

“Orthodoxy or death”

Aspects of the Greek religious fundamentalism

during the 20th and 21st c. and a possible way out

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Handout

Introduction

Esfigmenou Monastery, Mount Athos

“Orthodoxy or death” motto

The religious and the secular in the contemporary Greek context

Multiple secularizations

The Greek, indifferent Orthodox or pagan, is primarily deeply religious

The Church due to its strong and diachronic tie with the Greek national ideology as well as with charity and solidarity works still strongly intervenes in the political or public sphere

It is not a question in Greece for religion to *re-enter* in the public domain, an important premise of the modernity, but of *remaining* in the public domain

There is a strong bond between Orthodoxy and Greek nation inhibits to a great extent any progress in terms of secularization

Aspects of Religious Fundamentalism in Orthodox Greece

The Greek fundamentalism could also be generally defined as both “abrahamic” and “syncretic”

- a. Abrahamic/Theological fundamentalism: an essentialist understanding of ecclesiastical Tradition; a superficial understanding of the normative character of the patristic nature of Orthodox theology; preserving the seeming Christian and moral character of the society, by applying a moral manicheanism; the phenomenon of *gerontism*, etc.
Abrahamic/Theological fundamentalism is applied in a wide spectrum of cases, from a reactionary attitude against the official dialogue of the Church of Greece with the other Christian Churches and traditions, against any imaginary or real anti-religious initiative on the side of the state, against any serious academic work or use of modern scientific methods of interpreting the Fathers, against any change in the hard-core denominational character of the religious subject in all levels of the compulsory state education etc.
- b. Syncretic/Ethno-religious fundamentalism: at the core of this species of fundamentalism is not the Church as the body of Christ but the Church as the ark of the Nation that makes use of religion and faith for purposes that have to

do with the ethnic, cultural continuity and purity of the nation at the expense of the flourishing of the body of Christ.

The migration influx in traditional Orthodox societies, like Greece (since already 90s) tests the very coherence of the Greek society to an extent that a considerable number of people, otherwise faithful Christians, don't hesitate to join various racist or nationalist and anti-immigrants movements; the recent economic crisis provoked a harsh, although naïve and populist, reaction against the creditors, even from the side of various official Church leaders, priests, and theologians; deep tie between religion and nation in the Greek history; various kinds of Associations, fighting in favor of the spiritual rebirth of the Greek nation in its historical and past glory; the unholy alliance between a part of the Church leaders and the Greek junta in 1967-1974, and the Neo-Nazi party in nowadays.

This kind of (schematic) dichotomization between between Abrahamic and Syncretic fundamentalism should not be regarded in absolute terms since a close interrelation between the two categories is evident.

World Dogmatics as an Orthodox secular theology. A possible overcoming of fundamentalism

Without downgrading the centrality of theology, World Dogmatics is searching for a *common ground* (for instance, the concepts of being, experience, divine-human communion, saeculum, etc.) in order to bring into closer contact and mutual inclusiveness both the Church and the World, but this time from the perspective of the latter. A clear Chalcedonian connotation lies then in the background that focus on the deep world/saeculum-Church communion

Some Basic axes: *The self-revelation of God in history and the world in the person of Christ; eschatology; Searching for the one common Truth; The existential concern.*

Conclusion

Fundamentalism should be seen as the most serious *heresy* in the history of Christianity.

The outcome: the "Death of Orthodoxy"