

Freedom as anthropological component and national demand: Encounters and frictions in the Struggle for Independence

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1. The role of freedom in Christian anthropology

The Christian Church is a community of freedom. The vocation of the faithful and, therefore, their coming together is understood only in the context of free will¹. Freedom is not a concept in itself, but rather summarizes the purpose of Christian life. It is not a mere theoretical value within the spectrum of Christian doctrine, but lies at the core of its truth and in the perspective of the life of the faithful².

God creates human being free and autonomous. The human nature constantly “longs” for freedom and desires to live in freedom’s spirit. The human being is called upon to live freely, to let his fellow human beings live freely, and at the same time to act, so that freedom remains a standard of the human condition. But God Himself, who loves His creature so fiercely, does not force union with Him. The divine omnipotence “stops” before the reality of human autonomy and respects

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1. Cf. *Gal.* 5:13: "For you were called to freedom".

2. Cf. *Jn* 8:32: "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free".

human choices. He does not abolish or undermine freedom. After all, man is called to love God only freely and voluntarily. God is constantly “knocking” at the door of human existence. It is up to the human will whether it wants to unlock the door and introduce Him into its being, in order to bring about the “good alteration” within it. The Creator “wills” His creation to enter into communion with Him by freely and responsibly exercising its self-authority.

The very earthly life of Christ is a full and complete testimony to the emergence of the Christian life as a life of freedom. Despite the undeniable authority of Jesus’ presence in the society of his contemporaries, he did not in any way seek to coerce the acceptance of his countrymen or to extort faith in him from the audience of his teaching. That is why he did not seek his personal praise, he did not wish to communicate the miracles that he had performed, he did not promise a comfortable and quiet life for those who would follow him, he did not preach “things pleasant to their ears”, he did not want to entice or impress in any way. He preferred to suffer at the hands of his creature rather than reveal his power and glory in their true dimensions. Precisely because any of the above could be a cause of (even minimal) pressure for the acceptance of a miracle worker or a “powerful” person. He wanted the participation in His Body to function as an act of responsibility and awareness of entering into a life of loving sacrifice and interdependence of its members³.

Any kind of compulsion is therefore alien to the nature of the Church. Its place is the sphere for the development of human freedom and its time works for the liberation of the faithful from the internal and external bonds that threaten their existence⁴. The divine presence itself is a sign of freedom: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”⁵.

3. All this is summed up simply but eloquently in the Lord’s phrase: “if anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt. 16:24).

4. See, G. Mantzaridis, *Χριστιανική Ήθική*, vol. II, Mount Athos: ed. Vatopedi Monastery 2015, p. 242.

5. 2 Cor. 3:18.

Freedom is also reflected in the whole extent of Christian preaching, infusing the spirit of Christian doctrine and making its presence felt in every other Christian virtue. Moreover, every virtue offers its value only as a product of freedom. It goes without saying that the nature of freedom in Christ, as an element of communion with divine love, transcends the measures of human understanding and opens for human beings' sake extraordinary perspectives beyond his ordinary possibilities. Moreover, Christ is the only "liberator of men's souls"⁶, the only one who can complete man's desire to break down the barriers that prevent him from living authentically the life for which he was created⁷. The faithful who accepts the "conception" of divine mercy⁸ is able to experience more fully the "sacrament of the brother", i.e. the loving relationship with his fellow human being, in which the encounter with his neighbour signifies a ministry in favour of him, such that it does not enslave the one who loves and ministers, but on the contrary, by God's grace, liberates him in all the dimensions of his existence.

On this very ground, freedom's perspective does not only concern human beings, the whole human being, but divine love extends the gift of its presence to the whole creation: "and this creation is freed from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God"⁹. Forgiveness, for example, may give the outward appearance of a restriction of freedom, but in reality, it frees man from the bonds of individual self-sufficiency and self-justification and opens wide the horizons of his relationship with his brothers and sisters. The "other" no longer becomes the obstacle that hinders us in the development of

6. Cf. the *Apolytikion* of the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord to the Temple: "Hail Virgin Theotokos full of Grace, for Christ our God, the Sun of Righteousness, has dawned from you, granting light to those in darkness. And you, O Righteous Elder, rejoice, taking in your arms, the Deliverance of our souls, who grants us Resurrection". In this sense, we can say that the "discharge" that Elder Simeon asked for constitutes a release from any other desire, which has become secondary and probably unnecessary.

7. *Gal.* 4:3: "so also we, when we were minors [we] were enslaved under the basic forces of the world".

8. *Ps.* 23:6: "Surely your goodness and faithfulness will pursue me all my days".

9. *Rom.* 9:21

our “talents”, but the “door” that introduces us to the meadows of our self-transcendence¹⁰.

Freedom is still the “background” and the foundation of Christian asceticism. Not only because the latter is authentic only as a result of our free-will, but also because it is the object of our efforts. We fast, abstain, suffer and mortify our bodies in order to “train” ourselves to resist temptations and to eradicate the passions that oppress our existence. We thus aspire to the life of the Kingdom, which is equivalent to freedom from all necessity.

Freedom is usually understood as the possibility of choice or independence in acting. For Christian doctrine, however, its dimensions are much broader. First, human being’s created nature imposes certain constraints and limits his possibilities. For example, he comes into life without choosing the place and time of his coming into the world, or even who his relatives will be. The life in Christ is precisely a pedagogy and improvement in partaking of the absolute freedom that comes as a fruit of communion with God. With human synergy it can lead to complete and authentic freedom.

A fundamental point in this process is the renunciation of the passions¹¹. Subjugation to the sinful habits inhibits human being’s progress¹². The redemptive dimension of Christian preaching becomes clear for another reason: its dynamic can release human beings from the inner burdens that bind their personality and prevent them from developing a healthy relationship with God and their fellows. The reception of Christian truths and their adaptation to human behaviour, what we call synergy with

10. Cf. Arch. Sofrony (Sacharov), *Οικοδομώντας τὸν ναὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ μέσα μας καὶ στοὺς ἀδελφούς μας*, vol. II, trans. by arch. Zacharias, Essex, England: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist 2014, p. 233: "Let us try to understand that if we forgive everything to others, our spirit will be freer during this whole period of Lent".

11. According to St. Theoleptus of Philadelphia, the constraints of the senses bring freedom to the soul, as the sunset brings night. See, "Discourse on interior work in Christ and the monastic life", in *Philokalia*, vol. IV, Thessaloniki 1987, p. 147.

12. Cf. Tatian, *Adversus Graecos [To Heathens]*, chap. 11, PG 6, 829: "the free will led us to perdition; though we were free, we became slaves; we were sold in favor of the sin".

the divine will, requires an effort on the part of human beings¹³. It is essentially the human's struggle, his discipline. This also means that, while by observing the divine commandments outwardly it appears that the human being is bound and restricted, in reality he gains his freedom¹⁴. He is thus led to freedom under God, which is not "of this world"; it is beyond the conventional distinctions by which worldly freedom is understood and transcends them. Its dimensions are limitless and usually invisible to those who lack the necessary senses to perceive them¹⁵. Freedom is therefore a central component of human nature. It is a major feature of divine adoption and probably the greatest gift of our rational nature¹⁶. It is also the ground and precondition for human's spiritual progress¹⁷. Its fundamental value can also be understood antithetically, when it is abolished or questioned. And this happens not only when authoritarian regimes or unliberal living conditions are established, but also when attempts are made to subordinate freedom of will to a set of deterministic (i.e. existing in the "realm of necessity") processes¹⁸.

13. The presence of divine energy is necessary in all phases of man's spiritual progress, for the acquisition of genuine freedom. E.g., the joy of freedom brings diffusion to the souls that proceed to purification, while from the much freedom given to man and the abundance of divine gifts in general, men think that the acquisition of their free will is their own achievement (something that is avoided only by virtue of humility). See Niketas Stethatos, *Second Hundred of Physical Chapters on the Purification of the Mind* 21, *Philokalia*, op.cit., p. 85.

14. See, Mark the Hermit, *On the Spiritual Law* 30, PG 65, 909AB: "The law of freedom is revealed by the knowledge of the truth, but it is understood by the observance of the commandments; and it is fulfilled by the mercies of our Lord Jesus Christ". *Response to the questioners on the divine baptism*, PG 65, 992A: "These commandments do not cut off sin (for this is done by the cross alone), but that keep the terms of the freedom given to us".

15. See, Mark the Hermit, *On the Spiritual Law* 28, PG 65, 909A, "The law of freedom teaches all truth; and many understand it by knowledge, but few understand it by analogy with the observance of the commandments."

16. See, Kallistos Angelikoudis, *On the Union with God and on Contemplative Life*, *The Philokalia*, vol. V, op.cit.

17. For Nikitas Stethatos, freedom is equivalent to the apathy of the soul and is the first cause of engagement with what is of benefit to it. See *On the Practice of the Virtues: One Hundred Texts*, *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, op.cit., pp. 79-106.

18. Such views are expressed by the well-known historian Yuval Noah Harari, who sees

On the other hand, the possibilities of freedom given to human beings are not easy for them to accept, because of the inherent weakness of their nature and the dominance of the passions in their being. This is fully illustrated by the reactions of the Gergesenes to the narrative of the healing of the demon possessed man who plagued their region: they ask their deliverer Jesus to leave their land. They cannot bear His presence, even though He has favoured them¹⁹. They do not want to know their Saviour or to have anything to do with Him, so they have difficulty getting free²⁰.

Fyodor Dostoevsky recalls the same in his famous parable of the Grand Inquisitor. According to this, Christ returns to earth in Seville, Spain, and is arrested by the Inquisition, not because of some misunderstanding, but because he is preaching freedom of conscience, as the head of the Inquisition explains to him when he visits him in his cell. But people don't want the responsibility of freedom, he tells him, they can't bear this burden. That's why they submit their freedom to power at the price of their security: "Make us slaves, but make us full", is their demand²¹.

modern science as opposing free will but this opposition was something that "many prefer not to see as they look into microscopes and fMRI scanners", i.e. an "elephant in the laboratory". "[...] as scientists opened up the Sapiens black box, they discovered there neither soul, nor free will, nor "self" – but only genes, hormones, and neurons that obey the same physical and chemical laws governing the rest of reality [...]. The electrochemical brain processes that result in murder are either deterministic or random or a combination of both – but they are never free [...]. The sacred word "freedom" turns out to be, just like "soul", an empty term that carries no discernible meaning. Free will exists only in the imaginary stories we humans have invented". See in general, Y. N. Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, Oxford: Signal Books 2015. Harari's view –or rather desire– obviously echoes the old and now classic reductionist concepts, with which much of the scientific community disagree, such as the Russian-Belgian physical-chemist, scholar of complex systems, pioneer in the field of chaos and self-organization theories and Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine (1917-2003), who identified the importance of possibility (as opposed to certainty) in physical-chemical processes. See I. Prigogin, *The end of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature*, New York: The Free Press 1997.

19. *Mt.* 8:28-34.

20. See, *Jn* 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life". Cf. also *Jn* 8:32: "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free".

21. This particular narrative belongs to the well-known novel by the great Russian writer,

In short, we can say that God offers in a “noble” way to his most perfect creature, the human being, the gift of free-will and from his side he respects this fact to the utmost. But also the one who realizes the magnitude of the divine love and blessing, i.e. the saint, recognizes his inadequacy and offers God his entire existence and with it his freedom, trying to observe the divine will to the best of his capacity.

2. Dialectic between internal and external freedom

A central issue that freedom raises in human consciousness concerns the relationship between internal and external freedom, i.e. the extent to which it is possible to keep the human spirit free in conditions of external oppression.

In the previous decades, especially in the second half of the 20th century, the debate was mainly about social issues and concerned aspects of political authoritarianism and economic inequalities. Theological thought during these times was more oriented towards (over)emphasising the so-called “spiritual freedom”, somehow sealing off church life from the socio-political scene (except for cases of engagement with the system of state authority and references to regimes that persecuted the Christian Church). Later, however, in the last decade of the same century and after the collapse of the regimes of “really existing socialism”, Church followed the trends of national introversion that emerged internationally. She too, therefore, “rediscovered” the importance of collective struggles for the sake of social freedom in the “safe” space of national efforts. In many cases, in the expression of church discourse, Christian spirituality began to retreat in reverse for the sake of defending “national rights”²².

the *Brothers Karamazov*. Because of its obvious importance, it has also been published as an independent work. See F. Dostoyevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor*, Connecticut: Martino Fine Books 2016.

22. The extreme manifestations of these currents are the fundamentalist and anti-scientific tendencies, which extend to our days (and probably with greater intensity now).

As a matter of fact, the question of the defence of collective freedom is a delicate issue, which has occupied church thought and practice in the past, since it presupposes the use of violence, which the spirit of the evangelical imperatives cannot accept. On the one hand, there is a clear desire for a social climate of tolerance which allows people to choose their behaviour and actions, to cultivate and develop virtues which do not offend human dignity; on the other hand, however, the nature of the “fallen” world imposes a cost on the acquisition and maintenance of these goods.

It is clear that church’s teaching emphasizes the importance of inner freedom (and the way to communion with God)²³, without underestimating the value of the external freedom. Moreover, the Lord came and taught in conditions of Israel’s national enslavement and “rejected” any expectations his hearers placed on the national liberation character of his mission. The preaching of the Kingdom is linked to selfless love, love of enemies, universal openness to all nations and, above all, the cultivation of a humble attitude. This attitude, although may seem like a voluntary one, in the eyes of those who are hostile, indifferent or superficial to the Church’s word, in reality it is not. The Church cultivates and encourages the robust attitude of the faithful towards everything that degrades the human person (this is the reason for the so-called *martyrdom of conscience’s* discourse), while the presence of injustice cannot be tolerated. Church considers that absolute submission is due only to God, while only relative submission is due to every human being²⁴. Moreover, it is usually overlooked that, despite the glorious aspect of the period of persecution against Christians, the

23. Cf. also Kosmas Aitolos, *Διδαχές*, ed. I. Menounos, Athens 1979, pp. 269-270. "And why did not God bring another king, where there were so many kings near here to give the kingdom to them, but only brought the Turkish from the Red Appletree and gave it to him? For God knew that the other kings would damage us in the faith, but the Turks would not damage us; give him money and you can sit over his head. And lest we should perish God gave the kingdom to the Turks, and God have the Turks as a dog to guard us".

24. See G. Mantzaridis, *Χριστιανική Ἠθική*, vol. II, op.cit., pp. 420, 423.

Church especially honoured the person of Constantine the Great who brought about this hard trial for the ecclesiastical body.

In the Christian tradition, we see St. Athanasius widening the ecclesiastical prohibition of murder from its secular acceptance in times of war²⁵. St. Basil, on the other hand, in his 13th canon distinguishes participation in defensive warfare as a kind of defence of prudence and piety (apparently against the plundering that would follow in case of invasion) and follows the preceding tradition, which does not consider the elimination of enemies to be precisely a murder. He does, however, recognize the burden of having one's hands stained with blood and prescribes a sanction of three years' abstinence from participation in Holy Communion²⁶.

Commenting on this Canon, St. Nikodemos the Athonite recalls an incident from the *Old Testament*²⁷, in which Moses asked those who had participated in murder to purify themselves and then enter the encampment. Of course, he had immediately before rebuked the Israelites who, after the battle with the Midianites, had brought the wives of the defeated men with them alive and asked that they be put to death as being responsible for Israel's suffering²⁸. In his commentary, St. Nikodemos quotes Philo the Jewish, who observes that this was because

25. See, *Epistle to the monk Amun*, PG 26, 1173B: "Since in other transactions in life too we shall find differences to occur in some way or another: for instance, it is not permissible, to murder anyone yet in war it is paise-worthy and lawful to slay the adversaries [...]. So that the same matter in some respect and at some time or other is not permitted, but in another respect and at some other time when there is a good occasion for it, may be allowed and permitted".

26. "Our Fathers did not consider murders committed in the course of wars to be classifiable as murders at all, on the score, it seems to me, of allowing a pardon to men fighting in defence of sobriety and piety. Perhaps, though, it might be advisable to refuse them communion for three years, on the ground that they are not clean-handed". In addition, it is worth adding that the same Father, in his 43rd Canon, considers that murder has morally the same severity, whether it occurs in defence or in offense. Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa, in his 5th Canon, distinguishes voluntary from involuntary murder and prescribes a different sanction in each case.

27. *Num* 31:19.

28. *Num* 31:14-17

any murder, no matter how justified, is still a sin, since a fellow human being is lost²⁹. He even adds below, regarding the validity of this Canon, that it was precisely the one invoked by the Patriarch (St. Polyuktos) and the Permanent Synod later on to the emperor Nicephoros Phokas, when the latter asked that soldiers killed in war with barbarian nations should be commemorated as martyrs. The church leaders additionally provided a Canon, namely the 55th Canon of Basil the Great, which prescribes penances even for those who take part in an engagement with attacking bandits³⁰.

In any case, it is evident in many canonical prescriptions that the use of violence by clergy is, in any respect, unacceptable³¹. However, the conflicts between Christians and followers of other religions and the challenges created by the empire's involvement in numerous military conflicts constantly confronted the Church with major dilemmas. Thus, the historian Sozomenos preserves the accounts of the Bishop of Apamea Marcellus, who organised the burning of a pagan temple with a group of armed men. But the heathens arrested him and burned him. His sons wanted to take revenge, but the Council forbade it³². Balsamon, for his part, mentions the controversy that arose concerning the case of priests who had killed enemies. When the matter was examined, some members of the Synod asked for a sentence of idleness to be imposed, while most

29. "[...] although the killing of enemies in war was lawful, yet anyone that kills a human being whether justly and rightfully, or for revenge, or slays any person as a matter of violence and coercion, appears in spite of this to be responsible for the commission of a sin and crime, because he has killed a human being who is of the same race and of the same nature as his own", *The Rudder of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Orthodox Christians*, Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society 1957.

30. Cf. *The Rudder*, *ibid.* Isidoros of Pelousium, however, on his part, calls us not to admire anyone who strives in general, but only those who struggle for virtue. Thus, he considers that the struggle for the sake of the homeland and of one's intimates is praiseworthy, while those who put themselves in danger for foolish reasons are to be reproached; cf. Letter 116, *To presbyter Maron*, PG 78, 820C-821A.

31. Cf. Canons 27, 65 and 83 by the Holy Apostles, Canon 9 by the Quinisext Council and Canon 5 by Gregory of Nyssa.

32. See, K. Kallinikos, *Χριστιανισμός και Πόλεμος*, Athens: Gregores 1963, pp. 41-42.

of the synod members disagreed, considering their act praiseworthy³³! Konstantinos Armenopoulos, on the other hand, mentions the case of a bishop who killed an Arab soldier while defending himself and the Synod deposed him³⁴. Finally, the traditional imagery of the Revolution of 1821 had at least one parallel in our Byzantine past: Theodoret of Cyrrihus mentions St. James, bishop of Nisibis, who was called "the general" for the encouragement he gave to soldiers during the war with the Persian invaders³⁵.

In conclusion, we would say that while the Church recognizes the priority of freedom of the spirit, she accepts the great importance of the value of the collective freedom. That is why, although she was concerned about the way in which social peace was to be maintained, she was also understanding of the immediate desire to ensure the collective values of dignity and decency³⁶. In other respects, the great dilemmas concerning freedom are manifested at the social level, in the relevance and the interaction with others. The passage from theory to practice is tested and shows its value when one's freedom meets the freedom of others.

3. The thirst for freedom and the challenge of Christian principles in the Struggle of the National Revolt

The War of Independence is a particularly "productive" field for this discussion and a tragic period of challenge of consciences (apart from the grave cost in human lives). Here, the double sensitivity to throwing off the long-standing chains of an oppressor, who also happened to be

33. See, *ibid.*, p. 41.

34. See, *ibid.* Let us not forget here that the relevant synodal decisions also had an educational character for the ecclesiastical community. In this context of the cultivation of temperance, the case of the illuminator of the Goths, Ulfilas is characteristic, who did not translate into Gothic the *Books of the Kings* in order not to further stimulate the pro-war of their customs; cf. *ibid.*, p. 36.

35. See, *ibid.*, p. 42

36. See, fr. V. Kalliakmanis, *Θεολογικά ρεύματα τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας*, Thessaloniki: Pournaras 2009, p. 242.

a religiously different, comes together. The longed-for freedom, which nurtured hope in generations of enslaved people, took shape through a decade-long and particularly bloody struggle.

The centuries of slavery were long and hard. The wind of freedom, which blew at the beginning of the 19th century, was therefore too strong for the Greeks to harmoniously balance their attachment to the religious imperatives with their desire to restore an independent state. Despite the people's given connection with their Church and its traditions (and therefore with the importance of the concept of freedom within the body of Church doctrine), the longing of the nation for a free life was powerful³⁷ and there were times when the two trends had different aims. We shall see below some of these instances.

First of all, we should note that from the beginning, the Greek revolutionary forces wanted to show their cultural difference from the oppressor, whom they considered barbarous, both because this corresponded to their self-consciousness and because they were interested in their image towards the European nations, from which they expected substantial assistance. For example, the case of the attack on a Turkish cash transport by the abbot of the Tatarna monastery, Cyprian together with Odysseas Androutsos, at the beginning of March 1821, is typical. In this particular incident, the money was left unbroken in order to demonstrate the exact political nature of the impending uprising³⁸.

This initially gentle ambition has only sometimes been able to be put into practice. Either because of the general misery brought about by the long conquest or because of the bitter past (but also the savage present) that generated feelings of revenge, which found an opportunity to be expressed in the enthusiasm that followed the military successes, the unprecedented sense of freedom and the general indiscipline that distinguished the Greek troops, but also because of the long association with the enemy (which inevitably meant imitating his overall military

37. Obviously it is no coincidence that as a National Anthem was chosen a poem that praises Freedom.

38. See, *Ιστορία του Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους*, vol. XII, Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon 1975, p. 80.

and political tactics)³⁹, the revolutionary Greeks did not always avoid brutality.

Apart from the cases of violence that accompanied the liberation of cities (most notably those of Tripolitsa and Pylos), the ambivalence shown in the treatment of Ottoman prisoners is noteworthy. In particular, during the first years of the uprising there were many murders of Ottoman prisoners. This was attributed to many factors. First of all, it was considered that these were acts of retaliation, which were part of the charged climate of the first two years of the war⁴⁰ (as afterward, and as the years of the Revolution proceeded with constant conflicts, the fatigue grew and the customs of war became tamer⁴¹). It was also argued that the Greek side feared that its military secrets might be leaked, or even that the survival of the prisoners posed a constant risk of reprisals (in case they were released)⁴². It was also claimed that the murders were committed for practical reasons: in case of a Turkish attack, it would be difficult to transport them. It is also believed that occurred what occurs in many conflicts: the "burning of the escape ships" or the "demolition of the bridges". The executions were carried out in order to make the local population an accomplice, so that they would be forced to participate de facto in the war⁴³.

39. See Ap. Vakalopoulos, *Αίχμαλωτοι Έλλήνων κατά την Έπανάσταση τοῦ 1821*, Thessaloniki: Kornelios Theodoridis 1941, pp. 7, 15.

40. Although there was no lack of such incidents later on, such as the massacre of all the prisoners in Hydra and Spetses, after the spreading of the suspicion that the person responsible for the blowing up of A. Kriezis' ship was a Turkish prisoner (as revenge for his savage beating by the captain himself). See, *Ιστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους*, vol. XII, op.cit., p. 384.

41. As characteristically reflected in the correspondence between Theodore Kolokotronis and Ibrahim, in which the two leaders engaged in reciprocal compliments and in the mutual releases of prisoners that accompanied these letters, see Ap. Vakalopoulos, *Αίχμαλωτοι Έλλήνων κατά την Έπανάσταση τοῦ 1821*, op.cit., pp. 10, 39-40, 92-94, 96.

42. This lack of trust is believed to have been the reason why, before the Exodus of Messolonghi, the defenders of the city killed all the Greeks who had previously been in the service of the Turks. See, Ap. Vakalopoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

43. See, Ap. Vakalopoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 10, 12-13, 19-21. Incidents such as the order to execute the Ottoman sub-rent annuities by Athanasios Diakos to the villagers of

The desire to realize the long-standing longing for emancipation led in some cases, some ecclesiastical personalities to perfectly equate the two kinds of freedom, thus sacralizing the event of rebellion and minimizing, by their example, the moral inhibitions of the ecclesiastical community. The most typical case, in this respect, is that of Bishop Antimos of Elos, one of the most ardent and militant clergymen who participated in the Revolution. He sought to exalt the spirit of the troops by giving the conflict the nature of a "holy war", charging his preaching with redemptive appeals. Thus, after issuing the proclamation of the Peloponnesian Senate to the people, on May 26, 1821, after inspiring the crowd gathered in the church, he excitedly grabbed the pistols from the belt of the chieftain Charalampis, formed with them the sign of the Cross in front of the image of Christ and then offered them to the people, saying loudly: "Greeks, the Lord bless and sanctify your arms!" On another occasion, during the siege of Tripolitsa, his exhortation to the

the regions in which they served or the massacre of 350 Turks in Langadia by the Langadian Kanellos Deligiannis when the latter saw the indecisiveness of his compatriots or even the burning of the house of Kyamil-bey in Corinth by Papaflessas in order to "incriminate" the inhabitants and force their participation in the rebellion are to attributed in this same spirit. See, Fotakos, *Απομνημονεύματα περι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, Athens: Sakkellariou Bookshop 1858, pp. 32-33, 50. A. Vakalopoulos, *ibid.*, p. 19. In a more extreme version of this interpretation, the murders were allowed in order to exculpate through habit those Greeks, "who thought it a sin, and wept because they killed a Turk"; N. Speliadis, *Απομνημονεύματα διὰ τὰ χρησιμεύσωσαν εἰς τὴν Νέαν Ἱστορίαν τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, vol. I, Athens: Ch. Nikolaidis Philadelphus 1851, p. 246. Ant. Smyrniaios, «Τόποι μαρτυρίου Ἑλλήνων, Τούρκων καὶ Ἑβραίων στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση: Ἐνας ἀμφισθενῆς καθαγιασμὸς τοῦ ἠρωισμοῦ καὶ τῆς βίας;» in *Πολεμικὲς Συγκρούσεις καὶ Τόποι Καθαγιασμοῦ τοῦ Ἀπελευθερωτικοῦ Ἀγῶνος κατὰ τὴν Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ 1821* (Πρακτικὰ ΣΤ Ἑ Συνεδρίου), Athens: Archodariki 2018, pp. 263-264. On the other hand, of course, the impressions of this attitude may well be subordinated to the punitive attitude of the Greek chieftains toward those of their compatriots who did not show a willingness to participate in the Revolution; cf. Fotakos, *ibid.*, pp. 35, 178-180. In this pressure, the spiritual "tool" of excommunication was also employed, according to the customs of the time; cf. K. Simopoulos, *Πῶς εἶδαν οἱ ξένοι τὴν Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ '21*, vol. II, Athens: Politistikes Ekdoseis 2004, pp. 292-294. It is perhaps needless to say that the regime of terror with victims from the Greek population intensified sharply during the period of the civil conflicts of the Revolution.

combatants was soteriologically clear: "Do you see this Mandra (meaning the city wall)? There, whoever takes the ladder and climbs this wall, goes up to heaven"⁴⁴. Regarding his (over)enthusiastic character, Fotakos adds that his exaggerations (if not his failures) went so far as to preach that: "those Greeks who will be killed fighting for faith and homeland will be saints, and those who will again kill Turks, the enemies of faith and homeland, will also become saints". As for his rage, Fotakos testifies that "he served as a soldier and had more passion than other Greeks, so that if he had the Turks in his power, he would throw them all into the sea, and he would fall with them in order to make them sink as quickly as possible"⁴⁵.

The militant and historian Ioannis Philemon, in the same direction, mentions that "during the siege of Tripolitsa, Anthimos blessed the soldiers not, as usual, by hand, but by pistols, and he allowed Holy Communion only to those who had killed Turkish soldiers"⁴⁶. The same historian, intending to interpret the insatiability of the killing mood of the Greek troops during the capture of Tripolitsa, attributes part of it to similar exhortations: "According to the constant sermon of the bishop of Elos, Anthimos, every soldier had the permission to partake of the Blessed Sacrament only when he was killing a Turk; therefore every Greek of those who had taken possession of the city considered it a sacred duty to slaughter one or many Turks"⁴⁷.

44. See Metropolitan of Corinth Pantelemeion (Karanikolas), *Ἡ ἐθνική δραῖσις τοῦ κλήρου: μοναχοὶ καὶ κληρικοὶ εἰς τὸ 1821*, Athens 1981, p. 13.

45. See Ph. Chryssanthopoulos or Photakos, *Βίοι Πελοποννησίων ἀνδρῶν καὶ τῶν ἔξωθεν εἰς τὴν Πελοπόννησον ἐλθόντων*, Athens: Sakkeliariou 1888, p. 293.

46. Io. Philimon, *Δοκίμιον Ἱστορικὸν περὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. III, Athens: Soutsas & Ktenas 1860, p. 448.

47. Io. Philimon, *Δοκίμιον Ἱστορικὸν περὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. IV, *ibid.*, p. 229. Similar attitudes were shown at the same time in Crete, when during the revolt there, the Turks who were chased in the mountains were not even protected by the local priests: "some hungry and thirsty and other wanderers fled to Christian houses on the mountains in the hope of mercy, but the merciless ones could find no mercy anywhere. Even the priests, the ministers of the God of mercy, became the ministers of the God of vengeance: all that fell into the hands of the Christians, whether men or women,

As it seems, this zeal of the fiery bishop did not seem to be shared by all secular historians. The militant and erudite Michael Economou, for his part, underlines his reservations afterwards, as he recalls that the eruptive bishop "was in the camp in Verveni, and he was speaking to the soldiers naively, but with enthusiasm, calling their weapons honoured, preserved and glorified by God, and marking the wounded with the sign of the cross for the sake of their health, either by using some holy object, or their soiled cloak, or even with their own arms, inspiring in them a conviction of the sanctity of the cause"⁴⁸.

The mark of the Old-testamentarian spirit that prevailed in the general atmosphere of the revolutionary upheaval is also given by Ioannis Philemon, when he refers to bishop Gregorios of Methoni as the head of the siege of Pylos: "Such vigilantism and bloodthirsty revenge characterized the army that had gathered at Pylos and also the leader of the siege of the city, Bishop Gregory, who considered himself a second Prophet Elijah of Thesbeth"⁴⁹.

While hierarchs adopted this pro-war disposition, it should not be considered strange when the laity put forward religious promises to encourage the battle-weary Greek troops⁵⁰ or when moral values would

whether laymen or clergymen, all died in the mouth of the sword", see Sp. Trikoupis, *Ιστορία τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. II, Athens: Ora 1888, pp. 75-76. Cf. also Ant. Smyrniaios, «Τόποι μαρτυρίου Ἑλλήνων, Τούρκων καὶ Ἐβραίων στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση», *op.cit.*, p. 263.

48. M. G. Oikonomou, *Ἱστορικὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Παλιγγενεσίας ἢ Ὁ Ἱερός τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἀγών*, Athens: Papalexandris 1873, p. 128.

49. Io. Philemon, *Δοκίμιον Ἱστορικὸν περὶ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. IV, *ibid.*, p. 115. For the same prelate, Georgios Tertsetis relates an incident in which a clergyman did not allow a soldier to receive communion because he had committed murder in battle. The soldier appealed to Gregorios, told him what had happened and the prelate invited him to take communion alone the following Sunday, because he has more innocent hands than the clergy, as he presented his breasts to the enemy's bullets! See, G. Valetas, *Τερτσέτη Ἄπαντα, Κολοκοτρώνη Ἀπομνημονεύματα*, vol. II, Athens: Parthenon 1958, p. 323. Ant. Smyrniaios, «Τόποι μαρτυρίου Ἑλλήνων, Τούρκων καὶ Ἐβραίων στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση», *op.cit.*, p. 264.

50. "We were shaken by our fear because for the first time we saw people killed. And Kolokotronis, in order to encourage us, picked up the pieces of each one, kissed

come to be reversed, as in cases where the sin was considered to be not the murder of a Turk or a Greek who behaved favourably towards the oppressors, but to let them live, because they were the ones who were wicked and persecuted the Christian religion⁵¹.

On the other hand, however, the assessment that incidents of extreme brutality were not the norm of the behaviour of the belligerent Greek side does not seem unfounded either⁵². The Greeks were, in most cases, prudent and usually avoided bloodshed. The main difficulty was found in the uncontrolled actions of the mob. And in these cases again, restraint was not lacking, as when the captured military commander of Tripoltsa, Kekhaya-bey, passed through the places he had burnt only 10 months before (Corinth, Argos, etc.). At the sight of him, the people disapproved of him, but did not attempt to lynch him (although he was particularly renowned for his cruelty and many Greeks wanted to avenge him)⁵³.

In another case, it is shown that the biblical spirit had not left the exhausted Greek raiders completely unaffected: the German philhellene

them and told the soldiers around that they were saints, they would go to heaven as martyrs, and then we approached and buried them", Fotakos, *Άπομνημονεύματα περι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, op.cit., p. 47. "Another man from Tshipia, after killing a Turk in Grana, went to cut off his head and found close there his brother's head, which he carried in his apron, crying. Here, he said to me with cries, is my brother's head. Then I said unto him, weep not, poor man, he is a saint, and now you have a saint from your family. Go therefore and drag his body and bury it", *ibid.*, pp. 105-106. With the same spirit, even Dimitrios Ypsilantis will be aligned, echoing the influences of Enlightenment ideas. He notes thus in a circular letter: "If tyranny according to divine and human laws is the greatest crime, war against tyranny is the most just and the only sacred one according to these laws". See, Io. Philimon, *Δοκίμιον Ἱστορικὸν περι τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. IV, *ibid.*, p. 97.

51. Io. Philemon, *ibid.*, p. 229.

52. This is fully in line with the opinion of the British naval chaplain Charles Swan, who believed that "the Greeks are not generally barbarians and bloodthirsty as they appear in times of frenzy. They treat their prisoners with great kindness, as I have found from undisputed witnesses. The Turkish women are so devoted [to them] that they do not want to abandon them". See K. Simopoulos., *Πῶς εἶδαν οἱ ξένοι τὴν Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ '21*, vol. II, op.cit., p. 370.

53. A. Vakalopoulos, *Αἰχμάλωτοι Ἑλλήνων κατὰ τὴν Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ 1821*, op.cit., pp. 11, 66. K. Simopoulos, *ibid.*, p. 257.

officer Bellier de Launay witnessed the meeting of a Greek with a defenceless Turkish prisoner, during which he told him: "You have made me afraid and tormented all my life. Now I will avenge you. And do you know how? I will save you and your people and I will protect you all my life!" And immediately afterwards she embraced and kissed him. As for his promise, he kept it in full, according to the testimony of de Launay⁵⁴.

Besides, the Greek authorities also systematically tried to promote the spirit of respect for the unarmed enemy and, in general, the civilizing of the liberated country. Thus, in 1822 the newly established Greek administration officially abolished the institution of slavery, and in May 1822 a Greek was sentenced to death for killing a prisoner. Amongst his many worries, Demetrios Ypsilantis fought a daily battle to humanize morals, in the midst of the enragement caused by the ferocity of the conflicts. He did not even tire of recommending to the troops the fallacy of eliminating prisoners also from a military point of view: they were necessary for exchanges, or even for their use in public works. At the same time, in those dark times, he was careful to emphasize the educational and civilizing character of the Struggle: on the one hand, the war was not being waged against the Ottomans and their houses, but against tyranny; on the other hand, the observance of laws and customs respectful of the enemy could instruct even the Turks, with the benefit ultimately accruing mainly to the nationals living under Ottoman rule, so that they too might one day enjoy a state of social justice. Obviously, for these reasons, he made sure to invite to his name-day dinner some prominent Turkish prisoners (who during the evening became intoxicated and returned to their quarters supported).

Also typical is the narrative about Bishop Antimos of Elos, who gathered the troops besieging Tripolitsa and taught them the difference between the extermination of a soldier and a prisoner, by adapting the content of the Canon Law. He referred specifically to St. Basil the Great, saying that he forbids communion for twenty years to the one

54. See K. Simopoulos, *ibid.*, p. 33.

who kills a defeated enemy, while the one who kills forty armoured enemies is considered blessed. In fact, the Philhellenes present, who witnessed the incident, report that " the words of this gospel-spirit man gradually softened the eyes of the most murder-prone, unruly fighters. Their whispers were drowned out, and a deep silence spread. Calm and thoughtful, they scattered through the camp"⁵⁵.

The soothing and long-suffering aspect of Bishop of Elos' preaching was not confined to the occasion of the siege of Tripolitsa, but intensified after its successful conclusion: "When Tripolis was destroyed, nothing else taught the soldiers more than prudence"⁵⁶.

Unfortunately, the rebellious Greeks did not always follow these exhortations and orders. Thus, it is witnessed that at the beginning of August 1821, and because Alexandros Mavrokordatos and bishop Germanos of Old Patrai, were absent from Kalavryta, the young head of the city's garrison was bent by the demands of the mob (who rebelled against a rumour that the Ottoman prisoners had weapons) and the prisoners were almost massacred. The objections of the Philhellenes present and some dozy Greeks delayed the evil and the local authorities, who had been warned in the meantime, returned. The latter were particularly severe with those responsible for the disruption, but after a short time they were unable to prevent what did not happen in August... On other occasions, the Philhellenes have been the recipients of complaints from Muslim prisoners, but also of fear for their lives and those of their families. It is reported that even Demetrios Ypsilantis himself avoided visiting the Ottoman prisoners in order to ascertain the conditions of their detention, because he would only hear their complaints without being able to do anything substantial and would simply be upset. However, the allegations about Greek high officials, that they violated the regulations that had been established and personally

55. Ap. Vakalopoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 22, 41, 44-45, 73-74. K. Simopoulos, *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 246-247. The testimonies regarding the latter event connect the Bishop's speech with the effort of the Philhellenes to rescue a young Turkish prisoner.

56. Io. Philemon, *Δοκίμιον Ιστορικόν περί τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. III, op.cit., p. 448.

kept prisoners/slaves or that they visited imprisoned Ottoman women, do not seem to be confirmed, although the accusations made about some of them (Kolettis and Mavrokordatos) were evident. Besides, Greek society was very strict on moral issues, so reports of sexual abuse of women prisoners by Greeks were rare. Moreover, Greek women were suspicious and indifferent toward Ottoman women prisoners, but very affectionate towards their children⁵⁷.

A relevant issue that generated much discussion was that baptism of prisoners. First of all, there was a desire to convert to Christianity by the prisoners themselves, apparently in order to improve their conditions of detention. On the other hand, many of them reverted to Islam when they were released, and some were forced Christianisations. That is why the Executive Body and the Peloponnesian Senate by order forbade the baptism of the Ottomans, even if they themselves requested it, as they considered it a product of violence and necessity. Later, however, in May 1822, the Peloponnesian Senate changed its mind and asked for this baptism to be allowed, probably because it was not necessary to refuse it, but also to make the Greeks more benevolent.

The Minister of Religion, bishop Joseph of Androusa, expressed his objections to the procedure chosen by the Senate and the arguments invoked, and proposed that only women and children, if they so wished, and minor children with the consent of their parents, should be baptized. Placed on its side, the Parliamentary Body considered that it would be religiously correct and politically advantageous for all to be baptized, if that is their wish. The Executive Body's assessment was formulated the following month, expressing its reservations about the views of the other Body. It insists in particular that this kind of wish is a product of necessity and that its acceptance would be equivalent to an imitation of the Ottoman practice of forced Islamism. It notes the practical issue of the impossibility of performing catechesis, since there are no clergymen who could carry it out, while it even adds the

57. See Io. Philemon, *ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 229. Cf. also Ap. Vakalopoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38, 48, 51-52, 59, 74-75.

possible “danger” that the Christianized Ottoman rulers would acquire full rights to the egalitarianism of the newly established Greek territory, so that they would be able to claim even political offices from the lands they previously possessed! It concludes by adopting the proposal of the bishop of Androusa, Joseph, noting that boys may be baptized up to the age of 12 without the guarantee of a Christian, since the nation is for the time being in a state of “moral infancy”. As for women, it asked that they be allowed to be baptized at any age, because they will be liberated (apparently from the oppression imposed on them by the Muslim framework) and will become grateful to the Greek State.

In response, the Parliamentary Body employed theological arguments, noting that the refusal of Baptism condemns the captive Ottomans to eternal perdition. But even the possibility of improving their earthly life is something that charity undeniably requires. It disagrees with the argument that there are no clergymen who could indoctrinate the newly converted, considering it slanderous to the clergy. As regards the dangers that could arise from the rights of the baptized, it proposes the adoption of special laws to counteract these possibilities. On this basis, a new generation of “good Greeks” could emerge from the children of Christianized Turks. The Executive Body responded promptly and closed the matter, sticking to its positions: experience has shown that there can be no trust in baptized prisoners, the granting of rights will breed rivalries, and all educated clergy are busy in administrative positions⁵⁸.

Certainly, however, the field in which the two conceptions of freedom were most severely challenged was that of the Church’s participation in the uprisings against the Ottoman oppressor. We do not intend to focus at this time on the specific involvement of the clergy, as we have done so on another occasion⁵⁹. We will, however, concentrate on some

58. See, *ibid.*, pp. 52-58. Ibrahim’s campaign later fully verified the reservations of the Executive Body, as all the Turkish prisoners released assisted the Egyptian general in his movements; cf. *ibid.*, p. 58.

59. See, our contribution in the collective volume of the Holy Metropolis of Trimythous on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the National Struggle against

characteristic moments of the diversity of views as they were expressed under the pressure of those tragic circumstances.

First of all, it is known that the ethnarchical position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate during the period of the Ottoman Empire made particularly delicate and sensitive its attitude, which it had to adopt every time a revolutionary movement broke out or the subjugated rayahs participated on the side of a foreign power that was at war with the Ottoman Empire. The “eyes and ears” of the Sublime Porte were firmly fixed on the activities of the Patriarchate, demanding concrete and explicit condemnations of any anti-Ottoman act. The “Great Church” was obliged to constantly demonstrate its legitimacy by deposing clergymen who participated in rebellions, excommunicating the leaders of movements, condemning publications that incited revolutionary feelings, etc. The same of course happened in the lower levels of power, with the local metropolitans and the pressure from the pasha of their provinces. The validity of this attitude was vividly demonstrated by the genocide that accompanied the announcement of the Revolution in 1821: tens of thousands of civilians were slaughtered for days in Constantinople and the major cities of the Empire in retaliation and terrorizing the Christian population, while many clergymen and prelates were executed as an example⁶⁰.

Thus, in a pre-revolutionary uprising, just 13 years before the outbreak of 1821, papa-Thymios Vlahavas, with Russian support, declared a revolution in Thessaly. Ali Pasha’s forces suppressed the movement and, at the Patriarchate’s urging, he later stopped his activities. After the suppression of the rebellion, the Ottoman authorities carried out systematic investigations to discover its instigators and their accomplices. As part of these investigations, the monk Demetrios from Samarina was arrested, who seems to have had completely different priorities: he was sent to the region by the ecclesiastical authorities to deter Christians from

the Turks (1821-2021), A. Zachariou - M. Matthaïou (eds), *Ἑλληνική Ἐπανάσταση*, Idalios, Cyprus: ed. Holy Metropolis of Trimythous 2021, with the title «Ἡ ἔνοπλη συμμετοχή τοῦ Κλήρου στὸν Ἀγῶνα τῆς Ἐθνεγερσίας», pp. 99-140.

60. See in detail, *ibid.*

participating in the rebellion and the threat of reprisals⁶¹. During his interrogation, the Turkish authorities attempted to investigate his possible links with local chiefs and questioned him about his accomplices. He replied in a strictly ecclesiastical and patristic manner: "My conspirators are my conscience and my duty, which oblige me to advise Christians and make them submissive to your laws". His attitude is absolutely patient and he will endure to the end all the cruel tortures to which he has been subjected. Paradoxically, it was his sacrifice that brought about the result of his personal mission: as the sources report, his sacrifice cut down the fury of the authorities and the oppression of the Christian minority was reduced⁶².

These priorities of Demetrios must not have been his personal affair exclusively. The emphasis on religious freedom over ethnic freedom seems to have been shared by a large part of the enslaved Greeks. The militant (and aide-de-camp to Theodoros Kolokotronis) Fotakos records the climate of differentiation between national freedom and Christian principles and describes the attempt of the higher clergy to harmonise the sense of social freedom with Christian spirituality during the period when the "Great Revolt" was being prepared: "[the bishops] ... allowed the spiritual guides and other clerics to incite the Greeks to revolution in their confession and to regard it as religiously excused; for God has made all men free. And many of the bishops, such as Antimos

61. "[...] encouraged by that biblical love which has always been the characteristic of the apostles in times of persecution, he has been running through the troubled towns in those stormy days, to reassure the Greeks and bring them back to the yoke of obedience". Makarios of Corinth, Nikodemus Athonite, Athanasios Parios (eds), *Synaxarium of Neomartyrs*, Thessaloniki: Orthodox Kypseli 1989, p. 728. The relevant evidence comes from F.-C.-H.-L. Pouqueville, French Consul at Ioannina, in his work *Histoire de la régénération de la Grèce*, vol. I, Paris 1824 (trans. in Greek by X. Zygouras, Athens: An. N. Trimes 1890, vol. I, pp. 189-190).

62. "[...] his blood stopped the tyrant's suffering and served as the expiatory victim of Thessaly, where the suffering and persecution ceased". Makarius of Corinth, Nikodemus Athonie, Athanasios Parios (eds), *ibid.*, p. 730. Cf. also K. Sathas, *Ἡ Ἱστορία τῆς Τουρκοκρατούμενης Ἑλλάδας*, vol. IV, 1770-1821, Athens: Livanis 1995, pp. 100-102.

of Elos, deliberately composed specific prayers, which they delivered to the priests of their provinces and recited them after the invocation"⁶³.

However, the concern about the inhibiting effect of Christian fellowship in the national cause is expressed even more clearly in a phrase of the same work (but included in another version, interpolated between the two sentences of the previous passage), which compares adherence to gospel teaching to "torpidity": "And the spiritual guides exhorted them to rebellion, because the Greeks were so much weakened under tyranny, and religion had so weakened the ignorant mob, that they had the fear of Hades if they killed Turks, because they believed that God would

63. *Απομνημονεύματα περί τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, op.cit., p. 7. The present blessing, as Fotakos also transcribes it, captures in its extreme ecclesiastical formulation, the intense feeling of repulsion towards the oppressor: "O God Almighty, invisible, impenetrable and inconceivable, you who strengthened your prophet Moses with the shape of the cross, to overthrow the oppressor of old Israel, the arrogant and unyielding Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and saved by it your people; listen to the prayers of your servants, who are anointed in the name of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and deliver us, the new Israel, the royal priesthood, of the Ishmaelite oppression; strengthen and empower us, and our pious and God-guarded princes and princesses [meaning the family of Ypsylantis], and the Christ-loving army by virtue of the holy and life-giving cross, overthrowing the enemies of thy holy church, and showing her victorious and triumphant against the descendants of Agar. Upon you we commit our hopes, O King in wars, rightly worshipping the only God and saviour of us; enlighten us to be imitators and followers of your true servant, the pious King Constantine, and make us worthy to hear that heavenly voice, "With this you shall overcome, oh descendants of the Greeks, Christ-believers, and pious children of the Orthodox Church, and subdue the ungodly Agarenes", as we who are humbled became worthy of our longed-for freedom, glorifying your almighty name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen*.

Exapostilarion

Those who are not venerating your image, O Virgin, and that of your Son and God, by sincere faith, condemn them as ungodly, and deliver them into hell.

Stixiron, plagal first tone

Come, O mother of Christ, to us who pray to you for a compassionate visitation, and deliver us who are tormented from the tyrannical threats and cruel fury of the Agarenes; for whose sake we are persecuted as captives, and naked, continually dwelling and wandering from place to place, in caves and in mountains; Have mercy on us, O most praised One, and give us comfort, relieve our grief, and appease the against us rage, by pleading to Christ who gives great mercy to the world", *ibid.* pp. 8-9.

afflict them, and that they would give an account of it. But the clergy brought them out of this delusion because they took the weapons first"⁶⁴.

Some three decades later, we see the same scene in Macedonia. Shortly before the outbreak of Chamis Karatasios' revolution, in 1854, a body of about 40 armed men from liberated Greece landed on the coast of Posidio, intending to recruit local youth, creating a foothold among the local population and eventually making the peninsula of Kassandra the base of the impending rebellion. From the village of Kalandra, which was the first village to which they asked for men and supplies, as in all the rest of the region, they were met with the refusal of the local chiefs and their request to leave, accompanied by the provision of food (in the meantime, of course, the leaders of the Greek communities had agreed among themselves to have a uniformly negative attitude).

When the captain of the squadron found that the reluctance of the Greeks of Kassandra was unanimous, he expressed his bitterness and disappointment, saying: "I expected to gather at least one hundred men from Cassandra, to make little Greece grow, but the people fear the tyrant and nothing will happen". The answer and the interpretation of the behaviour of the population was given by the priest of the village of Agia Paraskevi, fr. Nikolaos, with a clear and profoundly theological attitude: "Forgive me, my captain, but the small Greece does not become larger with turmoil and destruction in the world, but with God's will. The world is right to be afraid, for in 1821 nothing remained intact and it has not yet recovered"⁶⁵.

64. Cf. Fotakos, *Άπομνημονεύματα περί τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως*, vol. I, ed. by T. Gritsopoulos, Athens: Etairia Peloponnesiakon Spoudon 1974, p. 53. The philologist Sarantos Kargakos considers that in this particular passage, the author refers to the religiosity of the subjugated; cf. S. Kargakos, *Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ 1821*, vol. I, Athens: Peri Technon 2019, pp. 248-249. The overall spirit of the text, however, does not seem to confirm this. The hesitation before the possibility of killing even one person is not a matter of religiosity for the Christian life.

65. See. P. Stamos, *Θρυλοὶ καὶ Παραδόσεις τῆς Κασσάνδρας*, Athens 1972, pp. 29-31. It is worth adding that the sequence of events fully justified the reservations of the local leadership of the Greek communities: one night, drunken soldiers of the delegation killed a passing Turkish gendarme in a deserted area. The incident was soon brought to the

Meanwhile, another observer reflects synthetically on the rivers of blood that were shed in the times of slavery for the good of freedom and the pioneering fighters for human dignity. It is about the Consul of France in Ioannina François Pouqueville, who happened to meet in his place of action, on the mountain, the revolutionary Fr. Thymios Vlahavas, whom we have already mentioned. Later, when Ali Pasha managed by trickery to capture the revolutionary priest, after torturing him in a barbaric and humiliating manner, he left him to die in plain sight in the courtyard of his palace. There Pouqueville will encounter him and, shaken by the pitiful sight, will admire the greatness of the noble martyr's fortitude, will reflect on the culpability of killing so many innocent people, and will come to the paradoxical "power of weakness" which attributes the true glory to those who restore the virtue of faith to Christians. He thus implicitly recognizes that even martyrdom for national liberation can solidify adherence to the principles of gospel teaching for Christians who are being challenged⁶⁶.

attention of the authorities, but investigations were unsuccessful. It was then ordered that the heads of the communities be hanged and everyone expected massacres to follow. Eventually, the harm was averted by the speech of a wise local leader and the goodwill shown towards the Christian inhabitants by the governor of Valda (Kassandria); cf. *ibid.*, pp. 31-38.

66. "Ce fut à Janina, attaché a un Poteau planté dans la cour du sarail, où je revis Euthyme Blachavas, que j'avais autrefois rencontré à Miliias dans le Pinde avec ses soldats. Les rayons d'un soleil brûlant frappaient sa tête bronzée qui défiait la mort, et une sueur abondante coulait de sa barbe épaisse. Il connaissait son sort; et plus tranquille que le tyran qui savourait l'idée de répandre son sang, il leva vers moi ses yeux remplis de sérénité, comme pour me prendre à témoin de son heure suprême. Il la vit approcher, cette heure redoutable pour le méchant, avec le calme du juste. Il sentit sans frémir, et sans se plaindre, les coups des bourreaux; et ses membres, trainés à travers les rues de Janina, montrèrent aux Grecs épouvantés les restes du dernier des capitaines de la Thessalie. Hélas ! Pourquoi une fin aussi glorieuse était-elle entachée d'une faute, qui avait compromis ou entraîné tant d'innocents au tombeau? Desseins impénétrables de la Providence, vous ne vous expliquez jamais que par des prodiges qui confondent les calculs de notre faible raison. Le supplice et la révolte d'Euthyme préparaient le triomphe d'un faible mortel, qui n'avait pour armes que la douceur et la prière; ils allaient révéler la gloire d'un de ces confesseurs de J. C., destinés a soutenir les timides dans la tempête, dont le sang, confondu avec celui du guerrier, réhabilita par

At the same time, with the burden of his emotional expression, this observer of different race and confession, gives the mark of the drama of consciousness, which possessed those subjugated who felt themselves crushed in the choice between the two dimensions of freedom⁶⁷. For others, however, things were clearer, and so they would either take up arms to take on the oppressor⁶⁸ or they would stalk with a deadly glare those responsible for the failed uprisings that led to the widespread bloodshed of civilians⁶⁹.

4. Epilogically: They did those things then.

What do we do now?

Freedom is a central element of the human condition and is at the heart of the desire of every society. What one is willing to do –and especially to sacrifice– to achieve it is, in its own right, an equally important question. And the way in which freedom of opinion is manifested is also a capital issue⁷⁰.

son martyre la fidélité et l'honneur que la religion commande aux chrétiens". See, F. Pouqueville, *op.cit.*, tom. I, pp. 293-294.

67. Such as, for example, the holy figure of the righteous Isaias, bishop of Salona, who, when he decided to join 1821 Struggle, went to the monastery of Hosios Loukas to deposit his priestly garments. And when the last Easter of his life came again, he did not want to participate as a minister on the celebration of the Resurrection. See, Dr. Kravartoyiannos, «Ἡ θυσία τοῦ Ἡσαΐα Σαλώνων», *Ιστορικά* 111 (2001) 38.

68. Cf. P. Panayiotopoulos, «Ἡ ἔνοπλη συμμετοχή τοῦ Κλήρου στὸν Ἄγωνα τῆς Ἑθνεγεροσύας», *op.cit.*

69. See, for example, the characterization “Skylosophos” (the Dog-wise man), given to the metropolitan bishop of Larissa, Dionysius the “Philosopher”, after the suppression of his movement in Ioannina (1611) or the subsequent reign of terror that followed the mocking verse: “If you dare, Uncle-Lambros, then come back again to Andros”, after the defeat of Lambros Katsonis’ fleet at the naval battle of Andros (1790), or again the insults of the grammarian Ioannis Kerasovitis against fr. Euthimios Vlachavas. Cf. K. Sathas, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

70. Possibly, the militant Yachos, mentioned by N. Kasomoulis, was more detached from the commitments and fears that surrounded his existence: “[...] the aforementioned defender of Messolongi in particular was preparing his garlic-flavoured sauce, when a

The conditions in which the Greeks revolted 200 years ago are quite different from today's on many levels. One of them is undoubtedly the spiritual level of the enslaved Hellenism. In this context, it seems completely unrealistic to talk about the universal dimensions of Christian teaching or loving sacrifice, even towards the enemy. It was almost inevitable that the model of the hero would be preferred to the model of the saint⁷¹.

In any case, apart from the historical clarification of the aspects of the period of the Revolution, which of course has its own importance, it is essential to reflect on the responsibilities that the turbulent period bequeathed to us. This is because the persons who were involved in the War of Independence did what they could, under their own conditions and capabilities and, of course, under the constraints imposed by circumstances. Their failures and achievements belong to that context. It is up to us to live up to their total biological and moral sacrifice. Neither the extreme "hagiologies" nor blind annihilations are of any use. And much less does the embellishment of the falsification of gospel truths offer for the sake of good things which, important as they are, remain secondary to the great event of the Kingdom.

Turkish bomb fell next to him without hurting him and with its fuse still burning. Then, without stopping to punch his garlic, he cursed the bomb, simply kicking it further away with all indifference [...]. See N. Kassomoulis, *Ενθυμήματα στρατιωτικά τῆς Επανάστασεως τῶν Ἑλλήνων 1821-1833*, vol. II, Athens 1941, p. 106.

71. See Ant. Smyrneos, «Τόποι μαρτυρίου Ἑλλήνων, Τούρκων καὶ Ἑβραίων στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση», *op.cit.*, p. 268.