Victor Roudometof and Vasilios N. Makrides (eds), *Orthodox Christianity in 21st Century Greece: The Role of Religion in Culture, Ethnicity and Politics* (Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2010), 274 pp., ISBN 978-0-7546-6696-7 (Hbk), £55.00

Many scholars continue to view Orthodoxy and Greece through the prism articulated by Huntington in his *Clash of Civilizations*. But his view is too general, better suited to a global strategic thinker. The editors of this volume offer a potent antidote. The end result is a solid contribution to the European sociology of religion: the Church as an institution; Church–state relations; pluralism and treatment of religious minorities in Greece; and the role of faith in constructing and defending national identity.

Writing with clarity and precision, the authors debunk two prevalent myths regarding Church–state–society relations. First, there is a clear distinction between modernizers and traditionalists, with the Church officially assuming the role of guardian of tradition. Much ink is spent on the late Archbishop Christodoulos, exposing an intriguing and paradoxical figure. On the one hand, Christodoulos uses his position to defend 'Greekness' against the threat of globalization, European policy directives and 'national alienation' (p. 33). On the other hand, under his leadership the Church deploys very modern instruments to reach the public by reinvigorating non-public mechanisms of welfare

provision (Fokas), permitting Christian rock bands such as the Free Monks (Molokotos-Liederman), rethinking the position of women in Orthodoxy (Sotiriu), and revisiting the Church's stance on non-Orthodox minorities in Greece (Yannas and Antoniou). As Roudometof and Anastassiadis show in their respective chapters, nationalist rhetoric and support for localism serve a modernizing purpose. 'For militant church reformers, facing internal opposition' and seeking 'to modernize a fragile and staggering church ... finding an external adversary ... is the key to survival, if not success' (p. 57).

Second, the Church is an institution unlike others, not only substantively but also organizationally. In an interesting chapter, Makrides discusses the implications of the 2005 'crisis' (in truth more of a corruption scandal) on the Church and Church–state relations. What emerges from the analysis is an institution, albeit privileged, that seems remarkably similar to others. It is rife with intra-organizational conflict, spiritual as well as political disagreements, centralizing and controversial decision-making tendencies and some corrupt individuals who take advantage of their position to pursue personal agendas. These are normal pathologies of any bureaucracy, including the bureaucracies of other religions.

What is interesting are the political repercussions at a time when Archbishop Christodoulos sought a more publicly visible and influential Church in Greece. Because of his sympathies for the Right, mostly politicians and intellectuals of the Left used the allegations against Church officials and individuals close to Christodoulos as payback to undermine his political ambitions. Reacting against Christodoulos's 'expressive interventionism', opponents sought to discredit his personality and behaviour by pointing out extravagant vacations, links to individuals of dubious reputation, and unwillingness to punish wrongdoers until after scandals hit the morning papers. For political reasons, even the most virulent critics were careful to make their opposition personal and not institutional. Their main point was to suppress any 'gains' the Church had made among Greek voters in the aftermath of the identity cards crisis in 2000, to 'prove the state's superiority over the church ... and to weaken its wide social influence' (p. 61). But one may ask: doesn't undermining the leader of the Church also undermine the institution itself, because the leader represents the institution? Haven't the scandals, especially the more recent one about Vatopedi—which the authors do not address—shaken trust in the institution and leaders of the Church? Don't these 'personal' attacks aim to reconfigure political–institutional relations? Can they ever be just personal?

What would have made this otherwise satisfying volume even better is the presence of a theoretical framework that ties the chapters together. Edited volumes usually suffer from the absence of a central argument, and this book is no exception. The value of individual contributions is significant but the absence of a framework reduces its overall utility and generalizability. For example, the editors and Stathopoulou argue that Greece is not exceptional. Well said, but then why is Greece theoretically important, and why does it not differ from other European countries? Without an overall framework that places groups within and across societies in particular categories, it is very difficult to distil the argument's implications for modernity and its ability to be replicated substantively in similar cultural settings, such as those of

Serbia or Bulgaria, or ostensibly dissimilar settings, such as those of Germany or Italy.

The authors succeed admirably in exploring the role of Orthodox Christianity in twenty-first-century Greece, but the book on Orthodox Christianity in twenty-first-century Europe still remains to be written.

Nikolaos Zahariadis
Department of Government
University of Alabama at Birmingham, 410 HHB, 1530 3rd Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35294-1152, USA

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