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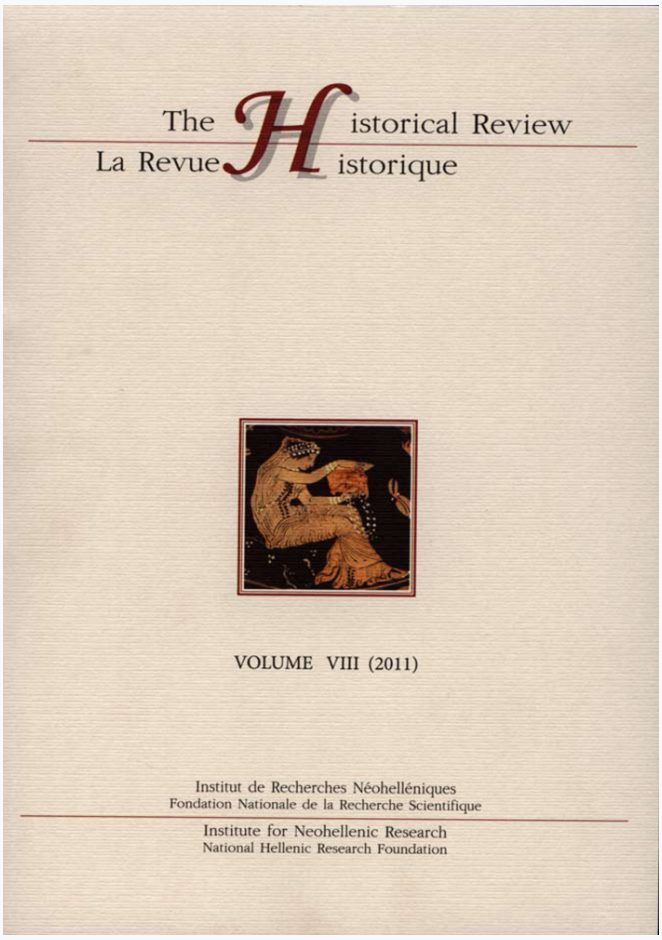

Neophytos Vamvas and Religious Toleration

Nicholas Eliopoulos

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NEOPHYTOS VAMVAS AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

Nicholas Eliopoulos

Abstract: According to Neophytos Vamvas (1766/70-1855), the Greek State in which he lives is not religiously homogenous. Vamvas thinks that within the borders of this state one can find, in addition to the faithful Orthodox majority, religious minorities that he classifies as "faithless". How, according to Vamvas, should the faithful Orthodox majority of the Greek State treat these minorities? Vamvas teaches that Greek Orthodox Christians should not hate and persecute their faithless minorities. Rather they should treat them in accordance with the biblical commandment "Love thy neighbour". According to Vamvas, such love demands that Greek Orthodox Christians work for the conversion of the faithless to Orthodoxy. This seems to suggest that we should think of Vamvas as an advocate of religious intolerance; but this is wrong. Vamvas' "Love thy neighbour" is – or at least can be interpreted as being – a call for religious toleration. However, it is unlikely that minorities living in a Greek State organised in accordance with Vamvas' conception of toleration will be happy with their treatment.

In his *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* [Elements of ethics], Neophytos Vamvas (1766/70-1855) makes it clear that, in his view, Christianity is the only true religion:

> Necessary for the natural and political deficiencies of man is a principle of morality that is always clear, forceful, faultless, incorruptible, that is to say, God Himself, the only self-sufficient and passionless master and judge of all men; and true faith [ἀληθινὴ πίστις] in God, which is the Christian faith.[1]

[1] Neophytos Vamvas, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* [Elements of ethics], Athens ²1845, p. 11. All translations are my own. Those who read only English and who are coming to Vamvas for the first time should consult Bruce Merry, *The Encyclopedia of Modern Greek Literature*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004, pp. 449-50, for an overview of Vamvas' life and work. They should also see G. P. Henderson, *The Ionian Academy*, Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1988, pp. 52-54, for an account of Vamvas' time as professor at the Ionian Academy, as well as the items in note 2 below. There are numerous works on Vamvas in Modern Greek, but two items by Athanasia Glykofridi-Leontsini stand out as particularly important discussions of his thought: "Η αισθητική θεωρία του Βάμβα. Μια περίπτωση αφομίωσης" [The aesthetic theory of Vamvas: a case of assimilation]", in *Νεοελληνική αισθιτική και Ευρωπαϊκός Διαφωτισμός* [Neohellenic aesthetics and the European Enlightenment], Athens 1989, pp. 52-75, and "Ο Νεόφυτος Βάμβας και

Vamvas' view of Christianity as the only true religion comes out elsewhere in his writings. In his *Σύντομος ἀπάντησις* [Short reply], he approves of the Bible Society's efforts to "translate and teach the Bible to nations that have not been taught the Christian faith, with the aim to enlighten these nations with the transmission of the divine word".[2] In other words, those who have not been taught and do not subscribe to the Christian faith lack "the divine word". Further, in his massive and posthumously published *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ* [Natural theology and Christian ethics], Vamvas characterises "faith" [πίστις] in unequivocally Christian terms.[3] He then goes on to explicitly classify Judaism and Islam as forms of "faithlessness" [ἀπιστία].[4]

Although Vamvas takes Christianity to be the only true religion, he does not think that all Christian denominations are equally true. In *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ* he places among the faithless, not only Jews and Muslims, but also those he calls "heretics". "Heresy," Vamvas tells us, "is faithlessness [ἀπιστία] that is opposed not to all, but to part of the biblical teaching."[5] According to Vamvas, then, not all Christian denominations

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το πρόβλημα της ελευθερίας" [Neophytos Vamvas and the problem of freedom], in *Νεοελληνική Φιλοσοφία. Θέματα πολιτικής και ηθικής* [Neohellenic philosophy: political and moral questions], Athens: Kardamitsa, 2001, pp. 69-141. Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός. Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες* [Neohellenic Enlightenment: political and social ideas], Athens: MIET, 1996, pp. 461-462, has a short but insightful discussion of Vamvas' place in Modern Greek liberalism. He describes Vamvas as the "least radical" of Korais' supporters and argues that *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* – or rather the first edition of that work, *Στοιχεῖα τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Ἠθικῆς* [Elements of philosophical ethics], Venice 1818 – "developed the vocabulary of political liberalism in the Greek language" (p. 461). Also worth mentioning is Roxane Argyropoulos, *Νεοελληνικός ηθικός και πολιτικός στοχασμός. Από το Διαφωτισμό στον Ρομαντισμό* [Neohellenic moral and political thought: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism], Thessaloniki: Vanias, 2003, pp. 68-70, who discusses Vamvas' theory of natural rights.

[2] Neophytos Vamvas, *Σύντομος ἀπάντησις πρὸς τὸν ὑποκρυπτόμενον ὑπὸ Ζ. Π. Ρ* [Short reply to the one hiding behind (the initials) Z. P. R], Athens 1837, p. 12. On Vamvas and the translation of the Bible into Modern Greek, see Charles A. Frazze, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 137-139. See also N. M. Vaporis, *Translating the Scriptures into Modern Greek*, Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994.

[3] Neophytos Vamvas, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ* [Natural theology and Christian ethics], Alexandria 1893, pp. 278-279.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[5] *Ibid.*

are on an equal footing. Some – though he does not say which ones – are heretical and thus belong to the ranks of the faithless.[6]

Vamvas' view of non-Christians (such as Jews and Muslims) and of heretical Christians as faithless raises an important question: how, according to Vamvas, should a country which is made up predominantly of faithful Christians treat minorities it considers faithless? We can sharpen the focus of this question, for, according to Vamvas, the Greece in which he lives is such a country. Although he often describes Greece as a Christian country – Orthodox Christian of course – he does not consider Greece to be religiously homogenous. In his view, the country is inhabited by people he deems faithless.[7] Let us, therefore, recast our question as follows: how, according to Vamvas, should the Orthodox majority of the Greek State in which he lives treat its faithless minorities? This is the question that I will attempt to answer in this paper. I hope to show that, despite initial appearances to the contrary, Vamvas is an advocate of religious toleration, and that, therefore, his view is that Orthodox Greeks should treat the faithless with toleration. I will argue, however, that, given Vamvas' conception of toleration, this might not be good advice.

I

As the passage from *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* quoted at the beginning of this paper makes clear, Christianity – true Christianity, of course – plays a foundational role in Vamvas' moral and political thought. A few pages after this passage Vamvas emphasises the significance of the biblical commandment "Love thy

[6] Of course, as an Orthodox cleric, Vamvas takes Eastern Orthodoxy to be non-heretical; see, for example, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, pp. 94, 199; *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, pp. 113-114, 211-212, 285-286.

[7] That this is so comes out in *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*. Here (p. 284), Vamvas declares that members of the Greek Orthodox "laity" [λαϊκοὺς] should be forbidden to discuss matters of faith with "the faithless" [ἀπίστους] from the motive of "φιλονεικία" [love of strife, contentiousness]. Arguably, Vamvas would not have bothered to formulate this rule unless he thought that there was a very real possibility that, in their everyday lives, members of the Greek Orthodox laity would come into contact with the faithless. If so, then we have good reason to believe that, in Vamvas' view, the Greek State in which he lives is inhabited by people who belong to faithless religions. We should note that Vamvas' aforementioned rule only forbids members of the Orthodox laity from discussing matters of faith with the faithless *out of φιλονεικία*. Thus, provided that a Greek Orthodox layman avoids φιλονεικία, there is no reason why he cannot discuss matters of faith with his faithless neighbour.

neighbour": "Our divine religion explicitly orders us to love our neighbour as the second commandment of God."[8] Elsewhere, Vamvas argues that "The love of one's neighbour is the practical part of the Christian faith."[9] In view of these statements, it seems clear that, for Vamvas, Greek Orthodox Christians ought to live in accordance with the commandment "Love thy neighbour" – and, according to Vamvas, loving one's neighbour precludes hatred: "This command [that is, 'Love thy neighbour']...forbids hatred at all times."[10] Whom, according to Vamvas, should a Greek Orthodox Christian consider as his neighbour? Vamvas' answer is clear: "Every person".[11] Now, if Vamvas thinks that Greek Orthodox Christians ought to live in accordance with the commandment "Love thy neighbour" – a commandment that "forbids hatred at all times" – and if he also thinks that Greek Orthodox Christians should think of all people as their neighbours, then it seems safe to suggest that, for him, Greek Orthodox Christians ought never hate the faithless minorities living among them but should instead relate to these minorities in accordance with the commandment "Love thy neighbour".

A number of passages from *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* – passages in which the biblical commandment that we ought to love our neighbour is clearly active – lend support to this suggestion:

> [Fellow citizens]...must love and help each other as members of the same body, as creatures of the same nature as the Creator himself, even if they differ according to their religious beliefs and the ways in which they worship God.[12]
>
> I have a duty to love, and to help in time of need, any person whatever...Differences in belief do not nullify the duties of benevolence/humanity [φιλανθρωπίας][13]...Thus, if I feel and am completely convinced that I have the truth in me, I have no right to hate the one who has been deceived...How foolish, unjust, and inhuman are those who hate others due to differences in political beliefs, intellectual beliefs, or even differences in religious beliefs![14]

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[8] Vamvas, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 28. Clearly, Vamvas is thinking of Matthew 23:39.

[9] *Id.*, *Σύντομος ἀπάντησις*, p. 13.

[10] *Id.*, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 300.

[11] *Id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 28, and *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 298: "all people are our neighbours". See also *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 160, and *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 300.

[12] *Id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 149.

[13] Note *ibid.*, p. 160: "φιλανθρωπία, as the word itself makes clear, is love for humans, which is also called the *love of one's neighbour*" [Vamvas' emphasis].

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

The following passage goes a step further by introducing persecution into the picture:

> This heavenly faith of ours is all love...[Thus] to hate a man so as to seek revenge and to persecute [κατατρέχῃς] him, this is no longer human but beastly and the cause of great evil. Whatever is a member of the human race must to all be the object of honour and love... Just because the man who lives next door to you, or your relative, or your fellow citizen has a different inclination from you, different ideas and different convictions, does this mean that you have the right to violate the duties you owe him as a citizen, as a neighbour, as a human, as a Christian? Is there any injustice more inhuman than this or any absurdity greater than this? What? Do you want to bring others into submission so that they think in accordance with the ideas in your head? And if they don't, to persecute [κατατρέχεις] them? Which Christian law, which argument, permits you to hate, to have malevolence for, to plot and wish ill against those who did not receive the same upbringing, the same education, the same mind as you? According to you, all humans would have to be in a state of constant war, for it is impossible for all humans to have the same beliefs and the same way of thinking. Keep clear, therefore, of these hatreds and passions that are forbidden both by right reason, and by the heavenly morality of the Holy Scriptures, seeing that this morality is all benevolence/humanity [φιλανθρωπία] and brotherly love.[15]

If there is any doubt that it is Vamvas' view that Greek Orthodox Christians ought to love the faithless minorities living among them in accordance with the biblical commandment "Love thy neighbour", the following passage from *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ* should put this doubt to rest: "[The biblical commandment that we ought to love our neighbour] includes...all people in general: those who are just, those who are sinners, friends, enemies, strangers, *the faithless* [ἄπιστον]; for all people are our neighbours."[16]

It seems that we have already arrived at an answer to our question. Our question was: how, according to Vamvas, should the Orthodox majority of the Greek State treat its faithless minorities? And the answer is: according to Vamvas, the Orthodox majority should not hate and persecute these minorities, but instead should love them as neighbours. It appears, then, that there is nothing left for us to do, except perhaps to commend Vamvas for advocating what seems to be an admirable view about the way in which his people should treat those they consider faithless.

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[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

[16] *Id.*, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 298 [my emphasis].

However, to end the discussion here would be hasty. For Vamvas' answer to our question raises a new question: how does Vamvas interpret the commandment "Love thy neighbour" as it applies to the faithless? Without an answer to this question we cannot say exactly what Vamvas has in mind when he says that Greek Orthodox Christians should love as neighbours the faithless who live among them. Nor can we say with any certainty whether we should describe Vamvas' position as admirable and commendable.

II

What does it mean, for Vamvas, for Greek Orthodox Christians to love the faithless as neighbours? The first two passages from *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* quoted in the second paragraph of the previous section are helpful, for note that in both passages Vamvas conjoins "love" and "help". This suggests that, for Vamvas, there is an intimate connection between loving another as a neighbour and helping him or her. This suggestion gains support if we turn to *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*. Here, after telling us that the commandment that we ought to love our neighbour applies to all people, Vamvas goes on to explain how we should love our neighbour, namely "with love of dispositional and practical goodwill".[17] According to this idea, loving another as a neighbour involves having a disposition of goodwill towards him or her. The mention of "*practical* goodwill" suggests that, for Vamvas, this love involves much more than having a mere disposition of goodwill. It also involves action, action that flows from goodwill. This comes out clearly elsewhere in *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*: "True love...is an act of goodwill."[18] What does this mean? It means "to want for our neighbour the good and, as much as we can, to help him in his need".[19] On the basis of all this, we can attribute to Vamvas the view that to love another as a neighbour is to actively seek to help the other.

What does Vamvas have in mind when he talks about active help? Or better: how, according to Vamvas, should Greek Orthodox Christians actively help the faithless neighbours who are the objects of their Christian love? In *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, after telling us that to love one's neighbour is "to want for our neighbour the good and, as much as we can, to help him in his need", Vamvas immediately adds, "...and *first and foremost* to want, with piety and prudence, to contribute to his eternal salvation and to the

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 291. In the same passage Vamvas makes it clear that this "true love" includes the Christian love of one's neighbour.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

necessary means to the achievement of this".[20] What, according to Vamvas, is necessary for salvation? Belief in Christ: "The people must know the path to their salvation; but the path to this salvation is Christ."[21] According to Vamvas, then, one loves and helps his faithless neighbour by getting that neighbour to embrace Christianity – true Christianity, of course – for this is the path to salvation.

We can derive the same idea from *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*. Here, after telling us under the heading of "Φιλανθρωπία" (humanity/benevolence) – which, we should recall, Vamvas equates with the love of one's neighbour –[22] that "If I feel and am completely convinced that I have the truth in me, I have no right to hate the one who has been deceived," he adds "...on the contrary, I must pity him and, if possible, free him from deception."[23] In other words, the person with φιλανθρωπία loves and helps his neighbour by doing what he can to impart the truth to that neighbour, including, no doubt, the religious truth.

With this in mind we can return to our question – how, according to Vamvas, should Greek Orthodox Christians actively help the faithless who are the objects of their love? – and answer the question as follows: Greek Orthodox Christians should help their faithless neighbours by doing what they can to convert them to the true faith, for by doing so Greek Orthodox Christians contribute to the salvation of the faithless. Of course, in the Greek State in which Vamvas lives, the true faith is Eastern Orthodoxy. Thus, when Vamvas urges Greek Orthodox Christians to love the faithless in accordance with the commandment "Love thy neighbour", and therefore to help the faithless, what he is suggesting is that Greek Orthodox Christians should strive to convert the faithless to Orthodoxy. It is important to note that, according to Vamvas, government is not excluded from the requirement to save (and thus convert) the faithless, for, in his view, the "ultimate aim [of government] is and ought to be the eternal happiness of the people; for every human government must consider...the eternal salvation of the people".[24] There is no reason to think that, for Vamvas, "the people" does not include those considered faithless.

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[20] *Ibid* [my emphasis].

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

[22] *Id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, note 13.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[24] *Id.*, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 208. Thus Vamvas would disagree with John Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration", in Ian Shapiro (ed.), *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003, p. 218, who distinguishes "the business of civil government from that of religion" and on the basis of this distinction argues that the authority of the state "neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the soul and its pursuit of salvation".

The fact that Vamvas interprets the commandment "Love thy neighbour" as calling for the conversion of the faithless is disappointing, for it now seems that Vamvas is an advocate of religious intolerance. However, as I said, I want to argue that Vamvas is in fact an advocate of religious toleration. In what follows I hope to show that Vamvas' "Love thy neighbour" is – or at least can be interpreted as being – a call for religious toleration.

III

To show that Vamvas is an advocate of religious toleration we must first determine what toleration is. Having done that we must then ask: how well does Vamvas' interpretation of the commandment "Love thy neighbour" fit with this account of toleration?

I do not want to pretend that it is easy to answer the question of what toleration is. It is not. A look through the scholarly literature quickly reveals that there is much disagreement among scholars about how this term should be understood. Even so, John Horton seems to be right when he tells us (citing a number of scholars) that "It is widely agreed that the core of the concept of toleration is the refusal, where one has the power to do so, to prohibit or seriously interfere with conduct one finds objectionable."[25] Perhaps the best thing for us do within the confines of a single paper is to work with this "widely agreed" concept of toleration. According to this concept, toleration involves (at its core): (a) having a negative attitude towards another's conduct (or, we can add, opinion); (b) having the power to repress or "seriously interfere" with this objectionable conduct or opinion; and (c) refusing to exercise one's power to repress or "seriously interfere" with this objectionable conduct or opinion. Let me briefly say something about the three components that make up the core of the concept of toleration with which we are working.

Regarding component (a), Andrew Jason Cohen is helpful:

> Toleration is not indifference. If I see someone playing baseball (in which I have no interest) and walk past without interfering, we would not say I tolerate the behaviour. The reason for this seems straightforward: we think of ourselves as tolerating only when we recognize something and disapprove or, at least, dislike it...Some negative response is necessary for our lack of interference to count as toleration.[26]

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[25] John Horton, "Toleration as a Virtue", in D. Heyd (ed.), *Toleration*: *An Elusive Virtue*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 28-43, at p. 28.

[26] Andrew Jason Cohen, "What Toleration Is", *Ethics* CXV (2004), pp. 68-95, at p. 71.

We should note that Cohen adds that because toleration necessarily involves some sort of negative response it must be distinguished, not only from indifference, but also from multiculturalism: "Toleration is not pluralism or 'enthusiastic endorsement of difference' that might be better associated with certain sorts of multiculturalisms – one does not tolerate what one promotes. Cultural diversity and multiculturalism may or may not be values...but while toleration makes them possible, it does not require them."[27]

Turning to (b), it is widely recognised that this component is an important feature of toleration. As one scholar puts it: "...intervening must be something it lies within the tolerator's *power* to do – or at least must be believed to be so. I do not tolerate someone else's views if I would dearly love to gag them but lack the means to do so, as with internet regulation."[28]

With respect to (c), Cohen tells us that non-interference lies "at the heart of toleration".[29] Two things must be said about this non-interference:

(c1) Most scholars (including Horton)[30] agree that the *reason* for not interfering with behaviour, etc., that a person disapproves of is important for deciding whether or not we ought to describe that person as a tolerator. If that person refrains from interfering with an objectionable action out of, for example, fear of being punched in the mouth, then he is not tolerating that action. To be described as a tolerator that person must refrain from interference "for the right type of reason", for example, the person is entitled to perform the action,[31] or for a "principled" reason, that is, a reason "based on a value" such as "respect for the other tolerated or the value of toleration".[32]

That toleration involves some sort of dislike is expressed by others, such as Susan Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 8; Horton, "Toleration as a Virtue", p. 28; Peter Nicholson "Toleration as a Moral Ideal", in *Aspects of Toleration: Philosophical Studies*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus, London and New York: Methuen, 1985, pp. 158-173, at p. 161.

[27] Cohen, "What Toleration Is", p. 73. Note also Steven Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 67: "Tolerant people do not need to promote or encourage that which they tolerate. They are tolerant if they do not repress what they disapprove of."

[28] Glen Newey, "Is Democratic Toleration a Rubber Duck?", *Res Publica* VII (2001), pp. 315–336, at p. 317. See also Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism*, p. 9; Cohen, "What Toleration Is", p. 74; Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint*, p. 64; Nicholson "Toleration as a Moral Ideal", p. 161.

[29] Cohen, "What Toleration Is", p. 85.

[30] Horton, "Toleration as a Virtue", pp. 31-32.

[31] Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint*, pp. 64-65.

[32] Cohen, "What Toleration Is", pp. 80-81.

(c2) Does toleration involve the *complete* absence of interference? Recall that, according to Horton, toleration involves refusing to exercise one's power to repress or "seriously interfere" with conduct or opinions that one finds objectionable. The phrase "seriously interfere" suggests that toleration is compatible with *some* sort of interference, but what sort? Again, Cohen is helpful:

> Toleration is not a strict general principle of non-interference. Such a principle would prohibit any interference with others, including rational dialogue aimed at persuasion. If I try to persuade my sister not to have an abortion but then stand aside when she leaves to go to the family planning clinic, surely I may be tolerating her action. Toleration does not exclude rational dialogue [aimed at persuasion].[33]

If Cohen is right – and I think he is – then a person can be described as tolerating a belief or practice he disapproves of even though he tries to prevent or eradicate that belief or practice by means of rational persuasion.

With this account of the core of the concept of toleration in mind, let us return to Vamvas and ask how well his interpretation of the commandment "Love thy neighbour" fits with this account.[34]

Component (a)

Can we ascribe component (a) to Vamvas? Earlier we noted Vamvas' view that the commandment "Love thy neighbour" "forbids hatred at all times".[35] On the face of it, it sounds as though Vamvas' view is that Greek Orthodox Christians should never have any hatred of any sort in their hearts. If this is Vamvas' view, then it is hard to see how we can attribute component (a) to him: it is clear that this is *not* Vamvas' view. At one point in *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ* Vamvas reminds us that hatred of persons is forbidden, but he then adds that "hatred" is "innocent and praiseworthy" when it is directed to another, "not as a person, but because he sins [ἁμαρτάνει]... To hate in this way is nothing other than to hate the sin of the sinner; and this

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[34] Obviously, whether one accepts what I have to say about Vamvas and toleration in what follows will depend on whether one accepts the "widely agreed" concept of toleration I am working with. Even those who accept this concept might still have problems with what I say. They might disagree with my interpretation of the textual evidence or complain that I have failed to consider textual evidence against my position. Whatever shortcomings the following discussion has – and I am sure there are many – I hope that the reader will find it rewarding in some way.

[35] Vamvas, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 300.

hatred is connected to love because we want the salvation of the sinner."[36] Here, I think, we have a distinction between hating a person *qua* person and hating a person *qua* bearer of sinful beliefs and practices. While the former is forbidden, the latter is not – and it is clear that Vamvas thinks that the latter sort of hatred is perfectly compatible with the commandment "Love thy neighbour". For Vamvas, then, the biblical commandment that we ought to love our neighbour does not forbid *all* hatred. Although it forbids the hatred of our neighbour *qua* person, it does permit the hatred of our neighbour *qua* bearer of sinful beliefs and practices.

Now, Vamvas explicitly describes faithlessness as a sin.[37] This, together with what was said in the previous paragraph, suggests that we can ascribe to Vamvas the view that, while Greek Orthodox Christians should never hate but always love their faithless neighbours *qua* persons, they should at the same time hate the religious beliefs and practices of these faithless neighbours, for these beliefs and practices are sinful. This is enough for us to attribute component (a) to Vamvas.

Component (b)

Can we ascribe component (b) to Vamvas? I can find no place where Vamvas explicitly states that Greek Orthodox Christians recognise that they have the power to interfere in the lives of their faithless neighbours, but the fact (as we saw in section I) that we can ascribe to Vamvas the view that Greek Orthodox Christians ought not to persecute faithless minorities suggests that, in his view, Greek Orthodox Christians recognise that they have this power. If so, then we can also ascribe component (b) to Vamvas.

Component (c)

It will be recalled that this component has two parts to it, (c1) and (c2). For reasons of convenience I will deal with (c2) first.

According to (c2), toleration does not permit the repression of, or serious interference with, the beliefs and practices that one dislikes, but it does allow interference in the form of rational persuasion. The question for us, then, is this: do we have any textual evidence for ascribing to Vamvas the view that Greek Orthodox Christians ought to use only "soft" tools such as rational persuasion in order to secure the conversion of others and never

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

[37] In *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 282, under the heading "On the sins [ἁμαρτήματα] opposed to the Faith [τήν Πίστιν]", Vamvas lists "ἀπιστία" [faithlessness] as one of these sins.

tools that seem to come under the headings of "repression" and "serious interference", for example coercion and sinister manipulative techniques such as indoctrination, programming and brainwashing? The answer is "Yes". I shall begin with coercion.

Vamvas claims that "God is not a tyrant" and does not want us to relate to Him "as slaves" [ὡς δοῦλοι].[38] The idea seems to be that God wants us to come to Him freely. Given this view, Vamvas must think that if Greek Orthodox Christians were to use some form of compulsion in order to secure conversion they would be going against the will of God, for they would be bringing to God unfree worshipers.

Note also that in *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, under the heading "The way in which laws ought to be observed", Vamvas writes:

> A command is not properly carried out in action when the action is performed simply from force and not with the will to perform the end [μὲ βίαν καὶ ὄχι μὲ σκοπόν].[39] Thus, if one, not wanting to, is forced [βιασθῆν] to attend a church service, or some other sacred ritual, in accordance with an ecclesiastical command, he does not fulfil that command, since he does not fulfil that command willingly.[40]

Now, whatever else is going on in this tricky passage, one thing is clear: Vamvas does not want to enforce any sort of religious observation, for religious observation that is the product of force is not genuine – and given that Vamvas expresses this view while discussing "The way in which laws ought to be observed", it is clear that in his view religious observation ought never to be the product of *legal* coercion. Though if Vamvas thinks that religious observation ought never to be the product of legal coercion, then surely he would not approve of using the law as a means to securing a change in another's religious convictions.

Since Vamvas disapproves of the use of the coercive force of law as a means to securing a change in another's faith, it should come as no surprise that he also disapproves of the use of more severe forms of coercion for this purpose. That this is so comes out in the following passage where Vamvas clearly condemns religious belief that is the product of brute force (or the fear of such force):

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[38] *Id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 91.

[39] Note Vamvas, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 114: "σκοπὸς means the movement of the will towards an absent end".

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 222. Although in this passage Vamvas mentions only commands that issue from ecclesiastical authorities, there is no reason to think that what he says does not also apply to commands issued from political authorities.

> A slave cannot reveal his most intimate thoughts and feelings except to the extent that they are approved of by that person upon whom he depends [that is, his master]; and as a result, his conscience [συνείδησίς] with respect to religious matters is as equally enslaved as his conscience with respect to other things; for he must accept the religion of his master, should his master demand it, or else be subjected to the most horrible tortures, which means, of course, even death.[41]

Finally, let us return to the long passage from *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* quoted at the end of the second paragraph of section I.[42] Here, it will be recalled, we were told that it is "impossible for all to have the same beliefs". This suggests that Vamvas recognises the futility of trying to coerce people to change their beliefs. Of course Vamvas might be wrong about this, but this is not important for our purpose. Our goal is to determine whether Vamvas endorses the use of coercion as a means to achieve the conversion of the faithless. The answer seems to be: no, for this is futile. Not only does this passage suggest that conversion by means of coercion is futile; it also suggests that it is immoral, for, according to this passage, "Christian law" and "the heavenly morality of the Bible" forbid a person to "bring others into submission so that they think in accordance with the ideas in [his]...head...[and]...to persecute them".

The view that the use of coercion for the sake of conversion is futile and immoral can also be derived from a long passage in Vamvas' *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* [Elements of philosophy]:

> Concerning the freedom of religious beliefs or of the conscience [συνειδήσεως], because these beliefs and the sentiments that accompany them are the most sacred things that a person can have – since it is in these that he finds comfort during the miseries of the present life and in these he places all his hopes for eternal happiness – it is evident that no human power has a right to use force [βίας] against the conscience [συνείδησιν] of another, *but only* [*the right*] *of persuasion through reason and education* [τῆς διὰ λόγου καὶ διδασκαλίας πειθοῦς]. It might be that the opinions of the other are mistaken, and his sentiments are irrational; but as long as he has these opinions and sentiments it is certain that he is convinced that he thinks correctly, and it is not possible to alter his thinking unless his soul is *persuaded by means of demonstrative arguments* [πεισθῇ... διὰ λόγων ἀποδεικτικῶν], or by means of some divine power, as in

[41] Neophytos Vamvas, *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* [Elements of philosophy], Athens 1838, p. 304.

[42] That is, Vamvas, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, pp. 199-200.

> the case of the Apostle Paul, that the opinions he holds are mistaken and that the opinions presented to him are the correct ones. Without these means, which power can have the right to force [βιάσῃ] him to believe that which he does not believe or not to believe that which he believes?...Thus conscience [συνείδησις], with regard to all convictions, *and especially religious beliefs*, is by nature inviolable; and it would be clearly tyrannical, against the most sacred individual right *for a conscience to be forced by another conscience* [συνείδησις νὰ βιάζεται ἀπὸ συνείδησιν].[43]

It is evident that, for Vamvas, Greek Orthodox Christians must never use coercion as a means to securing the conversion of the faithless. In fact, the passage from *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* quoted above makes it clear that "persuasion through reason and education" is the only legitimate tool that Greek Orthodox Christians may use in order to change another's conscience. This is important, for "persuasion through reason and education" seems to preclude not only coercion as a means to conversion but also manipulation (indoctrination, programming, brainwashing). Of course, education can make use of such techniques, but it is clear that, for Vamvas, education must never do so: this comes out in the passage from *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* just quoted. Here, after mentioning "reason and education" as the only legitimate ways to persuade the conscience of another, Vamvas changes his language and instead talks of "demonstrative arguments" [λόγων ἀποδεικτικῶν] as the legitimate tool of persuasion. The most natural explanation for this change in language is that Vamvas places both reason *and* education under the general heading of "λόγων ἀποδεικτικῶν", indicating that he considers education to be a form of persuasion involving λόγων ἀποδεικτικῶν. There seems to be no room for manipulation here.[44]

I have been arguing that we have good textual grounds for attributing to Vamvas the view that neither coercion nor manipulation are acceptable means to securing a change in the faith of another and that only "persuasion through reason and education" (both of which involve the use of λόγων ἀποδεικτικῶν) should be used for this purpose. Thus, there seems to be no reason why we cannot ascribe (c2) to Vamvas.

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[43] Vamvas, *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας*, pp. 310-311 [first three emphases are mine; last emphasis is Vamvas'].

[44] Note also Neophytos Vamvas, *Λόγος ἐκφωνηθεὶς ἐν τῇ πανδήμῳ ἑορτῇ τῶν τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν καὶ Οἰκουμενικῶν διδασκάλων* [Speech delivered at the public festival of the three hierarchs and ecumenical teachers], n.p. 1851, p. 13: "[Education ought not to be] an instrument of fraud [ἀπάτης], deceit [ῥᾳδιουργίας], [or] trickery [στρεψοδικίας]."

What about (c1)? As we have just seen, both in the long passage from *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* quoted at the end of the second paragraph of section I and in the long passage from *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* quoted above, Vamvas can be interpreted as telling us that forced conversion is immoral. Thus Vamvas' view is that there are moral reasons why Greek Orthodox Christians should refrain from interfering in the lives of the faithless with severe means – and this is consistent with what (c1) demands. For (c1) tells us that toleration demands that we ought not to interfere with the beliefs and practices that we find objectionable for the right type of reasons or for principled reasons. Surely moral reasons fit these descriptions.[45]

If what I have said in this section is correct, then Vamvas' interpretation of the commandment "Love thy neighbour" fits perfectly with the core components of the concept of toleration. We were wrong, therefore, to toy with the idea that perhaps Vamvas is a champion of religious intolerance. He is not. On the contrary, Vamvas is an advocate of toleration. His call for Greek Orthodox Christians to treat the faithless who live among them in accordance with the commandment "Love thy neighbour" is – or can be interpreted as being – a call for religious toleration.[46]

However, as is almost always the case with Vamvas, things are not that simple; for a number of passages in Vamvas' works appear to undermine the

[45] Of course, as we have seen, Vamvas also gives Greek Orthodox Christians pragmatic reasons for refraining from hating and persecuting those they consider faithless – that this is futile and it leads to a constant state of war. However, this does not lessen the force or importance of the moral or principled reasons he gives for refraining from such behaviour.

[46] If it is correct that, for Vamvas, the commandment "Love thy neighbour" (as it applies to the faithless) is a call for religious toleration, then, since he thinks that this commandment has as its aim the conversion of the faithless, it follows that he takes religious toleration to have the same aim, namely conversion. It is interesting to note that (in one interpretation at least) Eugenios Voulgaris (1716-1806) held the same view about the goal of religious toleration. Commenting on an essay on religious toleration that Voulgaris attached to his 1768 translation of Voltaire's *Essai historique et critique sur les dissensions des églises de Pologne*, G. P. Henderson, *The Revival of Greek Thought, 1620-1830*, Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1971, p. 71, argues that: "[Religious] toleration, according to Voulgaris, is...a method of conversion." We should note, however, that not all Neohellenic thinkers saw religious toleration as a means to conversion. See, for example, Ioannis Kokkonis, *Περὶ Πολιτειῶν, περὶ τῶν εἰς σύνταξιν αὐτῶν, καὶ περὶ πολιτικῆς κυβερνήσεως* [On States, on their constitution, and on civil government], Vol. I, Paris 1828, pp. 424-425. Here Kokkonis quotes with approval Article 18 of the Virginian Constitution with its claim (as rendered by Kokkonis) that "All

view that he is an advocate of religious toleration. It is important that I deal with these passages.

IV

A. In *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς* Vamvas tells us that in a properly organised state what is important is "the common care of the ethical education of the citizens and the training of their intellectual capacities".[47] Vamvas adds:

> Thus, primary and most necessary in every human society, if it wants to be maintained in peace, glory, and happiness...is education and schools in which the necessary skills and sciences are taught. Education, so that the souls of the children can be cultivated and receive their first ethical *and religious* principles.[48]

A few pages later Vamvas praises the Athenian legislator Solon for "enacting *laws* [νόμους] concerning the education and physical training of the children"[49] and adds that the state must "set up public schools so that the people can be enlightened".[50] If we put these passages together, then we seem to get something like this: according to Vamvas, a state ought to introduce a system of public education that *all* children will be *legally* required to attend and that will strive to give them the same "first ethical *and religious* principles". If this is Vamvas' view – and I think it is – then we can say that in a Greek State organised by Vamvas, the children of the faithless will be legally compelled to attend public schools where they will receive an education in Orthodoxy. Is not Vamvas advocating the use of coercion as a means to conversion?

I don't think so. There is no indication that Vamvas thinks that any coercion should be used in the classroom in order to ensure that the children of the faithless will adopt the Orthodox teachings they are introduced to. This suggests that Vamvas' programme of education has as its aim only to introduce the children of the faithless to Orthodoxy in the hope that they will embrace it. It is hard to see how this on its own constitutes a coercive means to conversion, and it is important to add that Vamvas' educational programme does not prevent the children of the faithless from continuing to

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citizens have a mutual duty to tolerate in a Christian manner [ἀνέχωνται χριστιανικῶς] the [religious] beliefs of each other." There is no indication anywhere that Kokkonis takes this toleration to have conversion as its purpose.

[47] Vamvas, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 137.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138 [my emphasis].

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 141 [my emphasis].

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

uphold their religion. After school, these children will be perfectly free to go home and continue to live in accordance with the religion of their parents. It seems, then, that although Vamvas' programme of education does involve an element of (legal) coercion, this coercion has nothing to do with the actual exercise of power to forcibly change or repress anyone's religious views. Nor does it have anything to do with preventing people from practising their religion. We have no reason to think that Vamvas' programme of education is a coercive means to conversion.[51]

B. In *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, while discussing "punitive justice", Vamvas tells us that "the punishment of the wrong-doer...is owed to the state in accordance with the laws for the sake of the common good; for it is in the state's interest to legislate for the punishment of sins [ἁμαρτήματα]".[52] The word "sins" in this passage is important, for, as mentioned above, Vamvas considers faithlessness to be a sin. This suggests that, for Vamvas, the Greek State ought to make these forms of faithlessness illegal and punishable by law. Elsewhere, Vamvas tells us that punishments attached to laws should aim at "correction" [διόρθωσιν].[53] Thus we can say that in a Greek State organised by Vamvas, the punishment attached to the law against faithlessness will have as its aim the correction of faithlessness – and, of course, one corrects faithlessness by instilling the true faith. This suggests that Vamvas is not merely prepared to make faithlessness illegal and punishable by law, but that he is prepared to make faithlessness illegal and punishable by law for the sake of conversion. It seems, then, that Vamvas does allow the state to use the coercive force of law in order to achieve the conversion of the faithless.

I think, though, that this is wrong. Although it is clear that Vamvas does consider faithlessness to be a sin, it is unlikely that he would demand that the state make the sin of faithlessness illegal given the view he expresses in the opening sentence in the long passage from *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* quoted earlier about the fundamental role that religious beliefs play in a person's life. This makes it equally unlikely that Vamvas would demand that the state make the sin of faithlessness illegal for the sake of conversion, as does his

[51] It is worth adding that neither does Vamvas' programme of education constitute a manipulative means to conversion, for, as we saw above, Vamvas thinks of true education as a rational form of persuasion. Thus, he must think that the education in Orthodoxy that faithless children will receive (or should receive in a properly organised Greek State) as part of their early education will not involve the use of methods such as programming, indoctrination and brainwashing.

[52] Vamvas, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 360.

[53] *Id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Ἠθικῆς*, p. 23.

view that coercive means against the faithless for the sake of conversion are futile and immoral, and his refusal to approve of religious behaviour that is the product of coercion, even legal coercion. It seems to me that whatever else Vamvas has in mind when he suggests that the state ought to punish sin, he cannot be talking about what he takes to be the sin of faithlessness.

C. After telling us that loving one's neighbour "forbids hatred at all times", Vamvas goes on to say that this means that we:

> [...] should never want, never hope, never cause an evil [κακὸν] to our neighbour, either spiritual or earthly, at least an evil directed at him *qua* person, and without just reason and authority [δικαίαν αἰτίαν καὶ ἐξουσίαν]; this is added because from a just reason and authority an evil can be imposed upon one's neighbour for a good end [τέλος ἀγαθὸν]; for example, to be chastened by a superior for the sake of correction, or by a judge because of an unlawful act for the sake of justice.[54]

It sounds as though Vamvas is saying this: it is permissible to impose "an evil" upon our neighbour (though not *qua* person) if this is done from love, is for "a good end", and is done for a "just reason" and with "authority". Given this, one might want to argue as follows: (1) Vamvas does not tell us what he means by "an evil" in the above passage, but the examples of evil that he gives here suggest that he takes punitive laws to be evils. It is clear that he also takes brute force to be an evil.[55] (2) Clearly, the conversion of the faithless to Orthodoxy is a "good end" for Vamvas. (3) It seems safe to say that, in Vamvas' view, the Greek State in which he lives has authority.[56] (4) It also seems safe to say that, for Vamvas, the state has a "just reason" for imposing evils on the faithless, for, as we saw earlier, Vamvas thinks that the state has a duty to care for the salvation of its people, including the faithless. Surely our duties provide us with "just reasons". (5) Finally, Vamvas is committed to the

[54] *Id.*, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 300.

[55] See, for example, *id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας*, p. 304.

[56] For example, *id.*, *Σύντομος ἀπάντησις*, p. 1, and *Λόγος*, p. 15.

rule of law.[57] All must submit to the laws of the state, including the Church.[58] Given these views (the argument might continue) we can ascribe to Vamvas the following position:

> If, in order to fulfil its duty to save the faithless, the Greek State imposed evils on the faithless for the sake of conversion – for example, if the Greek State passed a punitive law making faithless religions illegal and commanding the faithless to convert to Orthodoxy, or even passed a law allowing (or perhaps commanding) the Orthodox Church and/or the Orthodox laity to use excessive means (e.g. brute force) on the faithless for the sake of conversion – then, so long as the state, the Orthodox Church, and the Orthodox laity were moved by love and did not direct these evils at the faithless *qua* persons but instead *qua* bearers of sinful beliefs and practices, then there would be nothing wrong with their using these evils in order to get the faithless to abandon their faithlessness and adopt Orthodoxy.

If this is correct, then it is clear that Vamvas thinks that the commandment "Love thy neighbour" is compatible with (or perhaps even demands) the use of coercion as a means to converting the faithless.

There is something wrong with this argument. It is difficult to agree that we can ascribe to Vamvas point (4) above. To see this we should recall Vamvas' view that God wants us to come to Him freely. We should also recall that in his view conversion by means of coercion is immoral and (as he tells us in the opening sentence of the long passage from *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας* quoted earlier) force must never be used against the religious beliefs of a person because these beliefs hold a sacred place in that person's life. Given these views, we have good reasons to conclude that Vamvas would not consider the state's duty to save the faithless as a "just reason" for imposing coercive evils on the faithless for the sake of conversion. For Vamvas, then, the state must use non-coercive means in order to fulfil its duty. As we have seen, Vamvas tells us what these means are, namely "persuasion through reason

[57] Neophytos Vamvas, *Ὁμιλία παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου Ν. Βάμβα εἰς τὴν Α΄. ἐτήσιον ἐξέτασιν τοῦ ἐν Ἑρμουπόλει Γυμνασίου. Τὴν 25 Αὐγούστου 1834* [Speech delivered by Mr. N. Vamvas on the first annual inspection of the Greek gymnasium in Ermoupolis, 25 August 1834], Ermoupolis 1834, p. 3: "The citizen who is brought up properly and is well-educated considers human society according to its true meaning: a union of persons in one body whose members must be in harmony with each other and who submit to one will, the will of the law." See also *id.*, *Στοιχεῖα Φιλοσοφίας*, p. 300.

[58] *Id.*, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 205: "The Church has a duty to submit to the political authorities, according to the command of the Lord, and not to extend itself outside of the spiritual sphere." Also p. 230.

and education". These are the only tools that the state may legitimately use in order to change another's conscience.

D. Appealing to I Corinthians 10: 27-28, Vamvas writes:

> It is unforgivable [for the faithful] to participate with the faithless [ἀπίστων] in their religious customs, sacred rites, rituals and superstitious worship; for such participation is an external assent to and acceptance of the false religion of the faithless and in that way a forceful rejection of the true faith.[59]

Isn't Vamvas advocating religious intolerance here? No, for toleration does not require that we involve ourselves in any positive way with the practice or belief that we disapprove of.[60]

E. In *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ* Vamvas condemns "ἔρις", which he characterises as "verbal dispute in which one contradicts another in a disorderly manner".[61] He goes on to give as an example of ἔρις any discussion in which "the truth that is opposed concerns the faith [τὴν πίστιν]".[62] As we have seen, Vamvas allows the Orthodox faithful to use rational means in order to persuade the faithless to convert to Orthodoxy; but since he condemns ἔρις – an example of which is opposing the true faith – it seems that in any discussion about faith between the faithful and the faithless, the faithless will never be allowed to respond completely to the arguments of the faithful. By forbidding the faithless in their discussions with the Orthodox faithful to argue against the true faith, is not Vamvas engaging in intolerance?

I don't think so. All that the ban on ἔρις does is demand that, in their discussions with the Orthodox faithful, the faithless not be allowed to criticise the true faith. The faithless can hold their religious views and practise their religion without having to criticise the true faith. The ban on ἔρις then is not

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[59] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

[60] One could argue that Vamvas' demand that the faithful not participate in the religious customs, etc., of the faithless is incompatible with multiculturalism. This might be true, but, if it is, it does not cause Vamvas any problems of inconsistency, since it should be clear by now that Vamvas is no multiculturalist. He does not call for the endorsement and promotion of religious difference. Neohellenic thought, however, does have its champion of multiculturalism, namely Rhigas Velestinlis. See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "An Enlightenment Perspective on Balkan Cultural Pluralism: The Republican Vision of Rhigas Velestinlis", *History of Political Thought* XXIV (2003), pp. 465-479.

[61] Vamvas, *Φυσικὴ Θεολογία καὶ Χριστιανικὴ Ἠθικὴ*, p. 318.

[62] *Ibid.*

incompatible with toleration, for this ban does not prevent the faithless from continuing to believe and practise their religion.

One might persist. By not allowing the faithless to attack the true faith is not Vamvas favouring the views of the faithful over those of the faithless? Is this not incompatible with toleration? The answer to the first question is yes, but the answer to the second is no. As scholars have noted, we need to distinguish between neutrality and toleration. While neutrality demands even-handedness, toleration does not: "Toleration...carries no inherent commitment to refrain from using the state in positive ways. For example, there is no inherent intolerance in using the state to encourage or aid conceptions of the good which one overtly morally favours. Neutrality precisely bars the state from doing this."[63]

I think that we can safely conclude that Vamvas' ban on ἔρις does not threaten the conclusion that he is an advocate of toleration. This ban might be incompatible with neutrality (and also with multiculturalism), but it is not incompatible with toleration.[64]

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I do not think that the passages that we have examined in this section undermine the claim that Vamvas can be interpreted as advocating religious toleration. However, these passages do contribute to our understanding of Vamvas' conception of toleration and shed more light on how he thinks Greek Orthodox Christians should treat their faithless minorities.

V

At the end of section I, I asked whether we should commend Vamvas for his view that Greek Orthodox Christians should treat the faithless in accordance with the biblical commandment "Love thy neighbour". Having finally

[63] Saladin Meckled-Garcia, "Toleration and Neutrality: Incompatible Ideals?" *Res Publica* VII (2001), pp. 293-313, at pp. 301-302. The same point is made by Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint*, p. 67. See also Cohen, "What Toleration Is", pp. 75-76.

[64] The fact that the ban on ἔρις conflicts with neutrality does not cause Vamvas any problems (at least any problems of inconsistency), for Vamvas does not subscribe to the value of neutrality. As we have seen, Vamvas makes it clear that the state should not remain neutral with respect to different ways of life, but should actively promote one way of life as better than the rest. This brings us back to Vamvas' idea that the children of the faithless should be required by the state to attend schools where they will be introduced to Orthodoxy. This measure is clearly incompatible with neutrality, but, as I argued above, it is not incompatible with toleration.

determined how Vamvas interprets this commandment as it relates to the treatment of the faithless, and having seen that it is (or can be interpreted as being) a call for religious toleration, we can return to this question: should we commend Vamvas?

The best way, I think, to answer this question is for the reader to imagine that he/she is one of the so-called faithless living in a Greek State in which Vamvas' ideas about how the faithless should be treated are put into effect, and then ask: "What will my life be like?" You would not be persecuted. Your place of worship would not be firebombed by hooded vandals in the dead of night. Your mother can safely go to the market without the fear that she will have her hijab torn off by a hateful shopper. The graves of your ancestors would not be smashed or defaced with offensive graffiti. You are safe from such evils because your Orthodox neighbours love you in accordance with the Christian commandment "Love thy neighbour". Precisely because your Orthodox neighbours love you in this way, they won't leave you alone. Since such love requires that Orthodox Christians help the faithless find salvation, it seems that regularly (perhaps even daily) you will be approached by your Orthodox neighbours as they try to convince you (through rational means) to convert to Orthodoxy. Not only that, but you will also be forced to watch as Orthodox Christians try to convert your co-religionists, including your children when they go to school. You will know that you live in a society where your religion is thought of as false, worthless, even a sin by the Orthodox majority. You will know that they are trying to eradicate your faith (albeit through rational means). You will know that you are unable to invite to your home any Orthodox friends or workmates that you might have in order to celebrate with you, for example, your child's bar mitzvah. Of course, you will also know that in treating you this way your Orthodox neighbours are (from their point of view at least) trying to help you, for they are trying to save you in accordance with the commandment "Love thy neighbour", a commandment that seems to be a call for toleration. Even though you know that your Orthodox neighbours love you, tolerate you and are trying to help you, it is very likely that you will end up feeling bitter about the way in which you and your co-religionists are being treated. Why, you will ask, don't the Orthodox Christians leave us alone and just accept us for who we are? This brings to the fore a serious problem with Vamvas' conception of toleration. Minorities, Susan Mendus notes, "want to be welcomed and wanted. They want to feel that they belong." Some conceptions of toleration, Mendus adds, fail to achieve this. In fact, some conceptions of toleration make minorities "feel as much alienated from the wider society as they do when they are

persecuted".[65] Vamvas' conception of toleration seems to be one of these. Although faithless minorities living in a Greek State organised in accordance with Vamvas' conception of toleration will not be persecuted, there is a very good chance that they will end up feeling alienated from the rest of society. However, as modern Greeks know all too well, the existence in a state of religious minorities that feel alienated can be very dangerous. This, perhaps, is a good reason – though some will complain, a "grubby", pragmatic reason – for us to be reluctant to commend Vamvas for what he has to say about the way Greek Orthodox Christians should treat faithless minorities.

Monash University

[65] Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism*, p. 159.