

Politics, Society and Culture in Orthodox Theology in a Global Age

Eastern Church Identities

Editors

Reinhard Thöle (Halle), Andriy Mykhaleyko (Lviv),
Ioan Tulcan (Arad), Martin Illert (Halle)

Advisory Board

Peter Bouteneff (New York), John Burgess (Pittsburgh),
Emmanuel Clapsis (Brookline), Kondothra M. George (Kottayam),
Matti Kotiranta (Joensuu)

Hans-Peter Grosshans, Pantelis Kalaitzidis (Eds.)

Politics, Society and Culture in Orthodox Theology in a Global Age



BRILL
SCHÖNINGH

Published with the support of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.



This is an open access title distributed under the terms of the CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 License, which permits any non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided no alterations are made and the original author(s) and source are credited.

Further information and the complete license text can be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

The terms of the CC license apply only to the original material. The use of material from other sources (indicated by a reference) such as diagrams, illustrations, photos and text samples may require further permission from the respective copyright holder.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30965/9783657793792>

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available online: <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

© 2023 by Brill Schöningh, Wollmarktstraße 115, 33098 Paderborn, Germany, an imprint of the Brill-Group (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands; Brill USA Inc., Boston MA, USA; Brill Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore; Brill Deutschland GmbH, Paderborn, Germany; Brill Österreich GmbH, Vienna, Austria) Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau, V&R unipress and Wageningen Academic.

www.schoeningh.de

Brill Schöningh reserves the right to protect the publication against unauthorized use and to authorize dissemination by means of offprints, legitimate photocopies, microform editions, reprints, translations, and secondary information sources, such as abstracting and indexing services including databases. Requests for commercial re-use, use of parts of the publication, and/or translations must be addressed to Brill Schöningh.

Cover illustration: Vicky Vlachogianni, "The Sound of the Feast", oil on canvas, 85 × 70 cm, 2010. Collection of the 2nd International Art Conference, Poland

Cover design: Evelyn Ziegler, Munich

Production: Brill Deutschland GmbH, Paderborn

ISSN 2628-9741

ISBN 978-3-506-79379-9 (hardback)

ISBN 978-3-657-79379-2 (e-book)

Contents

1.	Politics, Society and Culture in Orthodox Theology in an Age of Globalization: Introduction	IX
	<i>Hans-Peter Grosshans & Pantelis Kalaitzidis</i>	
2.	The Tsarist System	1
	<i>Alfons Brüning</i>	
3.	Orthodox Christianity under Pressure: Ottoman, Communist and Post-Communist Contexts	17
	<i>Ina Merdjanova</i>	
4.	Democracy in Russian Religious Philosophy: A Political Theology of Participation	29
	<i>Nathaniel Wood</i>	
5.	Is Scholasticism a Pseudomorphosis? A Polemical Note on Georges Florovsky's Political Theology	44
	<i>Cyril Hovorun</i>	
6.	History of the Idea of Democracy in Modern Greek Orthodox Theology	58
	<i>Dimitrios Moschos</i>	
7.	Orthodoxy and Democracy in Romanian Theology	78
	<i>Lucian Turcescu</i>	
8.	Eyes Wide Shut: Discussion about Orthodoxy and Democracy in Serbian Theology and Thought	90
	<i>Branko Sekulić</i>	
9.	Orthodox Theology Challenged by Balkan and East European Ethnotheologies	108
	<i>Pantelis Kalaitzidis</i>	

10. **Synodal Democracy and the Oriental Orthodox Churches** 160
K. M. George (Kondothra)
11. **Welcoming the Thorn in the Flesh: Orthodox Theology, (Post)Modernity and (Post-)Secularization** 170
Georgios Vlantis
12. **Primacy, Synodality and Liberal Democracy: An Uneasy Relationship** 183
Nikolaos Asproulis
13. **Constitutional Tradition and Eastern Orthodoxy: Political-Theological Aspects** 195
Atanas Slavov
14. **Church and State in the Orthodox World Today and the Challenges of the Global Age** 214
Sveto Riboloff
15. **Liberal Democracy, Spiritual Values and Nihilism: Prefatory Notes to a pending Discussion in the Orthodox World** 231
Haralambos Ventis
16. **The Reception of Human Rights in the Eastern Orthodox Theology: Challenges and Perspectives** 252
Ioannis Kaminiis
17. **Civil Society and Orthodoxy: A Counter-Discourse** 273
Irena Pavlović
18. **Mission(s) and Politics: An Orthodox's Approach** 292
Athanasios N. Papathanasiou
19. **The Sin of Phyletism: A Multicultural Perspective on Ethnic Bigotry in the Orthodox Church** 310
Chris Durante
20. **Orthodox Spirituality in Democratic Pluralities** 328
Kateřina Kočandrlle Bauer

21. Orthodox Christianity in the Context of Postcolonial Studies	338
<i>Vasilios N. Makrides</i>	
Contributors	368
Index of Names	378

Politics, Society and Culture in Orthodox Theology in an Age of Globalization

Introduction

The collection of essays in this volume grew out of a lengthy collaboration between the two editors, Hans-Peter Grosshans, a Protestant theologian, and Pantelis Kalaitzidis, an Orthodox theologian. At some point, the Protestant theologian raised the question of how Orthodox theology and Orthodox churches respond to very significant changes in society, culture, and politics and whether these changes would also leave their mark on Orthodox doctrine and practice, leading to changes in Orthodox doctrine and practice. With regard to Greek Orthodoxy, for example, the Protestant theologian was thinking of Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire, which took place between 1821 and 1830, or the transition from a monarchy to a democracy in Greece in 1974, and of Greece's accession to the European Community in 1981 – to name just three examples from the political sphere.

The question of the Protestant theologian fell on fertile ground with Kalaitzidis, who had recently posed something similar: the question why Orthodoxy had not developed an explicit “political theology” or theology of the political needed to be researched. Kalaitzidis raised this question in his 2012 book, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*, in which he presented the current state of the discussion concerning an Orthodox theology of the political.¹ At the same time, the discussion on the relationship between Orthodox theology and liberal democracy took a new turn², while wider interest in the emergence of an Orthodox political theology inspired by pneumatology and eschatology became more visible.³ Other Orthodox theologians have also taken up the

-
- 1 Cf. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012).
 - 2 Cf. Aristotle Papanikolaou, *The Mystical as Political: Democracy and Non-Radical Orthodoxy* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).
 - 3 Nikolaos Asproulis, “Pneumatology and Politics: The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Articulation of an Orthodox Political Theology,” *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (2015), 58–71; Georgios Vlantis, “Pneumatologie und Eschatologie in der zeitgenössischen orthodoxen Theologie: Richtlinien und Perspektiven”, in Petra Bosse-Huber, Konstantinos Vliagkoftis, and Wolfram Langpape (eds.), *Wir glauben an den Heiligen Geist: XII. Begegnung im bilateralen theologischen Dialog zwischen der EKD und dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: 2021), 119–37. For an overview of the current trends in political theology in today's Orthodoxy, cf. Kristina Stoeckl, Ingeborg Gabriel, and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christianity – Common Challenges and Divergent Positions* (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2017); Pantelis Kalaitzidis, “[Political Theology in] Eastern

topic. Metropolitan of Bursa, Elpidoforos Lambriniadis (now Greek Orthodox Archbishop of America) summarized in a precise way the state of research on the traditional relationship between state and church in the Orthodox tradition and the questioning of this relationship by a modern European understanding of the state.⁴ A number of current practical conflicts of norms between church and state and their theoretical consequences are discussed in a new study by Grigorios Larentzakis.⁵ In this respect, the already slightly older volume by Vasilios N. Makrides on *Religion, State and Conflict Constellations in Orthodox Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Comparative Perspectives* remains highly informative,⁶ but it is now complemented by the more recent volume (that emerged from an international conference): *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine*,⁷ while for the crucial issue of pluralism the edited volume by Father Emmanuel Clapsis always retains its value.⁸

To explore the question raised in greater depth, we invited a number of Orthodox theologians and other experts on Orthodox Christianity and its theology to a conference at the Volos Academy for Theological Studies in Volos, Greece, in February 2020. The question was expanded beyond the political sphere to include changes in society and culture – with a special focus on the challenges posed by today’s globalised world.

Orthodox Thought,” in William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott (eds.), *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford/New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), 97–110; Nathaniel Wood and Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Orthodox Christianity and Political Theology,” in Rubén Rosario Rodríguez (ed.), *T&T Clark Handbook of Political Theology* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 337–51.

- 4 Metropolitan Elpidoforos (Lambriniadis), “Das Verhältnis zwischen Kirche und Staat in der orthodoxen Tradition,” in Petra Bosse-Huber and Martin Illert (eds.), *Theologischer Dialog mit dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat: Die Beziehungen zwischen Kirche und Staat unter historischen und ekklesiologischen Aspekten* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 228–35. Cf. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, “Church and State in the Orthodox World: From the Byzantine ‘Symphonia’ and Nationalized Orthodoxy to the Need of Witnessing the Word of God in a Pluralistic Society,” in Emanuela Fogliadini (ed.), *Religioni, Libertà, Potere: Atti del Convegno Internazionale Filosofico-Teologico sulla Libertà Religiosa, Milano, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore e Università degli Studi, 16–18 Ottobre 2013* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2014) 39–74.
- 5 Grigorios Larentzakis, “Die Beziehungen zwischen Kirche und Staat unter dem Blickwinkel der pastoralen, erzieherischen, sozialen und kulturellen Angelegenheiten der Kirchen,” in Bosse-Huber and Illert *Theologischer Dialog mit dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat*, 197–217.
- 6 Vasilios N. Makrides (ed.), *Religion, Staat und Konfliktkonstellationen im orthodoxen Ost- und Südosteuropa: Vergleichende Perspektiven* (Frankfurt, etc.: Peter Lang, 2005).
- 7 George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).
- 8 Emmanuel Clapsis, *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation* (Brookline MA/Geneva: Holy Cross Orthodox Press/WCC Publications, 2004).

The relationship between Orthodoxy and democracy has often been a central theme in theological discourse – but not only there of course. As we write this brief introduction, the government of the Russian Federation is waging a brutal war against Ukraine and its people to rid them of the Western mindset and reincorporate them into the authoritarian “Russian world.”⁹ The ideological differences manifested here with regard to the free democratic, self-determination of societies and their people can also be found in Orthodox Christianity. The Orthodox churches are generally regarded as very “traditional” churches whose identity was formed in the premodern era and continue to exhibit a premodern mentality. This image of Orthodoxy is readily cultivated by conservative circles even within Orthodox Christianity but is almost more pronounced in Protestant Christianity, for example, where Orthodoxy is quickly and easily viewed in this way. This overlooks the fact that the challenges posed to Christianity today as a whole by postmodernity, secularisation, and globalisation, need to be dealt with urgently in Orthodox Christianity as well and are indeed being actively discussed. Drawing attention to this is also one of the intentions of this volume of essays.

These challenges include questions such as the compatibility of the Orthodox Church and its theology with modern moral concepts and democratic values or the acceptance of human rights in Orthodoxy. While such questions used to be quite often met with great scepticism in Orthodox churches and were deliberately left ambiguous, things began to change in recent times when it became clear with, among other things, the publication in March 2020 of the document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*. The document was composed by a special commission of Orthodox scholars appointed by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and blessed for publication by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This highly significant document, already translated into fifteen languages, addresses – along with its social sensitivity and its concern for inclusion – contemporary social and moral issues, challenges, and other issues in an unusual way for the Orthodox Church. These issues include poverty, racism, human rights, democratic values, reproductive technology, new forms of marital and family life, and the environment.¹⁰ They are issues that are ever-present on a

9 Cf. the recent “Declaration” by eminent Orthodox theologians who oppose the “Russian World”: <https://www.polymerwsvolos.org/2022/03/13/a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mir-teaching/> and <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/13/a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mir-teaching/#more-10842/> (accessed 27 March 2022).

10 David Bentley Hart and John Chryssavgis (eds.), *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (Brookline MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2020); also accessible at: https://www.goarch.org/el/social-ethos?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_

practical level since many Orthodox churches exist in liberal democratic societies. In this volume of essays, this debate occurs precisely by critically examining various earlier concepts (such as the Tsarist model and its “symphonic” background, Orthodoxy under persecution, etc.) in theological, historical and political perspectives and linking them to current issues (such as Orthodoxy and human rights, Orthodoxy and pluralistic societies, etc.).

With regard to the Russian Orthodox Church, the current war conducted by the Russian Federation opens up the discussion once more of the role played by a certain version of Orthodox theology and by the nationalist conservative social ideas of some Orthodox churches in their understanding of state and society, politics, and culture of the countries of Europe shaped by Orthodox Christianity. Already in Ukraine, however, the Orthodox churches seem to have constructively embraced liberal democratic conditions – not to mention Orthodox churches in many other European countries. In view of the various political tensions in Europe, which are currently exemplified by the war in Ukraine, there is a considerable need to better understand the religious character of various countries of Orthodox tradition in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

On a fundamental intellectual level, this discourse is about transparency in the interconnections between religious identity and the political or social context, as well as the relationship between tradition and innovation with regard to the understanding of politics, society, and culture in Orthodox theology. How flexible is Orthodox theology in its response to social changes or to social and practical conflicts between norms? To what extent has the Orthodox theological understanding of politics, society, and culture impacted the multiple changes in the societies of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, so influenced by Orthodox culture, in the last two centuries?

As editors of this volume, we would like to thank all the contributors for their erudite and fascinating contributions to the elucidation of these and many other questions for a better understanding of politics, society, and culture in the Orthodox theology of the present era of globalisation and for making their texts available for this purpose. The whole publication and the conference in Volos would not have been possible without the very substantial financial

km0Xa4sy6gOV&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy6gOV_languageId=en_US/. For this official ecclesial document, cf. the monograph by Dietmar Schon, *Berufen zur Verwandlung der Welt: Die Orthodoxe Kirche in sozialer und ethischer Verantwortung* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2021).

support of the whole project by the German Cluster of Excellence *Religion and Politics: Dynamics of Tradition and Innovation* at the University of Münster (Germany) and the Institute of Ecumenical Theology at the Faculty for Protestant Theology at the same university. We like to thank both institutions for their very generous support, as well as the Huffington Ecumenical Institute in California, and its Director at that time, the Rev. Prof. Cyril Hovorun, for its contribution to the conference. In respect to the conference in Volos we are very thankful to all the staff of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies for their wonderful hospitality. We also like to thank very much his Eminence, Metropolitan Ignatios of Demetrias in Volos for his patronage and his generous support of the conference. And we are grateful to Prof. Dr. Herman Selderhuis for his personal greetings as president of the European Academy of Religion and his active participation in the conference.

Concerning the publication, we would like to thank Dr. Henry Jansen and his *Wordfair English Language Service* for copy-editing and proofreading the entire manuscript and for standardizing the footnotes and layout. We would also like to thank Dr. Ioannis Kaminis (Volos) and Lorenz Opitz (Münster) for their support in preparing the manuscripts. We extend our warm thanks to Vicky Vlachogianni for the permission to use her painting in the cover of the present volume, and to Costis Drygianakis, MA (Volos), for his assistance all over the preparation of the book and especially for creating an Index. And, last but not least, we would also like to thank the editors of the book series *Eastern Church Identities*, Prof. Dr. Ioan G. Tulcan, Dr. Andriy Mykhaleyko, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Thöle, and Prof. Dr. Martin Illert, for including this book in this series, and Dr. Martina Kayser of the publishing firm Brill Germany for her very constructive support in the publishing process.