μαρτυροῦσι διὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πίστιν καθ’ ἐκάστην καὶ ὑπομένουσι θλίψεις ἀνεκδιηγῆτους καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐξουθενήσομέν τινας ἢ λυπηθησόμεθα, ὅτι ἐπελάθοντο τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ἑωθινοῦ εὐαγγελίου, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐβδόμου τυχὸν ἀνέγνωσαν τὸ ἕνατον;” See the recent publication of the *πιττάκιον*’s text in Paizi-Apostolopoulou and Apostolopoulos, *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα*, 55–64, specifically 61–62, l. 238–42.

religious solemnisation of marriages, interpreting canon law with authority and flexibility. In fact, the legality of certain permissions he gave was later disputed (ante October 1474) by patriarchal contenders who denounced him for breaking the law.²⁴

One of Agallianos' accusers was the current *megas ecclesiarchis* Manouil Christonymos, who was later elected patriarch as Maximos III shortly after the controversy (in spring 1476). In the summer of 1477 Maximos convened a plenary synod in Constantinople to settle critical issues relating to the Great Church. Some of the synod's decisions were announced to the Christians of the empire through an encyclical that was issued in August 1477. The letter included regulations that aimed at improving the organisation of the church and the everyday life of Orthodox Christians.²⁵

With the encyclical's regulations, Maximos attempted to set a strict legal framework regarding marriage for Christians. Henceforth marriages should be made only if the legal conditions were met, divorces would be permitted only for legal reasons, matters related to dowry should be settled only through the church, while the church would refuse a Christian funeral to Christians who chose to live together according to Islamic law.²⁶ The codification of the encyclical's regulations aimed at the social cohesion of Christians and at bringing them together around the institution of the Orthodox Church. Besides, it was clearly stated in the text that: "Primarily, we have to preserve our heavenly and Orthodox faith pure and solid, and therefore to be prepared to die for it, should it be requested of us, and not to prefer or prioritise anything over it."²⁷

²⁴ On Agallianos, see Christos G. Patrinelis, *Ὁ Θεόδωρος Ἀγαλλιανὸς ταυτιζόμενος πρὸς τὸν Θεοφάνη Μηδείας καὶ οἱ ἀνέκδοτοι λόγοι του* (Athens: s.n., 1966); on the cases of marriages for which he was later accused, see also Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, "Γάμοι, κωλύματα καὶ οἱ 'κατ' οικονομίαν' ρυθμίσεις τοὺς μετὰ τὴν Ἀλωση," in *Κωνσταντίνω Γ. Πιτσάκη Μνήμης χάριν*, ed. Maria Youni and Lydia Paparriga-Artemiadi (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2023), 311–20.

²⁵ For the publication of the encyclical text and commentary, see Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou and D.G. Apostolopoulos, *Μετὰ τὴν κατάκτηση: Στοχαστικὲς προσαρμογὲς τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως σὲ ἀνέκδοτη ἐγκύκλιο τοῦ 1477* (Athens: NHRF, 2006); the authors have republished the act in *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα*, 166–71.

²⁶ "Τοὺς... ἔθνη καὶ τρόπῳ κατηνιαζομένους". In some cases Christians of the Ottoman Empire chose to live together without asking for the blessing of the Orthodox Church. They entered thus into a kind of "civil" marriage, which was called "γάμος διὰ κεπηνίου ἢ καπηνίου" in Greek sources and which is mentioned for the first time in Maximos' encyclical of August 1477; see Paizi-Apostolopoulou and Apostolopoulos, *Μετὰ τὴν κατάκτηση*, 63, l. 187–88, and 75–76, with previous literature on the subject.

²⁷ "Καὶ πρῶτον μὲν τηρῶμεν τὴν οὐράνιον καὶ ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν ἡμῶν ἀκραφνῇ καὶ ἀσάλευτον, ὡς εἰ δεήσει ἐτοιμοὺς ἡμᾶς εἶναι καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς ἀποθνήσκειν καὶ μηδὲν ταύτης

However, it was for the same reason, namely for the preservation of the faith and cohesion of Christians, that the patriarchs of the following centuries encountered respective challenges on a case-by-case basis, demonstrating flexibility and open-mindedness.²⁸ For example, it is known that Christians having the same godfather were considered as spiritual siblings under canon law and thus it was strictly forbidden for them to marry each other. Nevertheless, we also know that Patriarch Mitrophanis III (January 1565–4 May 1572, mid-November 1579–9 August 1580) allowed a marriage of this kind to be officiated. Specifically, the priest Georgios, who was serving the patriarchate as *megas sakellarios*, submitted to the synod the question if his daughter could be legally wed to a man who had also been baptised by her godfather. In the respective patriarchal act, issued by Mitrophanis in January 1580, it was stated that the synod consulted on the subject a respectful and wise official of the Great Church, *megas logothetis* Hierax.²⁹ He confirmed that four – presumably similar – marriages had been allowed under a previous patriarch, Dionysios II (17 April 1546–July 1556), and they had neither been disputed nor dissolved in the meantime (approximately 30 years). *Megas sakellarios* Georgios was therefore given permission to officiate at this wedding, and Mitrophanis' patriarchal act stipulated that nobody should obstruct respective marriages,

for we are obliged to safeguard that which is explicitly written and put to ink by our Holy Fathers, but not to place strain on the many and bring dismay on Christian consciences with absurdities, which would be exceptionally detrimental to those that devise them, and diverge

προτιμᾶν ἢ προτιθέναι”; see Paizi-Apostolopoulou and Apostolopoulos, *Μετὰ τὴν κατάκτηση*, 57, l. 52–55; *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα*, 167, l. 42–45.

²⁸ For the Orthodox Church's tolerance in matrimonial and divorce issues during the post-Byzantine period. see Eleftheria S. Papagianni, *Ἡ νομολογία τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν δικαστηρίων τῆς βυζαντινῆς καὶ μεταβυζαντινῆς περιόδου σὲ θέματα περιουσιακοῦ δικαίου*, vol. 2, *Οἰκογενειακὸ δίκαιο* (Athens: Ant. N. Sakkoulas, 1997), 120–24; Despoina Papastathi, “Observations sur la culture juridique des Grecs orthodoxes sous la domination ottomane (milieu du XVe–milieu du XIXe siècle),” *Études Balkaniques* 19–20 (2013–2014): 123, 130n92, 132, 133n100; Despina Tsourka-Papastathi, “Le droit privé byzantin sous la domination ottomane: mécanismes de survie et d'évolution,” *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* (1922–) 97, no. 2 (2019): 173–74, 176, and the bibliography cited in these studies.

²⁹ Regarding Hierax, see Patrinelis, “Πατριαρχικά γράμματα,” 116–65, specifically 147–50; Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos, *Ἀνάγλυφα μιᾶς τέχνης νομικῆς: Βυζαντινὸ δίκαιο καὶ μεταβυζαντινὴ “νομοθεσία”* (Athens: NHRF, 1999), 63–64n65; Apostolopoulos, ed., *Τὸ Νόμιμον τῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας, 1564–ci. 1593*, vol. 1, *Τὸ ἱστορικὸ περίγραμμα: Τὰ πανομοιότυπα* (Athens: NHRF, 2008), 20–21.

the people of the Lord from norm, and teach the commandments of humans rather than those of God according to His sayings.³⁰

Nevertheless, we are aware that this issue was posed again in 1583, during the mandate of Patriarch Hieremias II, and also in 1611, under Neophytos II.³¹ This

³⁰ “φυλάττειν γὰρ χρέος ἔχομεν τὰ ῥητῶς γεγραμμένα καὶ τοῖς θείοις πατράσι τετυπωμένα, οὐχὶ δὲ παραλογισμοῖς ἄγχειν τοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ στενοχωρεῖν τὰς τῶν χριστιανῶν συνειδήσεις ὅπερ κρίμα οὐ τὸ τυχὸν τοῖς τοιαῦτα κατασοφισζόμενοις, καὶ τὸν τοῦ Κυρίου λαὸν τῆς εὐθείας παρεκτρέπουσι καὶ ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων διδάσκουσι καὶ οὐ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, κατὰ τὸ θεῖον λόγιον”; see A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, ed., *Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 4 (Saint Petersburg: V. Kirschbaum, 1899), 417–18, specifically 418, who published the text of Mitrophanis’ patriarchal act of January 1580, based on MS Athens, ΜΠΤ 441. The decisions of Patriarch Dionysios II mentioned in Mitrophanis’ act have not been preserved. We know, however, that Dionysios dealt with matters of matrimonial law and issued patriarchal acts in September 1546, June 1551 and February 1554; for the respective mentions to these acts, see Apostolopoulos, *Ἀνάγλυφα*, 42–45, 46–48. It should be noted here that some years later, in September 1560, the successor of Dionysios II, Patriarch Ioasaph II (summer 1556–January 1565), issued a letter regulating matrimonial matters, which did not, however, refer to the impediment in question (cf. Stavros I. Papadatos, *Περὶ τῆς μνηστείας εἰς τὸ βυζαντινὸν δίκαιον* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1984), 319); see the recent publication of the text in Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, Youli Evangelou and D.G. Apostolopoulos, eds., *Ἐπίσημα κείμενα τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, vol. 2, *Τὰ σωζόμενα ἀπὸ τὴν περίοδο 1498–1565* (Athens: NHRF, 2021), 411–14.

³¹ According to Alexios Spanos, the church finally realised that deeming Christians with the same godfather as relatives could not be easily observed nor protected; therefore, Patriarch Hieremias II and the synod permitted these marriages in 1583, and Patriarch Neophytos II confirmed later this stipulation, as it became clear from the synodal note he distributed to all the ecclesiastical provinces. Spanos referred to this subject in his work “Περὶ τῶν συνοικεσιῶν ἐγγχειρίδιον”, published for the first time in Konstantinos Armenopoulos, *Πρόχειρον, τὸ λεγόμενον Ἡΐξάβιβλος εἰς κοινὴν γλῶσσαν μεταφρασθεῖσα, Διορθωθείσα δὲ... παρὰ Ἀλεξίου Σπανοῦ τοῦ ἐξ Ἰωαννίνων, Ὑφ’ οὗ καὶ τὸ Περὶ τῶν Συνοικεσιῶν Ἐγγχειρίδιον προσετέθη* (Venice: Nikolaos Glykys, 1744), 496–562, specifically 558–59 (on this specific publication of *Ἡΐξάβιβλος*, rendered in the vernacular by Alexios Spanos, and its republications, see Constantinos G. Pitsakis, ed., *Κωνσταντίνου Ἀρμενόπουλου Πρόχειρον νόμων ἢ Ἡΐξάβιβλος* (Athens: Dodoni, 1971), ογ’–ος’). The text of the synodal decision of 1583 is not extant (cf. Manuel I. Gedeon, ed., *Κανονικαὶ διατάξεις*, vol. 1 (Constantinople: Patriarchikou Typ., 1888), 33–34). The Neophytos’ synodal note mentioned by Spanos is the act of May 1611 cited above in n. 1, in the extended form it acquired when it was registered in the official codex of the patriarchate, the Sacred Codex (Rallis and Potlis, *Σύνταγμα*, 5:157–58). For the concise form of the same synodal note, registered in the official law compilation of the patriarchate, see Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos, “Ἐνα ἴσον ἐκβλήθην ἀπὸ τοῦ Μεγάλου Νομίμου,” in *Ροδωνία: Τιμὴ στὸν Μ.Ι. Μανούσακα*, ed. Chryssa Maltezu, T. Detorakis and C. Charalampakis (Rethymno: University of Crete, 1994), 1:25–35, and Apostolopoulos, *Ἀνάγλυφα*, 211–13.

bears evidence to the fact that the patriarchs could not easily make far-reaching changes regarding the implementation of Byzantine law in matrimonial issues. An innovative patriarchal decision would not acquire normative character and general application unless it was repeatedly confirmed by patriarchs and plenary synods, through official acts (patriarchal *τόμοι*).³²

During his third mandate, Hieremias II was confronted with one more challenge that was matrimonial in nature. Chandax (current Heraklion), on Crete, was severely hit by a plague epidemic from 1592 to 1594, which resulted in thousands of deaths.³³ Many of the inhabitants who survived turned to second marriages, a practise that offered solutions to the urgent social problems that had arisen. The holy canons did not, however, allow priests nor widows of priests to enter a second marriage. Hieremias II faced a dilemma: would he remove the existing prohibition with the risk of being charged with breaking church rules by his contemporaries, or would he safeguard those rules, applying extra pressure on the Christian population of Chandax?³⁴ Along with the holy synod, Hieremias chose to apply the ecclesiastical principle of *οικονομία*, removing the prohibition in 1593/1594, and he was indeed publicly and severely criticised by the Cretan hieromonk and preacher Ioannis-Ioasaph Doryanos. Patriarch Meletios Pigas of Alexandria, who actively supported the ecumenical patriarch's decision and took part in the handling of the Doryanos affair, made the following observation: "Standing beside those who cannot reach the verge of virtue, to this man-loving

³² See the relevant comment of Zacharias N. Mathas, *Κατάλογος ιστορικός τῶν πρώτων ἐπισκόπων καὶ τῶν ἐφεξῆς πατριαρχῶν* (Athens: Andreas Koromilas, 1884), 156, 320n256, regarding an innovation introduced by Patriarch Samouil I Chantzeris (24 May 1763–5 November 1768, 17 November 1773–24 December 1774), who allowed marriage between two siblings and two first cousins. For Samouil's decisions on issues of marriage and dowry, see Vasileios K. Bakouros, *Σαμουήλ Χαντζερής ο Βυζάντιος (1700–1775): Η συμβολή του στην πνευματική κίνηση του Γένους κατά τον 18ο αιώνα* (Athina: Prosopon, 2008), 129–57.

³³ On the plague epidemic of 1592–1594 in Chandax, see Spyridon Lambros, *Βραχεία χρονικά*, ed. Konstantinos I. Amantos (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1932), 14–16; Filippo Pasqualigo, "Relazione letta nell' eccellentissimo Senato, 1594," in Stergios G. Spanakis, ed., *Μνημεία τῆς κρητικῆς ιστορίας*, vol. 3 (Heraklion: s.n., 1953), 64–114; Kostas P. Kostis, *Στον καιρό της πανώλης: Εικόνες από τις κοινωνίες της ελληνικής χερσονήσου, 14ος–19ος αιώνας* (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2020), 347, 351–52, with further literature.

³⁴ On the jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarchs on Crete during the Venetian occupation of the island, see the remarks by Constantinos G. Pitsakis, "Η ανατολική Εκκλησία της βενετοκρατούμενης Επτανήσου: Σε αναζήτηση μιας ανέφικτης 'κανονικότητας'," in *Ζ' Πανιώνιο Συνέδριο, Λευκάδα, 26–30 Μαΐου 2002, Πρακτικά*, vol. 1, *Πρώτο τμήμα, Ζητήματα πολιτισμικής ιστορίας* (Athens: Etaireia Lefkadikon Meleton, 2004), 481–512, specifically 490–91.

indulgence instead of gratitude, public defamations are presented, which have been unnecessary and inappropriately scandalous to the Church of Christ.”³⁵

IV

At a first level, the official introduction of a new reason for defrocking by Patriarch Hieremias II in 1593 and the wide application of this normative clause could be considered as an unacceptable novelty from the point of view of ecclesiastical law. In reality, however, it was a form of adaptation of a very serious ecclesiastical punishment to the new, financial necessities of the post-Byzantine period. It should also be noted that the severest ecclesiastical punishment, excommunication, followed a parallel path of adaptation to the circumstances that derived from the expansion of the church’s jurisdiction after the Fall of Constantinople.³⁶

Besides, the patriarchs who occasionally applied the ecclesiastical *οικονομία* to matrimonial issues, despite the respective prohibitions, or who undertook to lift a particular legal impediment to marriage, might in the first place be accused of inconsistency as to a substantial commitment of their institutional role, namely the preservation of the inherited rules of the Orthodox Church. After all, the Old Testament proverb “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy own fathers have set” was one of the most popular quotations of the patriarchal chancellery.³⁷ When we place, however, each patriarchal decision within its historical context and when we examine the sources carefully, we discover the underlying dilemmas and the delicate balances that had to be observed.

³⁵ “Συγκαταβάντες γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν μὴ δυναμένων εἰς τὸ ἄκρον ἀφικέσθαι τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἀντικομίσασθαι ταύτης τῆς οἰκονομίας τῆς φιλανθρώπου ἀντ’ εὐχαριστίας ὕβριν δημόσιον, καὶ παρὰ δέον, καὶ μετὰ σκανδάλου τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας ἄτοπον ἦν.” On the aforementioned decision taken by Hieremias II in 1593/1594 and the reaction of Doryanos, see the letters of Meletios Pigas published by Agathangelos Ninolakis, ed., *Ἡ πρὸς τοὺς Κρήτας ἀλληλογραφία Μελετίου τοῦ Πηγᾶ* (Chania: Nea Erevna, 1908), 30–32, 33–38, and Methodios Phougas, ed., *Μελετίου Πηγᾶ Ἐπιστολαί* (Athens: s.n., 1976), 79–81, 88–92, 99–103. See the passage “Συγκαταβάντες... ἦν” in Ninolakis, 37, and Phougas, 102. See also the comment on the subject by Constantinos G. Pitsakis, “Μάξιμος Μαργούνιος, Ἐπίσκοπος Κυθήρων: Μία προσέγγιση ἀπὸ τὴν ἀποψη τῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ δικαίου,” in *Ἡ Διεθνὲς Πανιόνιο Συνέδριο, Κύθηρα, 21–25 Μαΐου 2006*, vol. 2/2, *Θεσμοὶ (Μέρος Β΄): Λαογραφία* (Athens: Etairia Kytheraikou Meleton, 2009), 154–55, who supports that the prohibition of a second marriage for priests’ widows was not actually based on canon law, and that it was imaginary (the relevant literature on 154n21).

³⁶ See Panagiotis D. Michailaris, *Ἀφορισμός: Ἡ προσαρμογὴ μιᾶς ποινῆς στὴς ἀναγκαιότητες τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας* (Athens: NHRF, 1997).

³⁷ “Μὴ μέταίρε ὅρια αἰῶνια, ἃ ἔθεντο οἱ πατέρες σου”; Prov. 22:28.

It should also be noted that the relations that had developed in the sixteenth century between the patriarchate of Constantinople and the sovereigns of Russia, as well as the theological-confessional dialogue of the Protestant theologians of Tübingen with Patriarch Hieremias II, relations primarily connected to the ecumenicity and the Byzantine inheritance of the institution, offer rich material for the study of this article's topic. Historical research has thoroughly examined both fields from multiple perspectives, demonstrating the complex nature of facts and phenomena related to ecclesiastical institutions and religion.

The extant texts of the patriarchal acts are beyond question the most precious source for the study of the multiple functions of the ecumenical patriarchate. Through their lines, though, we are occasionally able to discern the human side of the patriarchs. For this reason, it seems appropriate to conclude this article with a quote from a letter that Patriarch Hieremias II addressed to two scholarly prelates who were in dispute over a doctrinal issue, Metropolitan Gavriil Seviros of Philadelphia and Bishop of Kythera Maximos Margounios, in his attempt to reconcile them. This testimony reveals how one of the most prominent representatives of the Great Church during the second half of sixteenth century perceived the management of multi-level challenges and the burden of responsibility entailed in this reality: "Our humbleness is henceforth obliged to correct whatever needed and can be corrected, despite our many burdens and woes, which the entire world knows, and not one person has not heard of."³⁸

Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

³⁸ "χρέος ἐπίκειται ἀπαραίτητον τῇ ἡμῶν μετρίότητι τὰ ἐκασταχοῦ δεόμενα διορθώσεως εἰς ἐφικτὸν διορθοῦν, καὶ τοι γε ἐνασχολουμένη περὶ πολλὰ βάρη καὶ πάθη, ἃ πᾶσα ἡ ὑφήλιος οἶδε, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνῆκοος γέγονε"; see the publication of the text by Sathas, *Βιογραφικὸν σχεδιάσμα*, 162–63, specifically 162. Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos, "Ne discutez pas sur le sexe des anges": Jérémie II réprimande Gabriel Séviros et Maxime Margounios," in Apostolopoulos, *Gavriil Seviros*, 137–44, specifically 138–43, supported that the letter was issued either between June 1587–July 1588 or *post* July 1590–*ante* April 1591. On Gavriil Seviros and Maximos Margounios, see also Kostas G. Tsiknakis, "Γαβριὴλ Σεβήρος, μητρ. Φιλαδελφείας," *Μεγάλη Ορθόδοξη Χριστιανική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 4 (Athens: Strategikes Ekdoseis, 2011): 483–86; Erika Elia and Rosa Maria Piccione, "A Rediscovered Library: Gabriel Severos and his Books," in *Greeks, Books and Libraries in Renaissance Venice*, ed. Rosa Maria Piccione (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 33–82; Federica Ciccolella, "Maximos Margounios and Anacreontic Poetry: An Introductory Study," in Piccione, *Greeks, Books and Libraries*, 147–60; Zisis Melissakis, "Testi di Angelo Lollino e Massimo Margunio reperiti sul monte Athos," in *Φιλόδομος εὐμενείας: Miscellanea di studi in ricordo di mons. Paul Canart*, ed. Marco D'Agostino and Luca Pieralli (Vatican City: Scuola vaticana di paleografia diplomatica e archivistica 2021), 413–32, studies with previous literature.