

2011—THE YEAR OF PAPADIAMANTES



GREECE
AND ORTHODOXY'S
"UNCLE ALEXANDER"*

Dedicated to Alexander Papadiamantes (VI)**

Alexander Papadiamantes in Contrast to Apostolos Makrakes

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The year (2001) marks the passage of 150 years since the birth of Alexander Papadiamantes (March 4, 1851) and ninety years since his repose (1911). These anniversaries remind us not only of our past, but also of the future of all of us, for the questions facing us remain the same, even if the answers may change.

This short story writer from the Island of Skiathos embodies a way of life that continues to be opportune and essential. The importance of his contributions we can better grasp if we compare him with another innovative Christian thinker of his age,

* Μπάμπας (*Barbas*) is an endearing colloquial term for a man of wide renown and respect. (This and all subsequent notes indicated by asterisks are those of the translator).

** One of Greece's greatest religious writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

the scholar Apostolos Makrakes (1831-1905), from the Island of Siphnos, who represents an entirely dissimilar notion of the Church and of modern Hellenism. Between Alexander Papadiamantes and Apostolos Makrakes there are very many differences.

One of the primary differentiations between Papadiamantes and Makrakes that emphatically characterizes our Skiathan is the distance that separates Makrakes from the renewal movement of the *Philokalia* in the 18th and 19th centuries—a movement known by way of the demeaning epithet “*Kollyvades*”—which made its appearance on Mount Athos under the guidance of St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite and consisted in the revival of the Orthodox Patristic tradition, with the study of the *Philokalia**** at its epicenter and with its distinct visible standard the frequent partaking of the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist.

The opponents of the Hagiorite “*Philokalia*” movement slandered the originators of this initiative, censuring them for the custom of remaining faithful to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church by not conducting memorial services for the dead on Sundays, the day of Resurrection, but only on Saturdays, the day for the commemoration of the dead, when *kollyva***** is offered up for them in the Church. So it is that these opponents contrived the mocking nickname “*Kollyvades*,” on account of what they thought to be some supposed ritualistic preoccupation with “*kollyva*,” when in reality the movement entailed a stalwart ecclesiastical effort for the restoration, on the basis of the *Philokalia* and the Neptic [watchful, or vigilant—*Trans.*] Fathers, of the mystical theological tradition of the Orthodox Church. The remnants of the *Kollyvades* Fathers sought refuge on the Island of Skiathos which, in an apt observation by Takes Papatsones,***** is in the shadow of Athos (Skiathos: the shadow of Athos).¹

*** A collection of mystical texts gathered by Sts. Macarios of Corinth and Nicodemos the Hagiorite.

**** Boiled wheat, symbolizing the Resurrection and new life.

***** A celebrated modern Greek poet and writer (1895-1976).

¹T. Papatsones, *Ἀσκησις στὸν Ἄθω* (Ascesis on Athos) (Athens: 1963 [1984]), p. 14.

Thus, Papadiamantes was nurtured by Orthodox tradition as put forth in the *Philokalia*, by which he judges, evaluates, and condemns Makrakes' writings. Against the westernized, Protestantized, and pietistic Makrakes² stands, in the spirit of the *Philokalia*, the Eastern and Orthodox Papadiamantes. Particularly revealing, with regards to Papadiamantes—this “monastic in the world”—is his obituary of his fellow Skiathan, Hieromonk Father Dionysios, whom he sets apart from Makrakes' teaching and places in the Orthodox hesychastic tradition of the *Philokalia*. Indeed, our saintly writer emphasizes, in reference to the *Kollyvades*, that this “derisive epithet was unjustly bestowed on them by apterous individuals envious of the monastic life”³ and notes, in addition, that “among the *Kollyvades* Fathers were the senior Patristic scholars Makarios Notaras of Corinth, honored as a Saint, Athanasios of Paros and Nicodemos the prolific writer, Kyrillos, Elias, Arsenios, and other virtuous Fathers.”⁴

In another place, he explicitly states that Makrakes tried to imitate the practices of the *Kollyvades* Fathers with regard to frequent communion, though with no success, since his effort involved a barren ritualistic and external mimicry: “The scholar in question, ‘Makrakes,’ indeed followed certain of the ancient customs of a very venerable monastic community to which these monastics [*Kollyvades* Fathers] belonged. As such, they concurred only in part with regard to doctrines.”⁵ He explains Makrakes' failure to imitate the revivalist movement of the *Philokalia* in the following manner: “Amidst these *Kollyvades* Fathers, Makrakes wanted to mimic certain customs, such as frequent communion and others, but he failed, as usual. For it is not given to worldly

² L. Brangk, *Τὸ Μέλλον τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ στὸν Ἰδεολογικὸ Κόσμο τοῦ Ἀ. Μακράκη* (The future of Hellenism in the ideological world of A. Makrakes) (Athens: 1997), p. 111: “Makrakes...proves, in the end, to be anti-Hesychastic.”

³ A. Papadiamantes, *Ἄπαντα* (Complete works), ed. N.D. Triantaphyllopoulos, 5 vols. (Athens: 1981-1988), Vol. V, p. 330. Cf. the commentary by Z. Lorentzatos, *Μελέτες* (Studies) (Athens: 1994), Vol. I, pp. 235-258.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Papadiamantes, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 489-499.

individuals to mimic the customs of these ascetic men, who live in such an irreproachable way, nor is it possible for those living in the din of the world to be given such lofty and seemly things.”⁶

For the Skiathan writer, the scholar from Siphnos resembled a Protestant and not an Orthodox Christian. For all of the good that he acknowledged in him, both in his intentions and his character, nonetheless backing away, Papadiamantes reprimanded Makrakes for his Protestantism⁷ and, indeed, repeatedly so in his works. Our literary monastic in the world rejected the alien thinking of Makrakes with angry aversion: “What kinds of innovations, what foreign ideas, what prattle are these things? Are we all Protestants now?”⁸

In his correspondence notably, Papadiamantes is quite blunt and most acerbic: “The essence of Protestantism does not consist so much in the absence of honor towards Icons and Holy Relics as in the disregard for the Oecumenical Synods, the Fathers, and Tradition, and in the absolute freedom of any person to interpret the Holy Scriptures, as though such were sufficient. It is exactly this which Makrakes also does, such that the cities and villages are filled with those who interpret the Sacred Scriptures, each according to his fancy, without authority, without a blessing, and without ecclesiastical approbation.”⁹

The obvious and visible distinction between the rudimentary principles of Orthodoxy and Protestantism is contained in the setting of the boundaries of communal and individual agency. Protestantism is an individualistic religion, in which the individual holds complete priority, the individual believer coming first and the whole of life individualized. On the contrary, in Orthodoxy the communal, social, and coenobitic factors prevail. The Church is understood to be the Body of Christ and a Christian body. The

⁶ *Idem, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 330.

⁷ Father Theokletos Dionysiates speaks aptly about the “Orthodox Protestantism of Makrakes” (in Brangk, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30, wherein he mentions the anti-Makrakes position of Father Philotheos Zervakos).

⁸ Papadiamantes, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 148.

⁹ *Idem, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 163.

constitutive act of the Church, the Divine Eucharist, is called, and is, “Divine Communion,” and already in the primitive Christian tradition there was proclaimed this conviction: “unus christianus, nullus christianus,” that is, “a single Christian is no Christian.”

Such precisely is the Orthodox ecclesiastical self-understanding that Papadiamantes puts forth in opposition to Makrakes, whom he accused of Protestant misbelief, and his own ecclesiastical Orthodoxy he delineates in the following way: “I am a genuine child of the Orthodox Church, which is represented by her Bishops. Even if many of these should happen to be sinful, the Church alone is competent to judge this, and we must invoke solely the infinite mercy of God. We do not confuse the authority and unity of the Church with the sins of individual persons, as do you conventiclors.”¹⁰

For Papadiamantes, the Church is the Body of Christ, whereas for Makrakes what comes first and what will save man, humanity, Christianity, and Hellenism together is an association of Christians. It was, moreover, for this reason that throughout his life he founded many successive societies of a religious or political orientation.¹¹

¹⁰ *Idem, op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 165. Cf. our earlier study: M. Begzos, “Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης καὶ Ἀπόστολος Μακράκης: ‘Ἀειπλάνητος Διδάχος’ ἢ ‘Κοσμοκαλόγερος’?” (Alexandros Papadiamantes and Apostolos Makrakes: “Ever-Wandering Teacher” or “Monk in the World”?), *Νέα Κοινωνιολογία*, Vol. XX-VII (Spring 1999), pp. 32-42, which was prompted by this proposition expressed by the poet Demetres Kosmopoulos about the adversarial relationship between Papadiamantes and Makrakes.

¹¹ Cf. Brangk, *op. cit.*, pp. 313ff., 327, where a connection is made between Makrakes and later para-ecclesiastical organizations (“Brotherhoods of Theologians”) in the Greek Church, spearheaded by Archimandrite Eusebios Mathopoulos (1849-1929), originally a follower of Apostolos Makrakes and later (after his defection from Makrakism) founder of the “Zoe” Brotherhood (1907). Cf. C. Giannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση στὴ Νεώτερη Ἑλλάδα* (Orthodoxy and the West in modern Greece) (Athens: 1992), pp. 348ff, 359: “The first extra-ecclesiastical organization in Greece was established in September of 1876 by Apostolos Makrakes.” See the doctoral dissertation of Emmanuel Karageorgoudes (Department of Pastoral and Social Theology at the University of Thessalonike), supervised by Prof. Father Theodoros Zeses, *Χριστιανισμὸς καὶ Πολιτικὴ κατὰ τὸν Ἀπόστολο Μακράκη* (Christianity and politics according to Apostolos Makrakes) (Thessalonike: 1992), esp. pp. 105ff, where the “Makrakist” ancestry

However, in this way the Church becomes corrupted: the Body of Christ is reduced to a society of Christians. Thus, ecclesiality is abolished and a parachurch emerges. The relationship between the Church and such a para-ecclesiastical religious organization is directly analogous to the relationship between the state and a parastate (a state within a state), between the mainstream educational system and alternative education, between the economy and the shadow economy, between a body and an association, between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy, between the Hesychasm of the *Philokalia* and Protestant pietism, that is, between ecclesiality and religiosity.

The concrete differences here center on matters of priority: which comes first? Christ or the Christian, the Church or the individual? The body or the association? The Body of Christ or an association of Christians? Ecclesiality or religiosity? To wit, in the language of Papadiamantes: “What Metropolitan, what Synod, can ever recognize Mr. Makrakes as Orthodox, unless he comes forward in simplicity and purity, in humility, without sophistry or ulterior motives, unless he falls down before the Church and says, ‘I have sinned,’ rejects trichotomism and every other misbelief, and says that he sincerely repents? He has the audacity to parley with the Church on equal terms, or, still more presumptuously, this fickle dialectician, this roving orator, wishes to treat her as a handmaid, demanding that the Church herself, and not Makrakes, admit that she erred in denouncing him. What a spectacular fall! What a headlong dive! There is one thing, however, that this erratic ranter forgets: that the Arians, the Apollinarians, and the Origenists were far more eloquent, erudite, and eminent than he. . . . But in this case it is Mr. Makrakes who is obstreperous, since he is not obedient to the Church.”¹²

With the following ecclesiological logic, born of Orthodox self-awareness, the Skiathan holy man of our century writes about the Siphnian “Socrates of the nineteenth century”: “Every Christian

of the “Christian Democracy” movement and of the organizational initiatives of Augoustinos Kantiotes [Metropolitan of Phlorina—Trans.] is documented.

¹²Papadiamantes, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 164.

ought to be obedient to the visible representatives of the Church, be they sinners or saints, and not draw near Makrakes. Otherwise, there would be anarchy, and nothing else.”¹³ In another context he states his views more emphatically: “The podium of the Church is not like the podium of the court of law or the political platform, where there are speakers and contesters.... The podium of the Church—the Ambon—is strict, exclusive, and authoritative. One person alone speaks. It is presupposed that he utters not ideas, but conclusions—acknowledged, indisputable dogmas. There is no room, there, for extemporaneous fooleries. For this reason, that single person must be anointed by the Church; it befits him to be the mouth of the Church, since discussion, rejoinders, and interruptions are not permitted. He must, therefore, be a clergyman.”¹⁴

The specter of Makrakes and the shadow of Papdiamantes will remain constantly with us in every honest search for the truth about our nation in every form and at every time. The choice of one or the other is the personal choice of each one of us, as well as the collective responsibility of all of us.



¹³ *Idem, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 576.

¹⁴ *Idem, op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 148.