

## **The Temptation of Judas: Church and National Identities**

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I would like first to express my deep gratitude to Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology for organizing this International Conference on Biblical Studies and for inviting me to participate in this gathering in honor of Professor Savas Agourides. Let me state that I am not a biblical scholar. My work and publications have been in the area of systematic theology. Nevertheless, I consider it a great privilege to participate in this symposium in honor of Professor Agourides whose theology has significantly influenced my thinking. In fact, just as Professor Agourides has connected biblical studies with other areas of theology, so also have I tried to assimilate biblical insights in my theological work. This is probably why I am here today among noted biblical scholars to speak on my topic, "The Temptation of Judas," in relationship to the contemporary life and mission of the Church of Greece.

In Christian theology and worship, as well as popular piety and literature, the personality and act of Judas remain the archetype of guilt and betrayal. Judas, "the son of perdition,"<sup>2</sup> is the archetype of denial and apostasy. Anything related to this archetype must be shunned as being opposite to the attributes of the faithful Christian, who has decided according to the baptismal formula "to be joined to Christ." In many cases the collective will, or illusion, to escape and be differentiated from the archetype of Judas, has been ex-

pressed by enactments and frenzied manifestations such as the burning of Judas' effigy.<sup>3</sup> Such acts, apart from the fact that they undoubtedly contain the elements of popular anti-Semitism, interest us here from a different perspective. Despite the cries and the fantasy of being differentiated from the prototype of Judas, in fact, what is eventually shown in our spiritual life, or the lack of it, is that we are all potentially Judas to the degree that we adopt his criteria and priorities. It is tragic to realize that, whereas we passionately condemn and abhor Judas, nonetheless the way we perceive Christianity, as well as the role and mission of the Church today, discloses that we have unintentionally adopted *mutatis mutandis* Judas' messianic religio-nationalistic views. What I am suggesting is that we import through the back door the otherwise condemned heresy of ethnophyletism in the life of the Church of Greece.

The reason why I engage Judas in the study of the relationship between Church and nation, is that many of us, Orthodox Christians, baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, succumb, without knowing it or without wanting it, to the *temptation of Judas*. The temptation in question does not refer to the act of betrayal which has as its motive an alluring sum of money, but to the unconscious adoption of criteria and priorities that Judas incarnated in a characteristic and tragic way, and which led him to betray Jesus Christ. This latter clarification is absolutely essential to make clear the views that this paper upholds.

### **The Betrayal of Judas and the Zealot Nationalistic Movement**

Indeed, Judas' motivation to betray Christ appears to be not merely financial; thirty silver pieces, after all, did not represent a significant amount of money. The Gospel accounts, the comments by the Holy Fathers, and the hymns of Holy

Week, all, of course, emphasize this element.<sup>4</sup> However, it is more likely that the thirty pieces of silver signify the outcome of a long internal process by which Judas doubted and rejected the messianic model his teacher adopted. The monetary sum was perhaps also the confirmation and guarantee of the agreement he had made with the religious authorities. As long as Judas followed Jesus, and took part in the community of his disciples, he was, according to the Gospel of John, their treasurer.<sup>5</sup> He showed considerable ardor in avoiding any unnecessary, according to his opinion, waste of money, as in the case of Mary, Lazarus' sister, who anointed Jesus with expensive ointment.<sup>6</sup> If we, therefore, wish to seek the deeper motive of Judas' betrayal, we must not only settle on Judas' uncontested stinginess; we must also examine his relation to the Zealot movement.

Many interpreters and historians of the New Testament era agree that Judas kept a close relationship with this movement. More particularly, the main cause of his betrayal seems to be his bitter disappointment about his messianic dream, that is, that Jesus refused to identify his own mission with the overthrow of Roman tyranny and the fulfillment of the national restoration of Judaism in Palestine.<sup>7</sup> In Jesus' time the Zealot movement expressed exactly the dreams of a national and political independence of Judaism and the concurrent radical rejection of Roman domination.

This dispute, however, was based on the Jewish expectation of a political Messiah on the one hand, and on a political theology of a theocratic character on the other. The Zealots supported the view that, as God is the only master and ruler of his people, any form of recognition of Caesar's rule over Palestine,<sup>8</sup> such as paying taxes to Rome, was anathema. That is why they considered it their religious duty to prevent others from paying the appointed tax. They were also ready for revolt and war with Rome, if Rome persisted in the enslavement of the people of God, as Professor Agourides

writes in his *History of the New Testament Times*.<sup>9</sup>

According to Josephus, such a revolt took place in A.D. 6 when Judas the Galilean, under the pretence of opposing the census by Quirinius, incited the people against the Roman authority.<sup>10</sup> The census was viewed as a sign of recognition of Roman domination and Caesar's rule over God and his people. The revolt was eventually suppressed, Judas the Galilean murdered and his followers scattered.<sup>11</sup> The severest revolts against Rome, with strong participation by the Zealots and other resistance groups, took place in A.D. 66-73 (the Jewish War) and again in A.D. 132-135 (the revolt of Bar Kochba).<sup>12</sup>

Examination of the details of the relations between the various resistance movements in Jesus' time would lead us in directions leading away from the topic at hand, and experts at present cannot give definite answers to the problem pertaining to the period of the two major revolts. However, we need to note that the Zealot revolutionary movement was connected to the *Sicarii*, who, during their armed struggle against the Romans, used a special knife called *sicus* in Latin. It was from this term that the word *Sicarius*, meaning sword-bearer or executioner, is derived.<sup>13</sup> Many interpreters and historians, following Cullmann's thesis, believe that the surname *Iskariotis* is derived from the same root.<sup>14</sup> According to this position, the surname *Iskariotis* cannot refer to Judas' place of origin, as held by both ancient and modern exegetical traditions, because there is no evidence for such a location or settlement named Iskarioth or Karioth in Palestine. On the contrary, *Iskariotis* (as well as the variants *Iskarioth*, *Skarioth*, *Skariotis*) seems to be a corruption of *Sikariotis* or *Sicarios* and seems to relate to the Zealotic activity of Jesus' disciple.<sup>15</sup> Other disciples of Jesus may also have come from the movement of Zealots, too, such as "Simon, who was called the Zealot."<sup>16</sup> That is why three terms have been proposed as references for the Judean resistance against Roman

rule: the Greek word ζηλωτής, the Aramaic word “*kenana*” (with its Hellenized form *Kananaios* or *Kananites*) and the Latin word “*sicarius*”.<sup>17</sup>

I do not propose to affirm the precise character or legitimacy of these interpretations, because discussion among biblical scholars continues. I can, however, come to some preliminary conclusions: (a) that it is beyond doubt that some ex-Zealots participated in Jesus’ movement; (b) that among them was Judas *Iskariotis*, by evidence of either his surname or his conduct and mentality; and (c) that many of Jesus’ sayings and parables<sup>18</sup> were explicitly or implicitly of an anti-Zealot character and intended to convey the message that the ultimate initiative in bringing out the kingdom belonged to God. According to Professor Karavidopoulos,

...man can in no way force God to hasten the coming of his kingdom, neither through the faithful keeping of the Law, as the Pharisees believed, nor through raw violence against the Romans as the Zealots wished, nor through exact calculations of the time that the current form of the world will be destroyed, as the apocalyptic writers figured.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus’ well-known answer to the trap question made by the Pharisees and the Herodians about paying the tax to Caesar or not, carries relevant implications: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”<sup>20</sup> Despite its clear anti-Zealot character, Jesus’ answer does not provide theological cover for collaboration with the conqueror. Rather, it transfers the discussion to another level. It puts the faithful person’s obligations and relations with God and the world on a hierarchical scale. It indicates that man cannot force God to hasten the coming of his kingdom, which will not come through revolutionary violence. The initiative for the coming of this new world is up to God. As a consequence, the acknowledgement of Caesar’s authority and paying taxes to him restricts the principalities and authorities of this era into

a clearly prescribed framework and does not allow them to claim what does not belong to them. In other words, worldly powers cannot occupy the position and place that belong to God and demand the worship that is due to God alone. With his striking answer, Jesus, apart from escaping the trap that the religious leadership set up for him, seems to preclude the danger of a double idolatry: that of a secular state claiming for itself what belongs to God; and that of worship of the state in the place of God by identifying the state with God. This latter point concerns especially the Zealots and the subject of this paper as well.

### **The Religio-Nationalistic Messianism and Secular Eschatology of the Zealots**

Leaving some important issues aside, such as the relations of Zealots with Pharisees, Essenes, and Maccabees,<sup>21</sup> I will now examine another side of the Zealot movement. It is a dimension that appears to have greatly influenced Judas and that directly concerns our subject. I am speaking of the Zealots' messianic expectations and Judas' adoption of them.<sup>22</sup>

The Zealots expected a Messiah-King, invested with secular power and authority, whose main mission was to violently overthrow Roman domination and the complicit Judean oligarchy, and thus lead the Hebrew people to national restoration, social justice and fulfillment of its historical expectations.<sup>23</sup> The messianic prototype was a Davidic Messiah with attributes of royalty and political power. The Zealots were inspired by a religio-nationalistic messianism, a worldly vision of messianism, which looked to the reestablishment of David's kingdom. The liberation from sin and the preaching of repentance in the coming of God's kingdom<sup>24</sup> were not priorities for this kind of messianism. The priorities were national liberation and vindication of the sacred national

and religious tradition of Judaism. Even more, this worldly messianism identified the coming of God's kingdom with Israel's national restoration. The notion of a Messiah without secular power, a Messiah who preached repentance, love, and forgiveness of enemies, and a Messiah who inaugurated a kingdom different from the kingdoms of this world, was completely inconceivable. Zealotism and relevant theocratic nationalisms substitute authentic messianism (the foundation of eschatology) with a secular messianism of nation and race. In such cases, there is a shift in eschatological perspective, from the creative tension between the historical and meta-historical to a suffocating worldly intra-historical framework of secular kingdom and national vindication.

Judas appears to be influenced by these messianic views as an erstwhile follower of Zealotism. This worldly messianism can be traced to his decision to betray Jesus because of the latter's refusal to assume the role of a secular king and national liberator. Judas' initial enthusiasm about his Teacher's dynamic and impressive presence, which was accompanied by seemingly revolutionary preaching and miraculous healing, was followed by disappointment about the image which Jesus presented at the end of his public ministry. Judas eventually broke with Jesus because, instead of exploiting the prestige and popularity that healings and miracles had accorded to Jesus and moving on to overturn Roman dominance and Judaic oligarchy, Jesus not only refused to put his miraculous powers in the service of the national-religious messianic vision, but also preached a suffering Messiah, deprived of any kind of secular power or authority, who was to be persecuted and rejected. He turned into a Messiah who came to forgive people's sins and inaugurate a spiritual kingdom. He became a Messiah who not only showed lack of regard for the nation's problems, but who also differentiated himself from the received tradition of the religious leadership, the depositories of the sacred national and religious

heritage.

Judas not only succumbed eventually to the three temptations that Jesus rejected in the wilderness (miracle, mystery, authority), but also hastened to “correct” Christ’s work. In Judas’ case, the desire to bring about the “correction” fomented a plan and prepared the path of betrayal. Judas betrayed the Teacher for what he believed to be religious inconsistency and the betrayal of the Judaic nation and messianic promise. He decided to intervene, therefore, and assumed the burden of defending the nation’s history and tradition, secretly aligning himself with the religious leadership, the authority which guarded the nation’s sacred tradition. Judas acted as a disappointed Zealot ideologist, seized by theocratic nationalism and worldly messianism, which in his view were contradicted by Christ’s preaching and conduct. This is suggested by the whole course of events, the return of the thirty silver pieces, the regret (without true repentance) and finally Judas’ suicide, which point to ideological reasons rather than simple greed as his motivation.

### **Analogies with the Present Ecclesiastical Situation in Greece**

The analogy with the present ecclesiastical realities in Greece seems obvious. In traditional Orthodox countries, the Church faces, if it has not already succumbed to, Judas’ temptation. I do not just refer to the known problem of ethno-phyletism and the illusion of identifying every “Orthodox” nation with the truth of the Orthodox faith. There are deeper and graver consequences: a) the distortion of the Church’s identity and self-consciousness; b) the constriction of the Church within an immanent historical perspective and the consequent loss of its eschatological identity; c) the restriction of its mission to fulfill the eternal destinies of nations; d) the transformation of the proclamation of God’s coming



kingdom into a proclamation of national salvation and preservation of an imagined glorious ethno-religious past; and e) finally the substitution of the history of salvation and the history of divine economy with the history of national regeneration. In what follows I will not attempt a comprehensive examination of the considerable problems presented by the relations between the Church and nations. What I will attempt is to draw some comparison with Judas' and Jewish Zealotism's views about nation and Messiah. In my remarks, I will confine myself mainly to the Greek ecclesiastical reality, which *mutatis mutandis* hold true also for the rest of the "Orthodox world," without suggesting any form of negative exclusiveness.

A hundred and eighty years after the 1821 Revolution<sup>25</sup> and the beginning of the end of the "kenotic" period of the Church under Ottoman subjugation, during which, due to exceptional historical circumstances, the Church undertook to preserve the nation, the Church in Greece seems unable to escape the syndrome of identifying with the nation. It is unable to see its work and its general historical course as distinct from the course of the nation. It also appears to remain unaware of the fact that this identification with the nation and national ideology has been imposed on the Church by the state, to serve the state's own purposes, which gradually have become the Church's purpose, too.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in the official ecclesiastical discourse, Orthodoxy and Hellenism signify exactly the same thing (for example, as in the slogan "Greece means Orthodoxy!"). The limits of Church are confused with the limits of nation, while simultaneously the Greeks are considered to be the new chosen race of God. The words of Jesus "the hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified"<sup>27</sup> in his encounter with the Greeks are interpreted through the lenses of racial criteria and historical anachronism. Indeed, as much as the Greek state seeks to adapt to international realities and takes politically con-

venient steps to divorce itself from the Church, the Church seeks to defend itself by appeals to the past and its contribution to the "struggles of the nation," in order to guard its exclusive relationship and symbiosis with the *ethnos*. As the Greek state is gradually denationalized, as a result of the wider realignments due to globalization and multiculturalism, the Church in Greece is more emphatically nationalized, because of a growing sense of insecurity that results from the loss of the special legal relationship to the state and the exclusive relationship with the nation.<sup>28</sup>

These phenomena unfortunately relate not only to a crisis of ecclesiastical policy, manifestations of anachronism, and religious fundamentalism. They also underline something deeper: the inversion of priorities (Christ or the nation? God's kingdom or the nation's continuity?), the loss of the Church's catholicity and universality, and the unconscious adoption of a worldly eschatology. The dominant ecclesiastical message today does not portray the sense of loss or failure that results from the intimate connection of Church and nation; on the contrary, the Church delights in appealing to this dimension, for example in books and publications about the clergy's participation in the armed struggle of 1821, the Macedonian conflict, and the Asia Minor disaster. In the process the Church does not seem to realize the distance that separates these actions from Jesus' behavior in similar cases and ignores the totally exceptional (*κατ' οἰκονομίαν*) character that the ecclesial conscience always attributed to the participation of the clergy in armed struggle.

However, how far is such an ecclesiastical message and the consequent ecclesiastical practice from Judas' temptation and theocratic nationalism as presented above? Would it possibly be an exaggeration to claim that, what Jesus Christ denied (confinement within a narrow national frame, national exclusiveness, restriction into a worldly messianism), *mutatis mutandis* seems to be pursued by the official

Church today? Indeed, the temptations that Christ rejected in the wilderness appear acceptable to the institutional Church. There is a difference: instead of transforming stones into bread, the Church flirts with both: attempting to show that Macedonia is Greek, and organizing massive gatherings to demand the inclusion of religious denomination on identity cards.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the Roman conquerors have been replaced successively by the Turks, Bulgarians, Germans, the European Union, the New World Order, the United States, NATO, etc. The nationalistic liberation that Christ denied to Judas and the Zealots, is, by analogy, the nationalistic liberation effected by Theodore Kolokotronis or Papaflessas<sup>30</sup> in the Revolution of 1821. These efforts, which restrict the catholicity and space of Christian freedom, are accepted and proudly projected by our own Church, and are also invoked as a token of its fidelity to Orthodoxy (Hellenic Orthodoxy). What Judas did not find in the person of Jesus and his spiritual messianism is generously offered today by the Church, with its continuous preoccupation with worldly matters of foreign policy, the continuity of the Greek nation and Greek homogeneity, the demographic problem of incorporating immigrants, identity cards, and the like.

The logical and natural consequence of the above is to identify the religious and the ethnic dimensions. Thus, national and Christian identity are considered as something unified and indivisible, although in the end, of course, Christian identity is finally degraded to a component of national identity. "Christian" identity, in this instance, does not refer to the participation in the eucharistic and eschatological community that the Church is, and to the subsequent moral, social and political consequences which derive from incorporation into this community. The dynamics of that kind of participation remain boundless and beyond any *a priori* objective limits, especially limits imposed by nationalist attachments. "Christian" identity constrained by these limits thus refers to

an aggregate reality the boundaries of which are coextensive with those of the nation. The adjective "Christian" does not necessarily, therefore, introduce criteria and demands specified and explained by the Church for personal, social, and communal life. Rather, it is merely connected to traditional cultural and historical references. Thus, the fight for the inclusion of religious identification in identity cards ends up being a fight about national identity, marked by the spirit of fundamentalism. The co-identification of religious and national identities has tragic consequences for both religious communities and contemporary nations.<sup>31</sup>

### **From the History of the Divine Economy to the History of the National Revival**

Undoubtedly, the Church's national role and its engagement in matters of national identity indicate a lack of eschatological perspective.<sup>32</sup> Eschatology, however, is not just the discourse about the last times or about the last chapter of Dogmatics, but also a perspective and reality related to the intrusion of the Eschaton into the present, the foretaste "from now" of the future age's life, the active expectation of the coming kingdom. That is why we should remember the plethora of biblical references which, according to the plan of divine economy, announce the eschatological realization of the unity of all nations and their final conversion. This unity will allow the regeneration and prevalence of universal peace.<sup>33</sup> We also need to remember the fact that this unity is already present in the Church of Jesus Christ. The sin which had broken the initial unity of the human race is transcended. All manner of divisions and distinctions, concerning sexes, races, nations, and social classes are transcended according to the Pauline statement: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, after

Pentecost and the coming of the Paraclete, the eschatological actualization of unity is presented by ecclesiastical hymnology as a palpable reality, an overcoming of the division in languages and nations brought about by the arrogance of the Tower of Babel. The kontakion of the Feast of Pentecost proclaims: "*Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord, we glorify the All-holy Spirit.*" To be precise, this unity is part of the plan of divine economy, where notions of exclusiveness, chosen people, and hereditary adoption are abolished, as excellently depicted in the prophetic book of Jonah as well as in Paul's Epistle to Romans chapters 4 and 9-11. Professor N. Matsoukas asserts concerning these biblical texts that

This exclusiveness, which is mainly the most serious symptom of the original sin, constitutes a danger for the era of the Paraclete's Church. The corrosion of the body of the Church by the sin of exclusiveness, as an egocentric rallying point, is continuously and dangerously close... For the Apostle Paul, Israel's degradation constitutes a painful fact of the history of the divine economy... Nothing can guarantee one's place in the Church except persistence in the spirit of ecumenicity.<sup>35</sup>

However, the history of divine economy is connected with the divine manifestations in creation and history; the interventions of the preexistent and incarnated Logos; and the mission of the Holy Spirit. The ultimate goal is liberation from sin, and salvation through Christ in which all nations will participate together with Israel.<sup>36</sup> All the great events of sacred history move toward the same goal. Election and covenant, the Law and the promised land, the call of the Prophets, the sending of Jesus by the Father, the parables and the disclosure of the mysteries of the kingdom, the fulfillment of Scripture and the necessity of suffering, the para-

dox of the cross and the glory of the resurrection, the coming of the Paraclete and the apostolic ministry – all proclaim the good news of God’s kingdom. It is a good news which includes all the nations and which is realized in the person of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God.

In conventional ecclesiastical rhetoric, however, the events of the history of divine economy are not integrated in a vision transcending the consequences of sin and affirming unity beyond ethnicity. What is worse, they are symbolically connected and emotionally loaded with events and vicissitudes of our national destiny. Thus a significant shift occurs, a slide from the history of divine economy to the history of national revival, a move that is nothing other than the logical conclusion of the temptation of Judas and the Zealots’ worldly messianism. Accordingly, we see that there is no great feast of the Church that is not somehow connected to some major national event and clothed with patriotic symbolism. The annunciation of the Mother of God is connected with the 1821 Greek Revolution (March 25<sup>th</sup>);<sup>37</sup> the resurrection of Christ, with the resurrection of the Greek nation after four hundred years of slavery; the dormition of the Mother of God, with the celebration of the armed forces; the exaltation of the Holy Cross, with the anniversary of the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922; the feast of the Holy Protection (Ἁγία Σκέπη), with the anniversary of the resistance against the Italians and the Nazis; the feast of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, with the celebration of the Air Force; the feast of St. Barbara, with the artillery; the feast of St. Artemios, with the celebration of the police forces, and so on. I stop here because the list seems endless. The most tragic thing about all this is that the Church not only cannot do anything to curb these developments (many of these “double feasts” were recently formally established), but it also seems to favor them, perhaps believing that in this way the Church comes to the center of public life and can therefore exercise

a more effective pastoral role.

According to this logic, the sacred and venerable heritage of the faith of the Church, including the Divine Liturgy, sacred symbols, Church feasts of saints and martyrs, holy relics, and so forth, become at the same time sacred and venerable objects of the race. Thus the cross, emblematic of the crucified ethos of Christ and of his denial of self and every worldly security, is now used as both a religious and national symbol. The national martyrs are often confused with the Church's neomartyrs.<sup>38</sup> The famous "double feasts" of Church and nation are concluded with a barrage of applause, the singing of the national anthem, and long-winded patriotic sermons – in a parody of both Church and nation. The reason for this is that the ecclesial dimension of the feast is lost, because it does not define, but rather is defined by, the national. The official ecclesiastical rhetoric in Greece does not preach "Jesus Christ crucified,"<sup>39</sup> "a scandal to the Jews, folly to the Greeks,"<sup>40</sup> but rather a Christ useful to the prevailing ethno-religious ideology. Thus it follows that the ecclesiastical sermon often offers a lesson in triumphalistic patriotism, as pointed out by the late Metropolitan Dionysios Psarianos. Thus, the patriotic preaching resounds more with the priorities of Judas and the Zealots, not those of Jesus.

Therefore, it was to be expected that the local Church would be transformed into national Church. One tragic result of multiracial, multicultural societies of Western Europe and America is the scandal of multiple Orthodox ecclesiastical jurisdictions (every nation must have its own Church), which is a nullification of Orthodox ecclesiology. Thus, the call for the salvation and sanctification of the world, as well as of the universe, is replaced by the sanctification and canonization of the nation. Simultaneously, the Church's tradition is turned from a renewed reality alive in the Holy Spirit into a kind of ossified folklore museum, the guardian of the nation and its verities. In addition, the mingling of nation and Church and

the substitution of the history of divine economy with the history of national renaissance produced ideas and manifestos which were distinguished for their theological and political confusion, their naïve style, and the metaphysical faith in the eternal value of Hellenism. Such a trope – typical of the climate of its era, but also of a tendency which still exists today in Greek Church and society – characterized the beginning of the twentieth century, as demonstrated by works published in Patras in which a “Creed of Hellenism” – an imitation of the Nicene Creed – appears, including elements that sink to the worship of the chthonic powers of the earth, and of race and blood. The Church in Greece has never, to my knowledge, clearly dissociated itself from such efforts:

#### NATIONAL “CREED”

I believe in one Greece, great and undivided, thrice-glorified and eternal, homeland of spirit, light and wisdom, of science, of all that is perfect; the creator of art, civilization and all progress.

And in Hellenism, this race’s intellectual strength, born of light and of Hellenic nature.

And in the Hellenic life-giving spirit, proceeding from the Hellenic light, and through the light of civilization filling the world and illuminating humanity from earliest ages; and produced by the Hellenic earth, and teaching civilization in the midst of barbarism.

And in the invincibility of this spirit’s power, unconquered, neither humiliated, nor lacking ever in the terrible national trials throughout the ages; rather ever living and radiant, shining forth from a single corner of the Fatherland, ever growing without change or diminishment.



In the new shining of the paternal spirit with the same excellent wealth of wisdom, science, and art.

And in our National Divine Religion, always maintaining intact our nationalism and language in all the terrible storms of our race, and unbreakably bonded with the existence and grandeur of the Nation.

I expect the inevitable dominance of Hellenism, just as in the past so also in the present, against all enemies and all obstacles, and its secure final triumph against all adversaries.

May the grandeur of old of our Fatherland and the invincible glory, power, and beauty of our Resurrected Nations endure unto all the ages.

Amen!<sup>41</sup>

### **Towards a New Relation Between Church and Nation**

The word of God commands: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image... You shall not bow down to them nor serve them."<sup>42</sup> Is not this command applicable in every way to the above "National Creed" which borrows the language of the creed of Orthodox dogmatics and not only introduces ethnophyletism, but also the paganization of people and nation? I wonder: does not the Old Testament commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,"<sup>43</sup> militate against the illicit confusion of God with the nation? Could it not be a warning to us about the disastrous consequences of theocratic nationalism, which was tragically embodied by Judas and the Zealots, and which continues to survive today under a Christian cloak?<sup>44</sup> If we change the persons

and names, the geographic and chronological coordinates, then Judas' temptation and denial certainly concerns all of us too, who identify national freedom with Christian freedom, Greece with Orthodoxy, nation with Church, national identity with Christian identity. However, as Bishop of Diokleia Kallistos Ware characteristically points out:

By respecting national identity, we must not forget that the Church, in its deeper essence, is One and Catholic. The basic element in the structure of Church on earth is not the nation, but the local ecclesial assembly, the gathering around the bishop every Sunday for the performance of the divine Eucharist. And this eucharistic gathering has to unite all Christians in a given place, independent of their national origin. According to the holy canons, the bishop has the responsibility not of a national group, but of a specific area. The Church as a eucharistic community is not organized on a national basis, but on a local basis. As a result, the national dimension must serve the Church, not enslave it.<sup>46</sup>

The aim, therefore, is to define the correct hierarchy of criteria and priorities in the relationship between the ecclesiastical and national dimensions, as well as the clear marking of their respective boundaries and their interrelationships. Neither should the nation be identified with the Church, nor the Church with the nation. However, as long as history exists, nations will exist too. The notions of nation and Church involve a dialectic relationship, since they entail an irreconcilable and counterbalancing dynamic. The nation originated from the breakdown and fragmentation of human unity, while the Church prepares and actualizes eschatologically the path to unity. The nation separates those who were initially united, while the Church unites those which were previously separated. Of course, it is not easy to deny the positive elements of the symbiosis of Church and people. Nor can one underestimate the fact that we are dealing with a people's Church, implying significant historical and social

commitments. However much the thirst of peoples for freedom and justice may be legitimate, it is equally necessary for the Church to take care so as not to be transformed into a temporal movement of liberation facing a deadline.

In the end, as regards the subject of nation, the issue is whether the course of the official Church in Greece, and perhaps the Church in other Orthodox countries, bears elements of historical sin in the sense of missing the mark and failure to adequately conform to its salvific mandate. Is it perhaps possible that the continuous self-involvement of the Church with the issues of the nation betrays a loss of the eschatological identity of the Church and a turn to inner-worldly and historically contingent matters? Does the entanglement of ecclesiastical discourse in the structures and forms of this age perhaps constitute an acceptance of Judas' and the Zealots' claims for and expectations of an ethno-religious messianism? The problem arose at the moment the Church was established within the world and began to seek justification for its mission by resorting to the historical past. In this way the Church, overemphasizing the "already" and forgetting the "not yet" of its nature and mission, becomes passionate about realities such as nation and race which are destined to be superseded and die in the eschatological end.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. Kornarakis, *Judas as a Collective Guilt Archetype* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> John 17:12.

<sup>3</sup> See G.A. Megas, "Judas in Popular Traditions" (in Greek), *Epetiris tou Laographikou Archeiou*, 3-4 (1941-42), 3-32.

<sup>4</sup> One can find these texts and extracts together with a commentary in P.D. Loukeris, *Judas the Iscariot and His Place in the Mystery of the "Divine Economy"* (in Greek) (Athens, 1991), 33ff.

<sup>5</sup> John 13:29; cf. John 12:6.

<sup>6</sup> John 12:3-5; cf. Matt 26:6-9 and Mark 14:3-5. See also G. Patronos, *Discipleship and Apostolicity* (in Greek) (Athens, 1999), 103. idem, "Je-

sus Christ and Judas, or How Judas Conceived His Teacher as a Messiah" (in Greek), *Diavasis* 24 (2000): 23; Savas Agourides, "The Betrayal of Judas" (in Greek), *E Kathimerini* 1 March 2001, supplement "Seven Days."

<sup>7</sup> On these topics see several aspects in: J. Karavidopoulos, "The Arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane According to the Narration of the Evangelist Luke (22:39-53)" (in Greek), *Epistimoniki Epetiris Theologikis Scholis Aristoteleiou Panepistimiou Thessalonikis* 15 (1970), 215-216. The relation between Judas and Jesus has recently been interpreted in a different way in the following works: C. Soullard ed., *Judas* (Paris, 1999), and A. Abécassis, *Judas et Jésus. Une liaison dangereuse* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, ed. L. H. Feldman, XVIII, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> See S. Agourides, *History of the New Testament Times* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1983), 348-349. Cf. J. Karavidopoulos, *The Gospel according to Mark* (in Greek) *The New Testament Interpretation*, 2 (Thessaloniki, 1993), 382.

<sup>10</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, 117-118 (ed. H. St. J. Thackeray). – idem, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, 4-5 (ed. L. H. Feldman).

<sup>11</sup> See Acts 5:37.

<sup>12</sup> From the ample bibliography on this issue we select the following: Savas Agourides, *History of the New Testament Times*, 284-290; S. W. Baron, *Histoire d'Israël. Vie sociale et religieuse*, vol. 2 (trans. V. Nikiprowetzky; Paris, 1957), 711-715, 720-726; J. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine d'après les thalmuds et les autres sources rabbiniques*, (Paris, 1867), 247-250; A. H. J. Gunneweg, *The History of Israel until the Bar-Kochba Revolt*, 5th revised edition, (trans. J. Mourtziotis; Thessaloniki, 1997), 387-399 (in Greek); M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, (trans. St. Godman, New York, 1958), 430-452; W.O.E. Oesterley, *A History of Israel*, vol II, (Oxford, 1957), 440-451, 459-463; St. Perowne, *The Political Background of the New Testament*, (London, 1965), 126-192; P. Prigent, *La fin de Jerusalem*, (Neuchatel, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> See Acts 21:38. Cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, 254-257 (ed. H. St. Thackeray); idem., *Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, 185-188 (ed. L. H. Feldman); V. Nikiprowetzky, "Sicaire et Zélotes. Une reconsidération", *Semítica*, 23/1973, 57-63; A. Paul, *Le monde des Juifs à l'heure de Jésus. Histoire politique*, (Paris, 1981), 216-220; A. Glavinas, *Church History*, v. I, (Thessaloniki, 1995), 73.

<sup>14</sup> See O. Cullmann, *Dieu et César*, (Neuchatel-Paris, 1956), 18; idem., "Le douzième apôtre", *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, 1962, 137-140. Cf. A. Glavinas, op. cit., 73-74.

<sup>15</sup> See, on the contrary: M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten. Untersuchungen zur*

*jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes*, I bis 70 n. Chr., (Leiden, 1976), 49, n. 3. For a sampling of hermeneutical comments and bibliography, see P. D. Loukeris, *Judas the Iscariot*, p. 25-26, 122-123. One should note that Loukeris seems to attribute to Cullmann the view that the surname Iscariot denotes birthplace and signifies the one who comes from the city Carioth (see p. 25 and reference to Cullman's article, p. 122, n. 38).

<sup>16</sup> Luke 6: 15; Acts 1:13. See also the variations in the manuscripts "Σίμων ο Καναναῖος or Κανανίτης" for the respective person in Mark 3:18 (where the adjective Καναναῖος or Κανανίτης does not denote origin from Cana, as erroneously interpreted earlier, but it is the Aramaic rendering of the word zealot with the addition of a Greek suffix, according to the clarifications of O. Cullmann, "Le douzieme apotre," 134; idem., *Dieu et Cesar*, 17-18. Cf. A. Paul, *Le monde de Juifs à l'heure de Jésus*, 216-219; J. Karavidopoulos, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 148; cf. also the variation in Itala manuscripts, Matt 10:3: "Judas Zelotes."

<sup>17</sup> O. Cullmann, *Dieu et Cesar*, 17-18; A. Paul, *Le monde de Juifs à l'heure de Jésus*, 218-219.

<sup>18</sup> Like the parable of the seed which augments on its own, Mark 4:26.

<sup>19</sup> J. Karavidopoulos, *op. cit.*, 176-177.

<sup>20</sup> Mark 12:13-17; Matt 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26. Hermeneutical analysis of the relevant fragment of Mark, in J. Karavidopoulos, *op. cit.*, 381-384; cf. also 176-178.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus. An Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period*, New York, 1956; A.H.J. Gunneweg, *The History of Israel until the Bar-Cochba Revolt*, 390-391; S. Agourides, *History of the N. T. Times*, 348-349.

<sup>22</sup> In the two following paragraphs (The Messianism of the Zealots and Judas) I have been inspired by the exceptional analysis by G. Patronos, *Discipleship and Apostolicity*, 42, 103-105; and idem., "Jesus Christ and Judas, or how Judas conceived his Teacher as a Messiah", 21-25.

<sup>23</sup> This is the way S.G.F. Brandon imagines Jesus in his work, *Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*, (Manchester, 1967). In his opinion, Jesus was the Messiah who fought, even with arms, for the spiritual revival and the political independence of his nation before being sentenced to death by the Romans.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31.

<sup>25</sup> The revolution of the Greek people against the Turkish yoke, a revolution that inaugurated the political liberation and the making of the modern Greek state.

<sup>26</sup> For the history of the adoption of the national ideology by the Church of Greece, see C. Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece*

(1821-1852), (Cambridge 1969); cf. I. Petrou, *Church and Politics in Greece 1750-1909*, (Thessaloniki, 1992), 141ff. (in Greek); and A. Manitakis, *The Relations between the Church and the State-Nation in the Shadow of the Identity-Cards Conflict*, (Athens, 2000), 21-56 (in Greek). For a comparative study of this phenomenon in the Balkan countries, see P. Kitromilidis, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans," in *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality*, (ed. M. Veremis; London and Athens, 1990), 51-60.

<sup>27</sup> John 12:23.

<sup>28</sup> A. Manitakis, *op. cit.*, p.17.

<sup>29</sup> From the time of the Nazi occupation of Greece, during the Second World War, until very recently, Greek identity cards included the religious denomination of citizens. This practice was abolished by the Greek government in May of 2000, despite intense reaction and the opposition of the Church of Greece.

<sup>30</sup> Heroes of the Greek revolution of 1821, among the most famous and highly esteemed by the Greek people.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, St. Zoumboulakis, *The God in the City. Essays on Religion and Politics*, (Athens, 2002), 11-47 (in Greek); G. Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu. Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans à la reconquête du monde*, (Paris, 1991); A. Maalouf, *Les identités meurtrières*, (Paris, 1999); J. Petrou, "Nationale Identität und Orthodoxie im heutigen Griechenland," in *Gottes auserwählte Völker Erwählungsvorstellungen und kollektive Selbstfindung in der Geschichte*, (ed. Alois Moisser; Frankfurt am Main, 2001), 261-271; Ph. Terzakis, *Irrationalism, Fundamentalism and Religious Revivalism: The colours of the chessboard*, (Athens, 1998) (in Greek). For the religious roots of nationalism, see P. Lekkas, *The Nationalistic Ideology. Five working hypotheses in historical sociology*, (Athens, 1996), 178-194 (in Greek).

<sup>32</sup> See an extended analysis of this aspect in my study "The Church and the Nation in Eschatological Perspective," in *Eschatology and the Church*, (ed. P. Kalaitzidis; Academy for Orthodox Theological Studies of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias, Winter Programme 2000-01, Athens 2003), 339-373 (in Greek). Cf. P. Kalaitzidis, "Orthodoxy and modern Greek Identity. Critical Remarks from a Theological point of view," *Indiktos*, 17 (2003), 44-94 (in Greek).

<sup>33</sup> See for example Gen 12:3; Isa 2:2-5, 66:18-24; Rom 4:9-11; Gal 3:8; Eph 2:11-22.

<sup>34</sup> See Col 3:11; cf. Gal 3:26-29; cf. also *Epistle to Diognetus*, ch. 5; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discourse 7*, PG 35, 785 C; Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy I*, PG 91, 664 D-668 C.

<sup>35</sup> N. Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology*, v. II, (Thessaloniki

1985), 375-376.

<sup>36</sup> N. Matsoukas, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> The anniversary of the Greek national revolution against the subjugation under the Ottoman Turks.

<sup>38</sup> The martyrs who refused to become Muslims and died for Christ during the Ottoman occupation.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor 2:2

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor 1:23

<sup>41</sup> See M. Chairetos, *Reflections on the Nation, or: A Study on Ethnism*, (Patras 1905), 7-8 (in Greek).

<sup>42</sup> Exod 20:3-5.

<sup>43</sup> Exod 20:7.

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that the text of the Constantinople Council (1872) connected ethnophyletism with a Judaic spirit of exclusivity. Hieromonk A. Radovic (now Metropolitan of Montenegro) spoke about "Judaic temptation" which results in the cult of the nation and of the ancestors, and which prevents the Church from realizing her catholicity and ecumenicity (cf. A. Radovic, "The catholicity of Orthodoxy. So-bornost or the bottom of illogicality," in *Witness of Orthodoxy*, (Athens 1971), 36-38 (in Greek).

<sup>45</sup> Kallistos Ware, "L'unité dans la diversité. La vocation orthodoxe en Europe occidentale," *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, 77 (Avril 1983), 14.

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