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Global Eastern Orthodoxy: Politics, Religion, and Human Rights

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Global Eastern Orthodoxy: Politics, Religion, and Human Rights is a collective volume of eleven chapters plus an introduction by the editors. Reflecting not only academic specialization but also more immediate local engagement, the editors and contributors each deal here with a specialty area in which they are well-qualified scholars.¹ In preparing the volume, the editors emphasize the need to explore Orthodoxy from multiple disciplinary perspectives, taking into account a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. After a thoughtful introduction that stresses the need to analyze the accommodation of Orthodoxy to modernity/post-modernity and globalizing processes of all kinds, as well as the challenges of international migrations with the creation of diverse diasporas, the book is divided into two sections named to reflect broad sets of major issues facing Eastern Orthodoxy.

The first section, "Human Rights Between Religion and Politics," includes seven chapters that map out major conceptual and theoretical questions facing Orthodoxy in its foundational socio-cultural and political settings. Not surprisingly, it engages mostly with the national churches and societies of Eastern Europe, where Orthodoxy is strongly centered demographically. After Vasilios N. Makrides's insightful comparative and theoretical essay "Orthodox Christianity and Modern Human Rights: Theorising Their Nexus and Addressing Orthodox Specificities," this section includes two detailed papers on the Russian Orthodox Church, one by Kathy Rousselet exploring globalization dynamics and one by Kristina Stroeckl treating the ROC's position vis-à-vis human rights. The approaches to human rights by the Greek Church are analyzed by Effie Fokas who explains the history and present context of the challenges to the Greek position that have been laid out in the European Court of Human Rights. Olga Breskaya and Silviu Rogobete consider the results of a large survey of the ideas of youth in Belarus and Romania regarding religious freedom. Exploiting a more political analytic approach, Georgios E. Trantas evaluates the interactions between the Greek-Cypriot Church and the European Union that involve value leveraging in developing aspects of religious freedom where it is challenged.

The paper by Emmanuel Clapsis that appears in the middle of this section has a special explanatory task. It measures the outcomes in practical theological terms of the 2016 Great and Holy Council for the public religion role of Orthodox churches in light of the political philosophies of the Western thinkers John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and Charles Taylor. The Great and Holy Council was meant to be a sequel to the Ecumenical Councils of Christianity's first millennium, a way to clarify the unity of the Christian message and to relate it to the modern world, at least as seen through the Eastern Orthodox lens. Organized by the Ecumenical Patriarch, with consultative meetings that included virtually all Orthodox patriarchal, autocephalous, and autonomous Orthodox churches to set out beforehand the agenda and the baselines for decisions to be confirmed at the Council, the last-minute refusal to participate by four major national churches undermined the formal universality of the outcomes. However, Clapsis argues that "...the decisions of the Holy and Great Council reflect the beliefs and the

¹ It must be noted and applauded that the editors and the senior contributors in this collection are mentors to the junior contributors. The community centered around the serious scholarship that these relationships represent is a lesson in the advancement of knowledge that should be more broadly adopted; the mutual generosity of the learners here is laudable.

consciousness of all Orthodox Churches on the matters that it addressed" (80). Nevertheless, facing the demands of pluralism and democracy, Orthodox churches and peoples do not fulfill the stated hopes of the Council to engage with civil society and provide a "Robust Orthodox Witness in the Public Sphere" (92 section title).

Thinking about Clapsis's conclusions reminds us of the problems of church-state ties and human rights articulated in other settings. The successful meeting of practical theology with church and state politics is challenged by problems for the Greek church, as described by Fokas; for the Russian church's special approach to public human affairs, as described by Rousselet (the idiosyncratic civilizational and tradition-based Russian *imaginaire*); and by Stoeckl (the exploitation of the language of human rights for a conservative agenda). On the other hand, however, there is also the more optimistic outlook in diplomacy and political theology described by Trantas for the particular issues in divided Cyprus. Other connections between contributions in this volume could be made, and they provide one of its great values.

The challenges addressed in Part I are given additional concrete expression in the cases described in the second part of *Global Eastern Orthodoxy*, "Orthodox Diaspora and Identity in the Global World." This part of the book documents the growing spread of Eastern Orthodoxy, the current problems faced by churches on the dimensions of geographical versus spiritual/canonical boundaries, and for the Orthodox faithful, the quandaries of self, ethno-cultural, and national identities. The globalization of Eastern Orthodoxy increases the need to define the value sets that the church holds in new (and always changing) settings, and it increases the demands for the settling of identity—national, regional, and personal—in multiple societies. The papers in this section underscore the increasing importance of Orthodoxy in global affairs.

Maria Hämmerli investigates the dynamics of globality and identity among Orthodox Christians in diverse minority settings. After first interrogating the notion of *global religion* as applied to Orthodoxy, she details the historical bases for the migration of the Orthodox Christians that led to their settlement away from their homelands and compares this to the newer conditions for migrations since the 1990s. She finds that there are three major divergent trends in Orthodox reactions to secularity in migrant settings: (1) rejection of and resistance to secularity and strengthening the inherited "Tradition"; (2) allowing and promoting "dialogue and exchange with the 'world' (to be more precise, modernity)" (184); and (3) the "reconstruction of an Orthodox identity" as part of religious pluralism, that is, seeing Orthodoxy in respectful complementarity with other Christian faith approaches. The process of integrating converts to Orthodoxy into Orthodox churches begun by migrant populations (which often cling to prior ethno-national identities in many respects) presents special challenges that are not in the usual toolkit of most Orthodox Christians. Drawing on Victor Roudometof's conceptualizations of "glocality" for the world conditions of Orthodoxy, Hämmerli then stresses the unfolding of the processes of vernacularization and indigenization.

These last two processes are described and analyzed in detail in the remaining three essays of the book. After providing a careful description of the roots of the twelve Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States, most of which are tied to their "mother churches," Alexei Krindatch provides extensive documentation on the demography of Orthodoxy in America. Ethnic identification (rather strong) but predominant English language use (liturgical and in sermons) characterize most groups. Manifold survey data provided by Krindatch show the similarities and differences between American Orthodox and other Christian believers, pointing to the instantiation of the challenges of differentness outlined by Hämmerli in her essay.

The last two essays in this book explore the conditions for diaspora Orthodox Christians in two European countries closer to their homelands. Marco Guglielmi furthers the study of Orthodox *glocalization* in noting that Italy has the largest Orthodox diaspora in Western Europe,

which represents a “Western Orthodox laboratory” to be elaborated, perhaps, elsewhere in the Western world. Italy also has the largest Romanian Orthodox diaspora in the world, as well as parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church (apparently made up mostly of Ukrainians), and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, each of which adapts in its own way to relations with the dominant Catholic faith and Italian culture and politics.

Eleni Tseligka explores the complex ways the Greeks in Germany maintain ties with secular German society while also keeping strong ties of national identity to their homeland. A primary vehicle for identity retention is the social pattern of patronage (*choregia*) and its expression through *euergeto* (“doing good”), which has evolved in the Greek diaspora “to become almost synonymous to the kind of philanthropy that helps preserve the linguistic-religious cultural individuality of Greeks” (245). Consequently, Tseligka finds that “the life of Greek migrant communities in Germany is built around the church, either the institution or the building, or both...” (252), but, at the same time, according to the principles of Greek “individualistic collectivism,” this pattern does not isolate the Greek community from the surrounding secular society.

There has been a proliferation of research and writing on Eastern Orthodoxy globally over the last twenty years or so, which has been especially stimulated by the maturing of the Russian Orthodox Church as an important institutional actor in Russia and abroad after the fall of the Soviet Union and the addition of three majority Orthodox countries to the European Union in 2004 and 2007. The newer work, referenced and contextualized so ably in this volume, has provided intellectual undergirding for the multidisciplinary, multidimensional, and theoretical creativity we find in this collection. Its focus on Europe and the major North American diaspora populations of Orthodox nations fills a need to synthesize scholarship on the broadening questions animating the global religion of Eastern Orthodoxy, along with the faith, politics, economics, and cultures of Orthodox people.
