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What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

Greek Orthodoxy and the continuity of Hellenism

Abstract

'Hellenism' and 'Greek Orthodoxy' are quantities of global civilization that are themselves difficult to define and categorize. To sufficiently describe the centuries-old interrelationship between these two phenomena in an objective and evidence-based manner is nearly impossible. This paper therefore aims to concentrate mainly on one aspect of a highly complex interrelationship, namely the historical and philosophical points at which a transition occurred from ancient Hellenism to Greek Orthodoxy in the Christian era.

Such a transition has been vehemently described as a forceful suffocation by some, and as a providential transformation by others. Diametrically opposed views in this field can be a topic of scholarly debate, just as they are of popular prejudice. And this is made more interesting by the fact that, regardless of the degree to which one entity is believed to have been subsumed by the other, the interrelationship between Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy never remains static.

Could it then be argued that, during their long and enduring course of co-existence, Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy have not only been mutually enriching, but in fact life-giving for each other and for those who regard them as a way of viewing and experiencing the world? On the other hand, would the Hellenists of our time regard Christian Orthodoxy as being completely foreign

to the essence of Hellenism, thereby echoing Tertullian's rhetorical flurry: 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?'

This article attempts to show briefly that the distance between the capital cities of Hellenism and Christian Orthodoxy, while often difficult to navigate, need not be daunting.

Introduction

As a term of great historical endurance, it is probably not surprising that the various meanings attributed to, and associated with, the term Hellenism have undergone considerable change. The variations in the understanding and interpretation of Hellenism have been the cause of retrospective lampooning and anathematization, as much as of anachronistic apologetics and idealized projections about what Hellenism signifies. To this extent, historians may well speak, not simply of one Hellenism, but of various Hellenisms.

Yet in this paper, Hellenism will nonetheless be referred to in the singular, and this in no way overlooks the diachronic phenomenon of polarization and vehement debate between those who have held – and continue to hold – starkly different views about just what exactly is meant when the word Hellenism is used.

So what is Hellenism?

Hellenism derives from the term *hellenizo*, which simply means 'to speak Greek'. However, in his insightful book titled *Judaism and Hellenism*, Martin Hengel (1981: 2) cites a more dynamic aspect of Hellenism, deriving from 2 Maccabees 4:13, where the ἀκμή του Ἑλληνισμοῦ (meaning the 'climax of Hellenizing tendencies') is mentioned in connection with Hellenic reform in Jerusalem during the time in which that book of the Old Testament is set.

There are of course further ways in which the term in question can be considered (Gavrilyuk 2010: 329):

We need to distinguish between Hellenism as a cultural descriptor, Hellenism as a tag identifying a group of people, and Hellenism as a scholarly construct. As a cultural descriptor, Hellenism stands for Greek language, literature, rhetoric, poetry, philosophies, religious practices, social customs, manners, dress codes, family structure, burial customs, hospitality laws, political thinking, moral convictions ...

Writing almost 70 years ago, R.W. Moore (1944: 35) declared that, as a Hellenist, he was 'proud of his foster-parent', and that he saw three main characteristics of Hellenism: 'the urge to define, the urge to idealize and a preoccupation with the here and now ... The first and the second seem at first sight to be contradictory; but they are not.'

Added to this is the peculiar quality of Hellenism to produce volatile reactions as soon as it is placed in the same sentence with another term of similarly fluid interpretation: 'Christianity' (a term interchangeable for the purposes of this paper with 'Greek Orthodoxy' or, simply, 'Orthodoxy'). Not only Hellenism but indeed the very word 'Hellenes' has changed in meaning considerably over the course of many centuries. In the early Christian period, it was a negative term signifying the pagan believers of a bygone era. Only towards the later centuries of Byzantium would the term Hellene again be used in the sense of a proud line of ancestry.

The hostility with which things Hellenic in the early Christian era were equated with paganism is indeed an irony of history, given that the Church Fathers themselves utilized the vocabulary and philosophical concepts of Hellenic culture in order to articulate precisely the doctrinal beliefs of Christianity. Beyond the realm of words, however, it would be fair to say that the Christian devotee felt an affinity with much of the ancient Greek understanding of philosophy's very purpose. And that purpose of philosophy had more to do with how one lived than with abstract argumentation. What is more, how one lived life soon became the quintessentially Christian question as well, and so believers of the new faith regarded it as the true philosophy, and described it as such. With Christ as the Wisdom of God incarnate, the Christian became ipso facto the lover of wisdom, and a philosopher in the true sense of the word.¹ This interest in, and quest for, wisdom was to become the connecting thread between Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy.

It needs to be remembered that, the first to use the term 'theology' in the sense in which it is used today was not Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria or Tertullian, but ... Plato! For the first five centuries of its existence, Christian Orthodoxy developed in a distinctly Hellenic milieu amidst very strong currents of Stoicism and Neoplatonic thought. Repeatedly, these currents enhanced the Christian world-view that one's mode of living reflected a particular attitude towards death, and in many cases, the life

beyond it. One important manifestation of this of course gilded the legacy of Socrates, whose noble death, immortalized for all time by Plato's *Apology*, was in fact a direct consequence of his particular stance towards life.

Much of Greek philosophy was in fact regarded as a preparation for death. Characterizing the various antecedent approaches to the reality of human mortality was an undercurrent of optimism, which is odd considering that the ancient Greek view of the afterlife was – in contrast to the later Christian perception – quite gloomy. For the ancient Greeks, the life to come was not so much to be experienced 'up there' (in heaven) but 'down there' (in the underworld). This linguistic-conceptual positioning of the life to come was highly indicative. So where was any optimism to be found? Not in a cultivated eschatology, but rather in a logical framework along the lines of the Stoic formula that quite humorously declared: *Death is nothing to fear. For when it is there, I am here. And when it comes here, I am there ...* The progeny of the ancient Hellenes (namely, the Christian Hellenes) could draw upon this aspect of their cultural-philosophical tradition in a similar way to their spiritual-scriptural tradition that revolved around the rhetorical question 'O death, where is your sting?' (1 Corinthians 15:55).

There were of course other key concepts that the philosophical thrust of Hellenism would go on to share with the faith of the Christians. For example, when the Sophist Protagoras famously claimed that 'man is the measure of all things', Plato inverted the entire construct on its head by stating that 'God is the measure of all things, (*Laws* 716c). There could be few slogans more pertinent to the theocentric Christian world-view (that naturally did not develop in an intellectual vacuum). Furthermore, Hellenic terms and ideas exercised direct appeal to the exegetes of the Christian Gospel, as evidenced in ancient phrases that peculiarly summarised the entire goal of the Christian struggle, such as that in the *Republic* 613a: 'by the practice of virtue to be likened unto God (ομοιούσθαι Θεώ)', to mention just one example.

Elsewhere, one sees the amazing presentation of powerful vocabulary that would be taken up by Christian teaching several centuries after Plato had penned them:

The truth is that the cause of all sins [αμαρτημάτων] in every case lies in the person's excessive love of self (731e) [emphasis added].

One can therefore estimate the appeal that philosophical elements would have exerted on new converts to the Christian faith throughout the Mediterranean basin.² One could also articulate the analysis of the question at hand thus far in the following way:

Hellenism is undeniably one of the most significant cultural impulses for the life of the Church since its earliest historic manifestation. More than any single culture, every and any Christian must somehow deal with Hellenism, or specifically with the Hellenic impress on the formation of Christian doctrine and life ... What does Hellenism mean to us? For some Hellenism is primarily national, perhaps linguistic. For others it is primarily theological ... (Bouteneff 2010)

To others, Hellenism is seen in more poetic terms (Trakatellis 2010):
It is the triumph of wonder and admiration over fear.
It is the love of beauty and goodness as one entity.
It is the appreciation of the potential of all human beings for this kalokagathia, goodness and beauty, through the process of paideia.

What was Tertullian's phrase about?

Tertullian (c. 160-225) lived and worked as a lawyer in Carthage. In his treatise *Against Heresies* (Chapter 7) he rhetorically asks 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?', and gives the following very simple (some might say simplistic) symbolism to each of the cities mentioned:

Athens	Jerusalem
philosophy, reason	revelation, faith

Tertullian obviously poses a leading question as to whether Hellenism and the Christian faith are compatible, while listing the symbolic centres of each - Athens and Jerusalem.

It needs to be remembered that the quotation comes from a work combatting heresy specifically. The quote in full states:

Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy ... What indeed has

Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy to do with the Church? What have heretics to do with Christians? Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic Christianity!

Within the context of the struggle with heresies of all kinds (a struggle that was expected by the Apostles³ and immediately faced by the early Church), Tertullian's stark question can be seen, says Helleman (1994: 364), as a rhetorical flurry. As the great late scholar Georges Florovsky has pointed out in his insightful *Christianity and Culture*, Tertullian 'was afraid of an easy syncretism and contamination, which was an actual threat and danger in his time, and could not anticipate that inner transformation of the Hellenic mind which was to be effected in the centuries to come, just as he could not imagine that Caesars could become Christian.'

And yet, the two great minds of the Church in the fourth century, Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, would travel from Asia Minor to Athens in order to study at its university while still laymen in their early 20s, and take from the 'non-Christian' education tools that would serve the Church for the rest of their lives! And a fellow student of theirs at that time, would famously go on to become emperor and attempt to impose the religion of the ancient Greeks on an already Christianized empire. He failed dismally, perhaps because he died so suddenly. At any rate, history has recorded his name - from the vantage point of the victors - as Julian the Apostate. There is some very interesting correspondence from Gregory the Theologian to Julian, protesting the latter's attempt to divorce Christians from secular Greek learning, but a study of these details would require another article altogether.

Neopagan connotations

In recent times, one can hear an increasingly loud cry that whatever is Hellenic is inversely proportional to whatever is Christian. There is, according to this view, a mutual exclusivity between these two cultural and spiritual forces. Consequently the appeal to Hellenism - however this is conceived - often goes hand in hand with some denouncement of Christian faith and practice. Moreover, the hostile treatment of Christianity or Greek Orthodoxy is regularly clothed in supposedly 'patriotic' garb on the part of the 'true' Hellenes. In other words, to be truly Hellenic one must shun the intrusion of

an ‘imported’ or foreign belief system for the sake of reviving the religious beliefs and the Dodecatheon of ancient Hellas. This view, which provides the thrust of many neopagan arguments, and which boasts a Hellenism that predates the arrival of Christianity on Greek shores, at the same time ignores the fact that Hellenism has existed much longer *with* Christianity than it has existed without it.⁴

The neopagan argument is very good at citing atrocities such as the Crusades and Inquisitions committed in the name of God or of the Church (albeit the western Church). It is much less successful at displaying an in-depth understanding of the people, processes and educational contribution of the Church diachronically. And given that the Church speaks more on the specific than on the abstract, it may be worth recalling the recent assessment of that contribution by a specific representative of the Church, the current Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople:

*If we possess today the treasure of pre-Christian Hellenic literature, we owe it exclusively to the humble and anonymous Byzantine monastic scribes who, as well as preserving the treasure of patristic works, have handed down to us the manuscripts of our pre-Christian ancestors.*⁵

Such a testimony is not convincing, unless it is backed up by a very detailed and objective historical analysis. This is best left to specialists in that field,⁶ as it is beyond the scope of this paper and the proficiency of this author. However, even a cursory overview of certain stages in the history of the Church (the followers of Jerusalem) will show an attitude towards classical culture (the followers of Athens) that can arguably be described as respectful. Such respectfulness towards the creative works and manner of living from antiquity, is also a contributing factor towards a degree of continuity across the centuries.

An important example of the way in which ecclesial figures have held the so-called ‘pagan’ past in high esteem is the very title by which the Three Great Hierarchs (Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom) are known, namely as ‘Patrons of Greek Letters’ (Προστάτες των Ελληνικῶν Γραμμάτων). It needs to be emphasised that their patronage is not, semantically at least, of Christian learning per se. Much has been written about the capacity of these three Church Fathers in particular to appropriate the learning and love of wisdom from the ancient past, or at least those aspects that could prove edifying for the formulation and articulation



Fresco depicting ancient Greek philosophers,
from the Church of the Nativity, Arbanassi, Bulgaria.

of Christian truth, as they saw it. The full extent of their writings need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that one of the most characteristic, although very brief, works that reflects this interpretative tendency among the Greek Fathers is named: *Address to Youth – on how they might benefit from classical Greek literature*. This treatise, written by Basil the Great, appears to have a perennially valuable pedagogical message concerning the value of Greek texts from the time of Homer and Hesiod onwards, as evidenced by the fact that a new edition of the work has recently been published in Australia.⁷

Living in the fourth century, these Cappadocian Fathers engaged with their era's own historical transition between what could very loosely be called 'antiquity' and 'Christian society'. And in the fifth century we are told by Synesios about the ability of his nephew to learn Homer by heart, after learning 50 verses per day (Runciman 1933: 223-24).⁸ Yet there were also subsequent figures of immense significance for our topic. Of these, two in particular come to mind: Patriarch Photios the Great (ninth century) on the one hand, and the teacher of the Uncreated Light, Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica (fourteenth century), on the other. The former, with his distinct love of literature, preserved in his famous *Myriovivlos*⁹ (albeit in brief references that have been described as the world's first book reviews) many works of classical literature, some of which have subsequently been lost and are known to us only through this collection. The latter, when summoned by the Emperor Andronicus the Elder before the Senate, amazed everyone with his knowledge and profound analysis of the teaching of Aristotle. Apart from studying the representative texts of ancient Greek culture, there was also a noticeable shift from Latin and an increase in the usage of the Greek language officially within Byzantium during the reign of Heraclius (610-641): *the Empire became more strongly Hellenised. Greek was proclaimed the official language of the administration, replacing Latin. By the next generation, knowledge of Latin was rare even in educated circles. Thus another barrier was raised in the interchange of ideas between the Greek East and the West ...* (Davis 1983).

By way of a slight digression, it is worth mentioning at this point the depiction of ancient representatives of Hellenic culture (such as Plutarch, Plato and Aristotle) within iconographic murals in churches of Mt Athos, Ioannina and the Balkan region in general. These are visible today. They are shown with their saintly progeny, as in the example depicted below.¹⁰

While being careful not to draw hasty conclusions from iconographic depictions, it cannot at the same time be ignored that icons in general have an important teaching function and must not be dismissed merely as artistic decorations. This particular icon, for example, offers the beholder the following lessons:

- (1) The figures presented are not static. They are conversing. Learning and approaching the divine are not regarded as separate endeavours sealed off in watertight compartments, but rather as part of an ongoing process.

(2) Each figure, whether having lived before or after the coming of Christ, presents a scroll containing one or more major quotations of the holder's works. The beholder sees, then, that all have something to say. Orthodox spiritual life does not subscribe to a belief in infallible personal statements. It instead bears testimony to a common experience of truth, which is shared not only by contemporary seekers of truth, but also by other enlightened people across the generations. Hence, the Orthodox speak of a *consensus patrum*, and of communion in matters of the spirit that necessitates continuity in praxis.

To the extent that Christian Orthodoxy - having been born in and around Jerusalem - is treated as something foreign to the essence of Hellenism (even, ironically, when the former is specifically called *Greek Orthodoxy*) and as a faith system which was 'imported' (at best) or 'imposed' (at worst) within Greek territory, it is not difficult to see how the discussion of the entire topic at hand can lose clarity and proper perspective. For a start, it generalizes immensely concerning the manner in which the Christian proclamation became the prevalent faith of the ancient world, at a remarkably rapid pace. Any negative perception of the 'foreignness' of Jerusalem is compounded when it is seen as the conqueror of Athens. According to such an understanding, the very reality of transition, or rather the manner of the transition, from one faith system to another, becomes tainted. And so, the confusion of religious faith and nationalism, whereby the verity of the former is sacrificed to the latter even prior to any examination, is a sacrifice greater than that of Iphigenia in foolhardiness and injustice. For, it relies on a perception of history that does not stand up to the evidence. The transition between what is vaguely called the 'ancient world' to the 'Christian world', on the cusp of the fourth century after Christ, is the very point at which the 'battle' between Athens and Jerusalem was carried out historically, and yet it is also an arena in which other smaller ideological battles are won and lost to this day.

The view that Jerusalem was violently imposed on Athens, against the will of ordinary people, is highly dubious. Here are a few poorly-expressed reasons why:

- to begin with, it ignores the waning of Hellenistic 'religion' just prior to the Christian era

- it overlooks that the people who spread the new Christian faith in Greek lands were themselves largely of Greek background
- it fails to realize that to shun whatever is good in the non-Greek world is to act in a manner that is contrary to the spirit of Hellenism
- it does not take into account the great variety of concurrent metaphysical views within ancient Greece that would in turn beg the question: 'which one of these was forcibly displaced?'
- it does not deal with scholarly opinion concerning the Hellenized nature of the Gospels and Epistles themselves
- it is silent about the degree of Hellenization that occurred in and around Jerusalem, not just from the time of Alexander the Great, but even considerably earlier, as Martin Hengel has shown in his work *Judaism and Hellenism* (1981)
- it confuses imperial edicts against polytheism with an allegedly forced imposition of Christian beliefs by the Church.

If it were simply a case of the Church destroying pagan temples, then how is it that Pausanias, writing in the second century (that is to say, well before the Edict of Milan and the legalisation of Christianity by Constantine the Great) described many ancient temples he encountered during his travels around Greece as already derelict, that is to say, abandoned?

The Greeks have a word for a fixation with the past that comes at the expense of seeing anything better or higher: *αρχαιοπληξία*. The ancient Greeks were notable in that they acknowledged whatever was good in the cultures that surrounded them, and borrowed from these wholesale before transforming the content of what they encountered via their own particular genius. So, it is not they who shun what is foreign, but they who in fact recognize whatever is of value in the foreign, who act according to an authentically Hellenic mode.¹¹

Just two centuries after Pausanias, one of the most renowned Church Fathers, John Chrysostom, would ask, 'What, should we destroy the old schools? This is not what I am saying ...'¹²

Gregory the Theologian would also write (Letter to Philagrius, 32):
I admire the magnanimity (μεγαλοφροσύνη) and the courage (γενναϊότητα) of the Stoics, who teach that the external things are not an obstacle to happiness, ... I also admire, for example, [among those who underwent misfortune with courage] Anaxarchus, Epictetus and Socrates, to name but a few.

Similarly, while not all responses towards Hellenic *paideia* were positive during the thousand-year period of Byzantium (which is not surprising given its sheer duration, geographic expanse and the diversity of peoples encompassed by it), Skedros has no difficulty in presenting strong examples of leading Byzantine personalities much later than the Cappadocians who very openly espoused values and virtues of classical Hellenism. Once again, these leading personalities are not secular writers or rulers, but rather representatives of the eastern Orthodox faith, being either senior clergymen or monastics. He therefore presents the example of Michael Choniatis, a learned bishop of Athens in the twelfth century, who compared a Byzantine official from Constantinople to Solon and Aristides, on account of his concern for justice. The same bishop describes the ancient Greeks as 'those blessed men' who are not reproached 'for their distorted religion' because 'even though they worshipped thusly, they practiced virtue and knew beauty, daring the sea and long journeys to put human life in order'! (cited in St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, vol. 54, numbers 3 & 4, 2010, p.355).

The eastern Christian Middle Ages (Byzantium) have been accused of all sorts of dark, oppressive and destructive schemes against an entire ancient heritage. Yet, it would have been an incongruous entity indeed that could live up to that reputation and at the same time allow its capital city of Constantinople to be full of 'pagan' statues brought from all regions of the empire. One would be hard-pressed to find any ecclesiastical writer calling for the destruction of such works of exquisite art. The problem, then was arguably not ancient Hellenic culture per se, but rather instances of mutually exclusive views concerning worship and the very nature of God.

Byzantine imperial edicts concerning vestiges of pagan beliefs can be easily (mis)interpreted, with the 'benefit' of hindsight, as expressions of belligerent Christian hegemony stemming from state authority. This view, which is easily recycled among those who have already reached the foregone conclusion that this must have been the case, tends to overlook two factors: on the one hand, the context of what was the *realpolitik* in other parts of the world (namely the Far East and western Europe) contemporary with the actions in question and, on the other, the very details which surround these actions. For example, it would be easy to point to the edict of 10 July, in the year 399, that pagan temples in rural areas were to be torn down (Theodosian Codex 16.10.16). However, this should not be looked at in isolation. What also

needs to be taken into consideration is the edict that followed just one month later, on 20 August, 399 (Theodosian Codex 16.10.18), which qualifies the previous one, stating that temples that do not contain illegal statues and are not used for pagan worship may be allowed to stand.

St Nicodemos the Athonite (eighteenth century) is known to many readers as the editor of the *Philokalia* and the author of *Spiritual Counsels* published within the Classics of Western Spirituality series. This learned monk translated Gospel passages of the Vespers of Love celebrated every Easter Sunday into the Homeric dialect! The reason for his decision to translate certain verses into this very difficult form of ancient Greek is unclear. Perhaps we could assume it was Nicodemos' way of saying that his ancient forebears were not to be forgotten; they were still part of the *genos* who, having enriched us and all humanity, deserve to hear the same scriptural passages in their own language.

Concluding remarks

Writing in the eleventh century, John Mavropous says the following: 'Christ, my God, if you wish to exempt someone from the future threat of hell, I beg you for my sake to exempt Plato and Plutarch, for both of them, with their words and character, came very close to your Law.'

Significantly, John Mavropous was a bishop of the Orthodox Church. Moreover, it was he who proposed that the memory of the three great hierarchs, the above mentioned Patrons of Greek Letters, be celebrated on the same day of the liturgical calendar, January 30. That suggestion has been implemented to this day.

Are there points of departure between the totality of Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy? Of course there are, but these pertain to the rejection of polytheism and several other religious world-views by the Church which have in any case been rejected by the broader Greek culture itself. Not all aspects of classical Greek life were universally regarded as being of eternal value, and so these naturally withered away. To claim otherwise would be to construct a gross idealization of the past. Putting it in the words of Gregory of Nyssa (*Life of Moses*, II.11), Greek philosophy was 'always in labour but never giving birth'!

To achieve a balanced view of the relationship between the symbolic cities of Athens and Jerusalem, one must steer clear of preconceived or indeed prejudicial notions of the essence of Orthodox Christianity. To put it another way, one who sets out to evaluate Greek Orthodoxy and its relationship with

Hellenism must at least know the tradition of the former from within. And to know the Orthodox tradition from within, is to perceive the coherence of all elements of Orthodox faith and life (whether it be architecture, worship, hymnography, iconography, language or art) both with each other and in relation to the ancient Greek ideal of μέτρο & ἁρμονία.¹³

Historically, culturally and spiritually, the fusion of Hellenism and Orthodoxy seems to have been fruitful in the extreme. However defined, their coming together has evidently elevated human personhood. Yet because the relationship is not static, and has never been so, scholars, historians, Hellenes and philhellenes are entitled to explore an ever new synthesis of these two global forces that will truly and truthfully speak to our times.

It is therefore pertinent to ask about the role and usefulness of Hellenism, not only in the past, but also in the present and indeed the future of our globalized world, which is of course the theme of this conference. It may be that our discussion concerning Hellenism and Geek Orthodoxy has overlooked an important chapter, which is none other than an appraisal of the present fusion of these forces within Greece itself,¹⁴ as the hearth of Hellenism. While the globalized world transcends national borders, it does not have the capacity to destroy them completely. It would be quite nebulous to speak of the spiritual and cultural entities mentioned above, without taking into consideration their more concrete manifestations, whether good or bad, in the here and now. In this sense, the presenter of this paper acknowledges that his presentation is only half complete. Suffice it to say that, in terms of current reality, the following comments are worthy of consideration (Helleman 1994: 429):

At a time when Christianity is expanding rapidly in non-Western countries, yet virtually under siege in much of Europe and North America, it is surely appropriate to return to the issue of 'Hellenization', to re-examine the usefulness of cultural, philosophical and theological forms inherited from early Christianity.

This paper has tried in quite broad terms to illustrate the continuity of Hellenism vis-à-vis the Orthodox faith. Its position that Orthodoxy developed sometimes as the invigorator of ancient Hellenic culture, and sometimes as an inevitable replacement for it, is not a value judgement. It is an identifiable process. Although the degree to which this process occurred is admittedly open to much discussion, this paper has maintained that the degree of

continuity should not be undersold. It is quite separate from the discussion as to whether this continuity was good or bad, right or wrong, weak or strong.

If it has been shown that Greek Orthodoxy was historically open to the possibilities afforded to it by Hellenic thought, principles and values throughout its 20 centuries of existence, then, by extension, Hellenists may be a degree less 'complexical' about Hellenism's receptivity to the spiritual influences it has received via Jerusalem and the religious tradition that it represents. It is consequently very reasonable, and beneficial at the same time, to ponder the questioning of Moore (1944: 40), who has already been mentioned:

Are you exalting the legacy of Judea above that of Greece? Are you suggesting that Christianity has annulled Hellenism? No. We need both: they are complementary in our culture, mutually enriching. Greek thought at its highest has contributed to make Christianity what it is, and it is a contribution we must never suffer to be forgotten. I blame us for keeping our Hellenism and Christianity in separate compartments till they are mutually impoverished.

Complementarity and cross-fertilization have arguably never found a better and longer-lasting field in which to function than in the ongoing encounter between Hellenism and Greek Orthodox Christianity. Scholarship would benefit from a greater readiness to acknowledge the degree of cross-fertilization that has taken place, not only since the time of the legalisation of Christianity, but even from several centuries earlier. Indeed, to repeat a point made above, the divisions between Hellenism and Judaism itself were not insurmountable in the very earliest stages of their encounter and in the later Apostolic era:

The very Judaism which gave rise to Christianity was already Hellenized, to varying degrees ... The mistaken notion that Judaism and Hellenism were utterly separate realities in antiquity has led scholars to argue that Paul must be either Jew or Greek, and only one or the other ... Paul transcends this divide. (Parsenius 2010: 319)

Now, bearing in mind the mentioned complementarity and cross-fertilization, what implications could there be for a conference on the theme of Hellenism in a globalized world? Needless to say, one can make broad remarks, rather than conclusions. This is because, in matters of science, a concrete conclusion can only be drawn following a hypothesis and experiment.

Globalization is still an experiment. And if globalization is ‘the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale’,¹⁵ one may well question whether Hellenism - which of course is not a business or an organization - fits into such a thematic scheme at all. For, one sees throughout the long history of Hellenism a repeated and renewed internationalization, not of material goods, but of the ideas and values of humanism. If Hellenism is distinguished by its non-chauvinistic capacity to both give and take ideas, then the fertilization of the philosophy of Athens through the spiritual seeds of Jerusalem should not seem uncharacteristic.

At any rate, it was Greek philosophy from the Stoics through to the Christian Apologists, such as Justin Martyr, that maintained the existence of the seminal word (λόγος σπερματικός) throughout nature and civilizations as part of God’s provision for the world. The mere juxtaposition of religious and spiritual ideas would normally lead to syncretism. Hellenism, however offered the breadth of thought that instead enabled a new synthesis. Within the historical context in which Athens and Jerusalem met, there were several major syntheses, proof of which is given in the hyphenated terms we use to describe various hybrid phenomena, such as ‘Greco-Roman’ and ‘Judeo-Christian’. By contrast to the globalized world of the *pax Romana*,¹⁶ today’s globalized world does not so much give rise to new cultural forms as it does to a more bland conglomeration, mostly with a dominant culture that is imposed at the expense of others. Hellenism therefore provides a continuing counterbalance to the effects of globalization, rather than being just another by-product of it.

The above has attempted to show that the core values of Hellenism and the new spirituality of Jerusalem had a long engagement throughout the Hellenistic period, if not sooner. They have continued to enjoy a marriage that is fertile (which is not to say trouble-free) ever since. It may therefore come as a poignant shock to a student of the various stages of Hellenism that ‘the greatest hero of late Greek literature is Jesus Christ’ (Levi 1999: 165).[®]

In answering Tertullian’s question of ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’, it has hopefully become apparent that the distance between the capital cities of Hellenism and Christian Orthodoxy, while often difficult to navigate, need not be daunting. It is a distance that must be travelled anew in the twenty-first century, not in spite of globalization, but because of it.

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Notes

¹ It is not a small detail that the most famous Church of Greek Orthodoxy, Hagia Sophia, was dedicated in Constantinople to Christ, being the Holy Wisdom (Sophia) of God.

² Of course, this is not to say that Plato's teachings were transferred wholesale into the Christian doctrine. Church history shows that a clear dividing line was drawn between its own teaching and several of Plato's expressed views, particularly those on the creation of the world (the pre-existence of matter) and the transmigration of the soul.

³ For example, '... even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies ...' (2 Peter 2:1).

⁴ This claim is based on the assumption that we cannot really speak of Hellenism as a group of ideals before the existence of the earliest written texts/historical documents which, very roughly speaking, could not be said to predate the first millennium before Christ.

⁵ Speech given at the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia on the eve of the feast day of the Hierarchs, January 29, 2007.

⁶ For example, James C. Skedros *Hellenism and Byzantium*, *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, vol. 54, numbers 3 & 4, 2010, p.351: 'It was in the educational "system" of Byzantium that Hellenism survived and was passed on ...'

⁷ *St Andrew's Orthodox Press*, Sydney, 2011.

⁸ *Ο Συνέσιος τὸν ὄσιν ἀλάει γιὰ τὴν ἰκανότητα τοῦ ἀνιμοῦ του νὰ ἀποστηθίζει τὸν Ὅμηρο (μάθαινε πενήντα στίχους τῆς ἡμέρας), ἐνῶ ὁ Ψελλός, ἀπὸ πολὺ μικρός, ἤξερε ὀλόκληρη τὴν Ἰλιάδα ἀπ' ἔξω...'

quoted in Runciman, *S. Byzantine Civilization*, Arnold, London, 1933, pp.223-224, which also mentions how Michael Psellus knew the Iliad by heart.

⁹ Also known as the Bibliotheca.

¹⁰ This example depicts each philosopher with a halo, whereas other similar iconographic depictions do not.

¹¹ The writer is indebted to G. Valsamis' fascinating article published in Greek on website <<http://www.ellopos.net/gr/greeks>> for this notion of the receptivity of Hellenism. Valsamis also highlights an important point for Christians who shy away from their 'pagan' forebears through his pithy statement: 'I do not need to know Plato backwards in order to believe in Christ, yet nor can I claim that I believe more or better because I ignore Plato.' [translation my own].

¹² *Τὶ οὖν; κατασκάψωμεν τὰ διδασκαλεῖα, φησί; Οὐ τοῦτο λέγω...! Πρὸς Πατέραν Πιστόν Π (PG 47,367).

¹³ Let it be noted, for example, that Byzantine music retains the ancient musical scales (Lydian, Dorian, Phrygian etc) in 8 tones.

¹⁴ For example, even a cursory look at the Constitution of Greece today, will say a lot about the degree of fusion that has occurred on a formal level between Greek Orthodoxy and the Hellenic Republic. The Constitution explicitly makes mention of "The holy, consubstantial and undivided Trinity" (very technical doctrinal terms of the Ecumenical Councils indeed) while safeguarding the special legal status of the oldest semi-autonomous monastic territory in the world (Mt Athos). Having a life of over 1,000 years, it is a link to the culture, faith and mindset of the Byzantine world, since the establishment of the oldest standing monastery, Megisti Lavra, predates the Fall of Constantinople by exactly five centuries minus ten years.

¹⁵ Definition retrieved from the Oxford English Dictionary online.

¹⁶ The Hellenistic and Roman Empires encompassed the known world, which was to that extent 'globalised', long before the term globalisation was coined last century.

¹⁷ Levi, Peter in *The Greek World*, R. Browning (ed.), Thames and Hudson, 1999, 165. In speaking of Greek literature, Levi takes into account the language of the Gospels and Apostolic writings.