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## Greek Orthodoxy in Australia

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# GREEK ORTHODOXY IN AUSTRALIA

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## 1.0 Introduction

More than three million Greek Orthodox people exited Hellas, during the last four hundred years, in an effort to fulfil their personal ambition to amass wealth or to survive as the consequence of a long period of foreign domination and financial constraints. They have settled almost in every single neighbourhoods of the world, thus forming the Hellenic Orthodox Diaspora. The term *Diaspora* was first used by Thucydides to describe the exile (dispersion) of the people of Aegina by the Athenians (*Thucydides, Peloponnesian War, and II.27*). Greek Orthodox, despite their temporary or permanent expatriation to foreign lands for any reason, continued to maintain cultural, political, economic or social relations with their country of ancestry and descent. During this period, Greek expatriation has been an intense phenomenon claiming more than 40% of the Greeks residing, at any given time, outside the national borders of Greece or Cyprus. In 2007, of the 17,000,000 Greeks, an estimated total of 5,000,000 are residing in 150 different countries of the world.

During the last 1,700 years of Greek history and culture, three types of Hellenism emerged around the world: (a) Ethnic Hellenism: incorporating all those individuals who identify themselves as ethnic Greeks, by ancestry or descent.(b) Ecclesiastic or Religious Hellenism: incorporating all those individuals of non-Greek background, who identify themselves as Greek Orthodox, and (c) Cultural Hellenism: incorporating all those individuals of non-Greek background who either practice Hellenism or identify themselves with the Greek culture, thus developing manifestations of their Hellenized identity.

Contemporary Greek identity in Diaspora is comprised of four basic constituents, that is the Ancient Greek heritage; the Western heritage as this emerged via the Hellenized Renaissance; the Eastern Asian heritage as the consequence of the predominance of the Greek culture for 1300 years during the era of Byzantium. Finally, a significant component of the Greek identity has been the Greek Orthodox heritage and faith, as indeed, the Greeks, like the Jews, are ethnic groups however they are also religious bodies. It is perhaps this prevailing unique feature, namely the coincidence of ethnicity and religion that sustained Greek ethnicity in Diaspora.

### 1.1. The Eastern Orthodoxy

Over the last two millennia Greek Eastern Orthodoxy has been a religious, cultural and social symbol for the people of eastern European countries, the Balkans and

the Levant, including Cyprus. Orthodox Christianity as a faith and cultural legacy became fundamental for their national and cultural identity. Orthodoxy as an ingredient of identity defined the broader national identity of those countries in which Orthodox doctrines and literature seriously influenced their social, religious and political perspectives or Orthodox worshippers comprises the vast majority of their population.

The adherent of the Greek Church was for eleven centuries the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, having as its capital and co-capital the Greek cities of Constantinople and Thessalonike. Greek Orthodoxy was augmented throughout the sovereignty of the Empire becoming the core religion of all constituent peoples. The Empire itself adopted Greek as its official language, while its social structure was based on Greek classical principles. The Holy Byzantine Empire and the Greek Orthodox Church brought forth scholastic philosophy and theology via the patristic preaching, composed great hymns, produced the Byzantine architecture, iconography and encaustic engraving, enriched the mosaic art, developed both the cosmic as well as the ecclesiastic music, evolved new and original institutions, enriched the Roman law with the *Novellae*, introduced the monastic life and preserved the classical written monuments and masterpieces of the antiquity for the posterity, despite the initial destruction. Manuel Chrysoloras (1350-1415), preceding the fall of Constantinople (1453), settled and taught Greek classics in Florence, acting as an apostle of the distant eastern Hellenic glorious world. He was acknowledged as superior to every humanist in the West. The revival of learning in Europe has also emerged from the teaching of more than 500 Byzantine Greek humanist scholars who fled the catastrophe of 1453 and settled in Italy, advancing the revival of classical studies. Those Greek Orthodox scholars brought with them in West Europe the Greek learning, classical studies and an extensive knowledge about ancient Greek life.

The Byzantine Empire was also responsible for proselytizing the Slavs and the Bulgars. The Russians, although they inherited much from the ancient Scythians, they owe more to Greek Constantinople, from the time of Vladimir the Great (980-1015), the ruler of Kiev, who embraced Christianity in 988, intensifying cultural relations with the Byzantine Empire and especially with Constantinople. After the fall of Constantinople (29 May, 1453) to the Ottoman Turks, the Russian tsar Ivan III the Great (1462-1505) proclaimed himself successor of the Greek emperors of Constantinople, marrying an heiress of the Palaeologos Greek Orthodox rulers of Byzantium.

The Greek Church (Eastern Orthodoxy), as distinct to the Latin Church (Roman Catholic), began its separate evolution in 730 AD when the pope, theoretically dependent upon the emperor at Constantinople, was ordered to remove all religious statues from his churches. This was the time of the great Iconoclastic Controversy. The pope as the Head of the Catholic Church, refused to comply, even when the emperor sent a fleet to Italy with orders to bring him to Constantinople. However, the fleet was destroyed in a storm and the Emperor's orders were never materialized. The Greek Orthodox Church of the Byzantine Empire, based in Constantinople, dissenting on dogmatic (*filioque*) as well as canon principles and refusing to accept the papal supremacy, maintained an existence independent of the Latin Church ever since 1054. The crisis between Latin and Greek

Christendom worsened during the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073-1085) who set forth the liberation of the Church from lay and imperial control in his *Dictatus Papae*, claiming that the Church should be exalted above all men and human institutions, simply because it is a divine foundation and could not err in faith and morals. The schism between the two Churches was aggravated later on (1204) with the violent invasion of the papal Crusaders and the sack of Constantinople, followed by the vicious destruction of both the capital city and its religious monuments. The failure of the two Churches to reconcile their differences, following the Council of Basel, Ferrara (1438) and Florence (1439), despite the initial agreement and the signing of the bull *Laetantur Coeli*, deepened the dissention. The fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church initially (1439) compromised their pride and accepted papal supremacy, in their attempt to seek the help of the Latin States against the Ottoman Turks. However, their decisions later (1449) were renounced by the dominating ecclesiastic leadership of the anti-union forces within the Greek Orthodox Church. The later, perceived their differences with the Catholic Church so immeasurable that they ferociously opposed any union with the Latin Church under the pontiff's scepter, preferring to subdue to the tyranny of Ottoman Empire.

The Ottomans recognized the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople as the canonical spiritual and administrative leader of the Christendom under their rule, bestowing upon him precious rights and allowances. The Patriarch's authority extended over all sees and geographic provinces of the Ottoman Empire and was considered as the supreme spiritual leader by the entire Orthodoxy irrespective of tribal or ethnic ancestry and descent and the exclusive authority in faith and morals. Among the other Patriarchs of the Levant, namely the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch, his was first among equals. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch and his clergy had the power to try many kinds of civil cases rose among the Greek Orthodoxy but also in the discharge of ecclesiastical business. The practical significance of this elaborate organization was to elevate the Greek Orthodox Patriarch into a princely role, establishing the Patriarchate as the spiritual hegemony among ethnic Christians in Eastern Europe, including Russia. For nearly 500 years Greek Orthodoxy had become deeply entangled in the social, economic, intellectual and political life of the day for all other ethnic Orthodox peoples from Russia in the North to Jerusalem and Alexandria in the South.

## **2.0 Greek Orthodoxy in Australia – The Early Days**

From its first recorded appearance in Australia in 1892, under the reign of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Gerasimos, the Greek Orthodox Church had catered for all Orthodox people, not for Greeks alone. These included Greek migrants from non-liberated lands where Hellenism flourished, Arab speaking people, Syrians, Serbs, Romanians, Montenegrins, Macedoslavs and Russian Orthodox. All people of the Orthodox faith looked to the Greek Orthodox Church as their spiritual leader. Hence the prominence of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia did not result just from the numerical predominance of Greeks in Australia but from the traditional Greekness of those presiding at the Patriarchates in Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem. The presence and activities of clergymen from other Orthodox Churches that came to

Australia without the endorsement of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in the traditional and canonical way, and thus breached official protocol and the ecclesiastic canon law, caused restrained but firm opposition from the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The history of the Orthodox faithfuls in Australia commenced in March 1820, when a Russian Antarctic expedition put into the port of Sydney, where it stayed for three months. It was then, at Kirribilli Point in Sydney, where priest-monk Dionysios celebrated the first Byzantine liturgy in all its glory and colour (with colourful vestments church vessels and choral singing). Then, in 1868 another priest arrived in Clermont, Queensland. He was Constantine Arsenios, who was followed in 1896 by a Samian priest Dorotheos Bakaliaros, who visited the colonies of Victoria and NSW celebrating services, marriages and collective baptisms at the Anglican halls in East Melbourne and St. James respectively.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the absence of religious leaders, neither the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastic establishments in Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia, nor the existing Patriarchates appeared willing to establish a church in order to satisfy the religious needs of the first Orthodox Australian immigrants. It was therefore the lay community that undertook the responsibility to establish the Greek Orthodox religion in Australia. The services for the Greek Orthodox were conducted initially at night, following the dispersion of the Anglican congregation; however, by 1890 this was changed to a morning hour. The Greek Orthodox Easter rite in Melbourne was conducted by the Anglican clergy in the tradition of the Greek Easter at the Anglican Mission Room in East Melbourne in Arabic and Greek until the arrival of the first Greek Orthodox clergy.

Although the pioneer immigration of Orthodox to Australia commenced in the late 1840s, the first recorded permanent presence of the Greek Orthodox Church dates back only to the early 1890s. During this fifty years of wandering and gold rush immigration, Greeks, Russians and Syrians, being unshephered by a priest of their own communion, received initially the caring hospitality of the Anglican Church in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Available data attests that during this period the Roman Catholics were making “strenuous efforts to induce the Orthodox to attend their services”, while the Anglicans were offering to the Orthodox their churches and mission houses for religious services in their own tongue conducted mostly by a layman.

In 1889, the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, Field Flowers Goe (1887-1901), authorised Katarr Keamy, a prominent member of the Syrian Community and founding member of the Greek Orthodox Church of Melbourne to act as a reader during the services in which Goe himself was present and pronounced the blessing in Arabic for all Greek Orthodox. On certain occasions Keamy read Syrian services and either interpreted the sermon given by one of the Anglican priests, or preached from a sermon given to him by the Anglican Church during the preceding weeks.

In October 1891, Bishop Goe of Melbourne approached Patriarch of Jerusalem Gerassimos, initially through the office of the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, Bishop

Blyth and his assistant Reverend Theodore Dowling. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1892, Patriarch Gerassimos sent a letter to the Bishop of Melbourne with the Reverend Dowling, begging the Anglican Church to take “into your benevolent and spiritual solicitude the Orthodox immigrants, who are in complete privation and without ecclesiastical help and all those who are not unworthy of your aid, and to be good enough to receive them lovingly, kindly and meekly according to the teaching of Christ, in order that they may not err and fall into temptation, but that they may obtain the inheritance of heaven”. Gerassimos also gave permission to the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne for the Orthodox people to be baptized, married and buried by the Clergy of the Anglican Church according to the rites of the Orthodox Greek Church, with triple immersion in the name of the Trinity.

Following successful petition on the part of the Orthodox leaders, Reverend Dowling visited Australia urging the Patriarch of Antioch and the Patriarch of Jerusalem to appoint a shepherd for “these scattered flocks”. Dowling’s visit triggered excitement amongst the Orthodox people in Australia and raised hopes for securing an Orthodox priest. In October 1892 conferences began at the mission house of the Anglican church, which became the center of the Orthodox ethnicities, with the participation of the Greek Honorary Consul, Arthur Were, the Russian Consul Alex Poutiata, Sister Esther of the Anglican Church and the Greek and Arabic speaking community leaders K. Keamy, A. Maniakis and G. Matorikos. Letters were sent to Jerusalem, St. Petersburg and Constantinople requesting the appointment of an Orthodox priest. The offer of Theophanes, Archdeacon of Jerusalem, to appoint a married priest was refused by the Orthodox. In the meantime, Count Alex Poutiata died and the new Russian Consul, baron Ungern-Steinburg, guaranteed, without much success, that if a monk from the Russian Mission in Jerusalem were brought out, he should be paid by the Russian Government. In May 1894, the Russian Consul General in Jerusalem, B. Arsenieff, visited Patriarch Gerassimos requesting the appointment of an Orthodox priest. Gerassimos replied that although such an appointment for a few only Orthodox in such a remote place would incur immense expenditure, he was willing to send a priest, provided that he would receive a letter from the community of the Orthodox itself, guaranteeing his remuneration and accommodation for five years.

Patriarch Gerassimos in the meantime died and his successor Patriarch Damianos in October 1895 ordained a priest for the religious needs of the Orthodox people of Victoria. The ordained priest was Athanasios Kantopoulos, fluent in Arabic, Greek and Russian, whose arrival, however, was delayed for another two years. Thus, the official establishment of the Orthodox Church in Australia commenced in 1898 with the arrival of the Rev. Athanasios Kantopoulos, appointed in Melbourne by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem for the religious and spiritual needs of all Orthodox Christians. Five months later, Father Serafeim Phokas was appointed in Sydney concurrently with the establishment of the first Orthodox Church in Oceania, the Church of St. Trinity in Surrey Hills in 1898.

## 2.1. The Greek Orthodox Church in Oceania

The basis for the appearance of the Greek Orthodox Church and the first organised community's presence in the antipodes had been established in Melbourne mainly due to the existence of gifted leaders, the appointment of the first honorary consul of Greece, the active instigation of the Russian and Syrian Orthodox migrants and the genuine interest of the Russian Consul in Melbourne. However, the priests' relations with the community leaders were not at all harmonious. Often disputes would occur and a crisis would break out for trivial reasons. With the arrival of the Greek priests, a falling out also occurred with the Anglican Church. Rector Kantopoulos refused to recognize the baptisms which were conducted by the Anglican Church and on January 1899 enforced the re-baptism of Orthodox children in Melbourne. His actions were interpreted as "scandalous" and provocative by the Church of England and he was declared *persona non grata*. At the same time, rector Seraphim Phokas, who was appointed in Sydney, applied innovative and arbitrary methods in conducting sacraments. More important, however, was the dispute between the Arab and Russian speaking Orthodox people who formed a coalition with the irredentist Greeks, who remained Ottoman citizens, against the liberated Orthodox of the Greek Kingdom who had the organised Orthodox Communities of the two cities under their firm control. The former wanted the Greek communities in Australia, which also served as Church committees, to remain under the ecclesiastic jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The latter, though strengthened by the wealthy leaders of the community and the honorary consuls of Greece, had already convinced the Greek government and the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece to place them under their jurisdiction. The main reason for the dispute was the fact that the founding priests, emerging from a Patriarchate which served the Arab speaking followers, attempted to enforce the ideology of pan-orthodoxy in Australia, as they shepherded various ethnic groups. The Greeks refused to accept this policy, placing much importance on their Greek identity.

On 6 June 1903 the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, following the insistence of the Greek community leaders in Melbourne, placed Australia under its spiritual jurisdiction and appointed priest Nikandros Betinis to be their rector. As a result the conflict among the Greek Orthodox Christians continued even more intensely. The arrival of the second priest in Melbourne made matters worse. Under the pressure of the situation, Kantopoulos conducted services only for the congregation of the Arab speaking Orthodox Christians and took on the duties of a travelling priest in rural areas of Victoria until 1914 when he was forced to finally leave Australia and make his home in Alexandria, Egypt.

Betinis' arrival brought about a temporary diffusion amongst the Greek Orthodox people who had emigrated from the Greek Kingdom. The economic dependence of the priest on the community did not leave him with any margin to exercise authority. In 1910 Betinis was replaced by Archimandrite Theodoros Androutopoulos whose private life and liberal ideas did not find any allies amongst the leaders of the Greek community in Melbourne. Four years later he was replaced by Daniel Maravelis who tried without any

success to unify the regional brotherhoods within the Greek Community in Melbourne. In 1922 this peculiarly flamboyant clergyman was himself replaced by Irineos Kassimatis.

Priest Seraphim Phokas managed to secure and extend his position in Sydney by forming matrimonial ties with the influential members of the community, through his children, and his reign lasted until his resignation in 1913. The Church of Greece then appointed priest Demetrius Marinakis until 1923. Archimandrite Athenagoras Varaklas was then appointed and proved to be the most controversial clergyman of the pre-war period in Australia. Rector Archimandrite Germanos Iliou was appointed in Perth in 1914 and worked closely with the Kastellorizian Brotherhood to establish the church and the school.

Archimandrite Irineos Kassimatis in Melbourne and Athenagoras Varaklas in Sydney were the last clergymen that the Church of Greece appointed in Australia. In 1923, due to ecclesiastical unrest in the USA, the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis revoked the Synodic Patriarchal Tomos of 1908, which allowed the Church of Greece to have jurisdiction over the Orthodox people outside of the Greek state, and placed all Greek Orthodox Churches of the Diaspora under his spiritual jurisdiction. In January 1924 the new Patriarch Gregorios VII appointed Christophoros Knitis from Samos, an Oxford graduate, as the first Metropolitan of the Eastern Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

The pastoral reign of the first Metropolitan (1924–1928) was not smooth. The establishment of a Metropolis met with opposition from the Communities of Melbourne and Sydney in particular. They were influenced by the serving Orthodox clergy who extrapolated that with the appearance of the Metropolitan their authority and status would become somewhat limited over the congregation, their earnings would be reduced, and they would eventually be marginalized. The two Communities said their reasons for refusing to accept the establishment of a Metropolis were their inability to meet the cost of the Metropolitan's remuneration and the expenses incurred in the maintenance of the Metropolis. They also claimed that the Metropolis institution was forced upon them by the Patriarchate without any consultation with the Communities which financially supported the churches and the clergy. Furthermore, the establishment of a Metropolis by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople would transfer the centre of power of the Orthodox Community outside of Athens and consequently would greatly restrict the political power of the consular representatives of the Greek state in Australia.

Consequently, the arrival of Metropolitan Christophoros rendered acute the intra-communal strife and parochial rivalry, which contributed to the suppression of community development. The supporters of the community's unilateral authority (*koinotikoi*), who had been put aside by the membership turned quite openly against the Metropolitan. They embarked on a campaign of letters and representations to Greece, accusing the Metropolitan's private life and requesting his revocation. Several unhappy scenes followed in the *kafeneia* (coffee-houses) between the *koinotikoi* and the supporters of the Metropolitan (*metropolitikoi*). Fighting amongst Community members in the associations and cafes broke out, and the Metropolitan commenced a legal battle in civil courts against members of the Greek community whom he sued for alleged conspiracy against his morality. The Greek government, acting on the adverse reports and the advice



of consular representative and community leaders finally decided to request from Constantinople the dismissal of Metropolitan Christophoros.

The decision of the Greek government to intervene was, however, preceded by the fall-outs of a divided community in Sydney and the unfavourable coverage in the Anglophone media. The schism was institutionalized on 18 November 1926 when the new Council of the Greek Community of Sydney, seceded from the Australian Orthodox Metropolis and joined the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of America and Canada led by the defrocked Metropolitan Vassilios Komvopoulos. The sacraments conducted by the discharged and defrocked priests in Melbourne and Sydney were declared null and void by the Greek government and the children born from nullified marriages were not recognized by Greece.

Meanwhile, the Greek government declared an unrelenting campaign to recall Christophoros. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Greece, A. Michalakopoulos, assisted by the Minister of Education, sent an austere note to Patriarch Vassilios, demanding the immediate and irrevocable removal of the Orthodox Metropolitan of Australia. The reluctant Holy Synod and the Patriarch finally succumbed to the threats of the Greek government. However, rather than recalling Christophoros, they decided to transfer him at the Metropolis of Vizyi (4 February 1928). At the same time the Greek government requested the Patriarchate to appoint as the Episcopal Vestryman in Australia a graduate from Athens University, the Archimandrite Theophylactos Papatanasopoulos. Theophylactos arrived in Australia (1 March 1928) and dedicated himself to a campaign of bringing about calm and harmony. His administration was lenient and was a large factor in the appeasement of the crisis. He was very diplomatic in his handling of situations and cautious to maintain a balance.

On 22 November 1931, the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate elected Archimandrite Timotheos Evangelinidis, who was serving as its diplomatic representative (*nuncio*) and rector of the Greek Orthodox Church in Bucharest, Romania, to become the second Metropolitan of Australia and New Zealand (1932-1947). The selection of the new Metropolitan was made on the basis of his financial independence because any dependency on the communities for his remuneration would have made the exercise of his ecclesiastical authority subservient. Upon his arrival in July 1932, Metropolitan Timotheos announced the appointment of a twelve-member Clergy-Laity Council and urged the two councils to unite into one powerful community. On 21 May 1933, Metropolitan Timotheos validated all sacraments conducted by defrocked priests, announced the removal of the schism and called on community representatives and the media to work together so that harmony and unity in the community could prevail. Timotheos' leadership was successful. The achievement of harmony and peace should be attributed more to his administrative incompetence, his fear of responsibility and his procrastination, as well as to coincidences related to the economic crisis and the war, than to his leadership skills. Despite the economic well-being that the Greeks enjoyed, particularly after 1942 with the increased security, capital and resources brought to Australia by the American military presence, Timotheos was unable to establish the Church's authority more firmly. In 1946, Timotheos, requested and gained a transfer to the Metropolis of Rhodes in Greece, while ensuring his support for the election of Archimandrite Theophylactos as the third Metropolitan of Australia and New Zealand.

Metropolitan Theophylactos was enthroned in Sydney on 13 June 1948 and promised a Metropolis which would be economically powerful and independent and unscathed by criticisms. His pastoral reign coincides with the more tragic years of the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) and the ideological conflict of the Cold War which characterized community life in Australia between 1950 and 1958 and kept the Greeks in Australia divided and unable to consolidate their networks. His nature was moderate and diplomatically flexible. He had a polite though often excitable personality and carefully avoided indiscretions. Thus he established his authority by developing mature, political expertise, exercising flexible policies and taking advantage of his numerous political acquaintances.

Theophylactos' episcopacy was decisive for the early stages of the organization of the Metropolis in Australia and was responsible for the development of a community conscience in the leaders of the times. The commencement of government controlled mass migration from 1952 onward, the appointment of the first Greek Ambassador to Australia in March 1953, the progressive replacement of the honorary consuls with career diplomats, the significant increase in the number of communities and churches, the creation of the Federation of Greek Communities, and the convention of an All-Community Congress setting the boundaries of the Church-laity collaboration and questioning the authority of the Church were all about to be realized, during that time. His objective was for the Metropolis to take over and be responsible for the implementation of teaching programs in Greek language and culture to Greek children in Australia. Theophylactos demanded the transfer of Greek teaching staff to Australia, the shipment of books and supporting material and the financial support of the teachers. The teaching grant from the Greek government was also approved in July 1948 and funds were made available at the start of the new school year of 1949, with the assistance of the Australian Greek Association in Athens.

Theophylactos attempted to exercise his authority in the communities on issues of administration and management of the religious sacraments. Until the middle of 1951, the communities were responsible for the service of the church sacraments. In July 1951 Theophylactos issued a circular informing the Executive Committees of the Greek communities around the country that Greek settlers must refer to the Metropolis and not to the offices of the communities for their sacraments and other religious functions. The Metropolitan's move was motivated by objective and rational criteria relating to the development of migration. Since 1949 thousands of Greek women immigrants had begun to arrive and the number of sacraments increased greatly. With the centralization of the Church's administration, Theophylactos was endeavouring to generate substantial income to enable the Archdiocese to become financially independent and consolidate its authority over the community.

The Metropolitan's administrative performance, however, was somehow inadequate, mainly due to the disorganization which he inherited from his predecessors. He was characterized as terribly slow in reaching decisions and appeared hesitant and conservative in his approach to change. He was not prepared for the mass immigration which started during his pastorate and the consequential rapid changes to the demographic composition of the community. From time to time the tension of the ideological schism, the massive arrivals of Greek migrants, the bitter conflict of the

Macedonian issue and the increase in social problems, mainly gambling and the abandonment of families, added to Theophylactos concerns. His friendly co-operation and his missionary acceptance of the Orthodox Serbs and Poles, after 1949, was considered to be 'unpatriotic' by the conservatives and their radical media who viewed it as damaging to the national interest of the community to collaborate with the communists. The functional decline characterizing the communities, which worsened with the increased intake of migrants after 1954, the ideological conflict amongst the clubs and the lack of any structural achievements which could have helped in the harmonious and smooth adjustment of new migrants to their new environment, caused the Greek media to hold Metropolitan Theophylactos responsible for this situation, accusing him of not guiding the communities to build the necessary infrastructure for the new migrants. The lack of adequate numbers of churches and priests was apparent, despite the community and Church administration boasting about adequate infrastructure and sufficient resources to meet the needs of the increased number of migrants.

Patriarch Athenagoras, as ex-Archbishop of America, having clear notions and views concerning structural organization of the communities of the Diaspora, encouraged Theophylactos to go ahead with the creation of new parishes in the form of communities. The visits of the latter to Greece (1956 and 1957), his deliberations and conferences with public servants and politicians in Athens, his continuous discussions with the Department of Foreign Affairs, and his talks with the clergy in Greece, illustrate that Constantinople had decided to implement the American organizational model in Australia; that is, giving complete power to the Church over the communities and thus unilateral control of the migrants. The only obstacle to this course of action was Metropolitan Theophylactos whose thirty-year stay in Australia and his moderate character discouraged him from a strong encounter with the communities. The organised communities, however, were equally reluctant to relinquish the power they had built up within their institutionalized community structures, and preferred to place themselves within the State legal system rather than surrender their power to the Metropolis, even if this meant that they would operate in the form of church councils. On the other hand, Theophylactos, more than any other Greek Orthodox Church leader in Australia, endeavoured not to disturb the balance between Church and communities. The policy of dialogue and communication which he established with the communities was based on the belief that the Church was only responsible for the spiritual, charitable and missionary service of the faithfuls but not for their administration and management.

Theophylactos, the spiritual leader of 170,000 Orthodox Christians in Australia and New Zealand who had the clergy and the congregation of the Russian, Ukraine and Syrian Churches under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and who travelled nine out of twelve months in the year to meet his followers in person, died in Melbourne in a car accident (2 August 1957), the city in which he lived and which he loved more than any other. He was the first and only Metropolitan who died and was buried in Australia, himself also a settler like his spiritual children.

Following the death of Theophylactos, the Archbishop of Thyatira and Central Europe, Athenagoras Kavadas, was temporarily appointed Patriarchal Exarch of Australia. Athenagoras was a trustworthy collaborator of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras from the time of his pastorate in the USA. Upon his arrival in Australia, he implemented a

program of re-organization and reconstruction of the Greek community with the Metropolis as its centre. With the influx of Greek migration, the new program involved the establishment of new suburban ecclesiastical communities with the active participation of more community members. This program aimed to decentralize the management of organised Hellenism so the Church could benefit financially and in terms of organization. The new system also aimed to weaken the old community organisations which had not acted in time (1952–1958) to establish new communities themselves in various suburbs of the capital cities where the new migrants were settling in great numbers, and thus to place them under their jurisdiction. The establishment of new and independent communities would strengthen the authority of the Archdiocese, as it would maintain the right of intervention and also maintain flourishing financial opportunities created from the payments of charges for performing sacraments and special ceremonies and a commission from the church's revenue. The ultimate target, however, was to curb the resistance from the organised laity community groups and to impose the Metropolis as the sole and undisputed authority of Hellenism in Australia.

On the 25th of February 1959, the Bishop of Nanzianzos Ezekiel Tsoukalas was elected fourth Metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Church in Oceania. Meanwhile, with the upgrading of the Metropolis of Australia to Archdiocese (1 September 1959) the ecclesiastical dominions of the Far East, Korea and Japan which used to be part of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Oceania, were re-attached to Oceania. His pastorship was incident-ridden, not because of his conservative policies but mainly because he was called to implement the program of parish sectioning which was initiated by Athenagoras Kavadas. Ezekiel, of a simple and almost isolate nature with a strong anti-materialistic attitude and hermit-like life was forced into taking part in some of the most severe confrontations which were tearing the Greek community apart. The immediate target of the Metropolitan was the establishment of communities which were dependent on and supervised by the Metropolis, and the running of schools controlled exclusively by the Metropolitan. The dispatch of school books from Greece, the appointment of teachers and the financial support for the schools would all be under the control of the Metropolis's welfare program. The immediate target was the corrosion and eventual disintegration of the Federation of Greek Communities as well as the weakening of the old communities.

The word *koinotita* (community) took on an interesting and remarkable ambiguity and difference in meaning when the communities' and the Archdiocese's uses of it were compared. The post-war suburban communities organised themselves to serve the laity, not the Church, and to encompass the educational, cultural and political needs of their members. To the Archdiocese, however, new suburban communities were established as regional parishes, in order to serve the Church. The implementation of the program of creating new communities was met with strong opposition from the Greek national representatives and the community leaders. Despite the approval by the Greek government of the Patriarchal program and the new Constitutional Charter of the Archdiocese, the confusing instructions relating to these given by the Greek government to its consular representatives in Australia created a severe communication breakdown between them and the Church hierarchy. The Constitution which caused the split between the Church and the old community organisations in Australia was rejected by the Federation because it would take away their right to establish new communities, as the

Metropolis now was taking 'the exclusive right to establish and organize new churches and new Greek Orthodox Communities as well as their branches all under its jurisdiction'.

In an attempt to encourage the demand for new churches, the Archdiocese started to receive applications in big numbers from Greek Christians and 'much to her [the Church] surprise', these applications came from all over the country. The contents in the application forms were all the same. The applicants (usually in big numbers of 600) were asking for services to cover their religious needs, giving the long distance and the large number of migrants within their (exaggerated) territorial boundaries as the reason for allocating top priority to their application. The Archbishop answered all these applications in the same way: he approved all of them and blessed the establishment of the new community 'whose aim was to have a church and a school to perpetuate our Holy Faith and our Hellenic-Orthodox ideals'. He also secured the geographical boundaries of each new community, arranged for their smooth relations with the other communities, and guaranteed their *status quo*.

The Archbishop's policy was condemning the old communities into demographic reduction and financial death. All new churches now should be independent community organisations. However, with their right to establish new churches taken away from them, the old communities were exposed demographically and financially to the consequences of the internal migration of the Greek population within Australia, that is, from the big inner suburban areas where the old communities were established to the outer suburban municipalities where Greek migrants were settling after 1970. The Archbishop wrote personally to his faithful priests urging them to encourage the establishment of new churches and communities in the wider metropolitan areas of Melbourne and Sydney, and to report to him any movements of the community leaders.

The dramatic culmination of the split between the Church and the communities erupted on 9 June 1960 when the Management Council of the Greek Community of Adelaide decided to split from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia. This 'rebellion' was followed by the Communities of Newcastle, Melbourne and Sydney. Ezekiel's response was severe: he excommunicated the involved leaders and defrocked their priests. The 'schism' had taken on ideological dimensions of dogma and spread to the country towns in which Greeks had settled. The excommunications did not bring the expected results and the harshness of the punishment made the 'Spiritual Courts' laughable, the masses more fanatical, and widened the schism.

The biggest problem concerned the invalidation of ceremonies and sacraments officiated over by the defrocked and non-canonical priests. Months before the crisis the Federation hierarchy contacted various other Independent Orthodox Churches, namely the Antioch, Syrian and the Serbian Churches, seeking their collaboration, but without success because they did not want to risk their good relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate by co-operating with the leaders of the breakaway communities. Similar approaches to Orthodox Bishops were made by Ezekiel, managing to get an undertaking from them to freeze out and isolate the 'rebel' communities. This forced isolation marginalized the communities' leaders and drove them to seek spiritual guidance from the Old-Calendarists and other non-canonical churches. The confrontation between the Archbishop and the old communities continued until 1968, when he temporarily resigned his post, without showing signs of reconciliation.

The temporary appointment of Patriarch Exarch Iacovos Tzanavaras (1968-1969) attempted, with little success, to reduce the causes creating the rift between the Church and communities and which restrained the progress of Hellenism. He had correctly diagnosed that the major causes of destruction were the continuing Cold War, the lack of communication and cohesiveness between Greek community organizations and the aloofness of some clerics who were pushing the dissenting communities of the Archdiocese to form a 'third situation', completely separate from the rebel old communities. Iacovos avoided comments of a political nature, making sure not to implicate the Archdiocese in new controversies. He approached the leadership of the dissenting post-war communities and compelled these clergymen who stood as pillars of the Ezekiel's regime to reduce their arrogance which was creating animosity, and he encouraged the leaders of the old communities to play a more vital role in the formation of a new era.

Ezekiel's re-appointment (16 August 1969) augmented the dissention. He cancelled the Mixed (Laitly-Clergy) Council of Victoria because he could not control it and went on to change systematically the composition of the parishioner councils and the benevolent brotherhoods. After July 1972, Ezekiel lost any interest in Australia. Without zest and ideas, without sincere willingness to lead his flock in Australia, he felt alienated in his own territory. The intra-community crises in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney and the continual campaign of the Press against the Archdiocese did not help his psychological condition. On 3 August 1974, the Patriarchal Synod elected Ezekiel Metropolitan of Pisidia. Ezekiel, obviously disappointed and bitter about his appointment to Metropolitan of Pisidia, nevertheless accepted the decision of the Holy Synod with some relief. He was undoubtedly the Hierarch who strengthened and enhanced the Archdiocese in Australia. He lived through the biggest part of the mass immigration of Hellenism and implemented the program of the Patriarchate under the most difficult circumstances which were created by the ideological fanaticism of that era. The majority of the Greeks in Australia accepted his 'promotion and transfer' with relief because they were looking forward to this change.

In summary, the main characteristics of Ezekiel's pastoral leadership (1959-1974) were:

- a) The shift of authority away from the previous joint arrangement between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek diplomats.
- b) The formation of new community organisations dependent continuously and irrevocably on the Archdiocese. The drive of the Church to take over single-handedly the political rule of the Greeks in Australia cannot be attributed to Ezekiel's spite but to a certain strategy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate which aimed to regain power and authority outside and beyond its narrow ecclesiastic space of Asia Minor.
- c) He adopted the policy of supporting the social and political pursuits of the Greek ruling class in Australia. His tendency was also to deliberately inspire feelings of danger among the people in order to keep them united around him and dependent on him. His continual, almost 'sales pitch' level of references to Byzantium, the Ecclesiastic Rules and the unwritten rights of the Church, were used as a shield of the mono-semantic and

undisputed authority of the Archbishop among the Greek Orthodox members, overpowering both the communities and the Greek consular authorities.

d) He has been the architect of the ecclesiastic communities, the builder of most community and church buildings and church schools. He was the Orthodox leader that consolidated the power of the Church establishing the Clergy-Laity Congress, first held in Sydney (1961), adopting the Mixed Council of Clergy and Laity and implementing a spiritual and educational program.

On 13 February 1975, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected the Metropolitan of Militoupolis Stylianos Harkianakis as the fifth Archbishop of Australia. His early days were confined to religious and cultural matters, being reluctant to infringe upon the rights of the communities. A man of significant education and a charismatic poet inspired many to believe that an era of harmony will prevail in the Greek community. Soon after, many became restless as a result of the power the Archbishop continued to accumulate to himself. Besides, there was a need to draw clear divisions between the duties and rights of clergymen and laymen, so that neither could dictate to the other. However, by 1982, Archbishop Stylianos curbed the authority of the ecclesiastical Communities and introduced the Parish system as the only appropriate form of Greek community organization in Australia.

During his long term in office, the Archbishop increased the status of the Greek Orthodox Church among the other ethnic Orthodox Churches and secured the financial and administrative welfare of the Archdiocese, while he remained Hellenocentric in his devotion to the Greek language and culture. However, in the same period, the number of Greek Communities reacting against his authoritarianism and pledging their ecclesiastic affiliation to non-canonical Orthodox Churches increased. Any form of communication with these dissenting communities, even with the discreet participation of the Greek State or the Patriarchate was rejected. Stylianos' correspondence with the Greek political leadership in Athens and his ecclesiastical leader, the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople revealed a contentious and insubordinate spirit. Most Greek State and Patriarchal efforts to remedy conditions in Australia were viewed as unwarranted interference. Nor should one overlook the preferred method of this Archbishop who systematically attempted to bring into disrepute all those individuals who distanced themselves from him or those who disagreed with his way of governing. As a matter of fact, from 2001, a state of "no-communication" prevailed between him and his supervising authority the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Greek Orthodox Church was denounced by many Greek leaders for pursuing a policy of "rule or ruin", despite devout reassurances to the contrary. These tendencies created serious dissension leading to ecclesiastic schism and causing intra-community conflict, frequently dragging along the Greek and Cypriot diplomatic representatives and their governments.

Stylianos' ecclesiastic dominion was augmented with the increase in the number of churches and parishes, while provisions were made to promote adequately educated Australian-born and English-speaking clergymen with the establishment of the St. Andrew's College of Theology. He further augmented the power of the Archdiocese founding new parishes and registering them in the *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Property Trust*, thus excluding the presence and the authority of the laity from the Church. Another important initiative of significance for inter-Orthodox unity and interaction with the non-

Orthodox, instigated by Stylianos was the establishment of the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Churches in Australia (SCCOCA) in September, 1979. In February 1980, delegates of the Greek, Russian, Antiochian, Serbian and Romanian Orthodox Churches decided to work together on issues of religious education, youth ministry, university chaplaincies, ecumenical dialogue, training for the clergymen, establishing a permanent secretariat and maximizing consultation and co-operation. Nevertheless, there are only limited aspiring strategies on the issues of apostolic and pastoral approach by the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia. The persisting dissension at intra-community and intra-Orthodox levels, the scarcity of well-trained Orthodox clergy to adopt new approaches, and the intermittent involvement of the Archdiocese on contemporary socio-cultural issues relevant to the second and subsequent generations of Greek Australians are the main challenges that its leadership will be faced in the years to come.

## **2.2. The Organization of the Greek Orthodox Church**

The Greek Orthodox Church estimated to approximately 400,000 constitutes the largest component of the Orthodoxy in Australia estimated to 650,000 faithfuls. There are 152 regional and urban Greek Orthodox parishes and ecclesiastic communities administering Greek afternoon and catechetical schools in Australia. The highest proportion of Orthodox migrants settled in Victoria, which continues to have the highest number of Orthodox in Australia, estimated to 455,000. However, only 92% of the foreign born and only 64% of the Australian born citizens originated from Orthodox countries stated Orthodoxy as their religion. In 2001, the Greek Orthodox settlers comprised 6.7% of the total population in Victoria. In a number of municipalities within Melbourne and Sydney metropolitan region, the Orthodox is numerically either second or third largest Christian denomination. For example, the Orthodox Christian people comprised numerically the second strongest religious denomination after the Catholics in the suburbs of Darebin (14.1%), Moreland (9.8%), Whittlesea (20.4%) and in Brinbank (11.8%) in Melbourne.

However, during the last 20 years, according to the Australian Census, the number of people identifying with Greek Orthodoxy began to decline. In 1981, the Census recorded 421 281 Greek Orthodox, while the 1996 figure recorded 361 057 people and in 2002, the actual number recorded was further reduced to 345 456. The numerical decline could be interpreted by the fact that the foreign born Greek Orthodox are aging due to the complete termination of the European migration and also by the fact that the Church is losing the loyalty of the second and consequent generations members.

The Greek Orthodox Church comprises five Archdiocesan districts with three assistant bishops and offices in the capital cities. Being a conservative hierarchical entity, all spiritual and administrative issues are determined and decided by the Archbishop alone. Through the frequent convention of the Clergy-Laity Congress, to which the parishes appoint both their clergy and lay delegates, the Archbishop formulates and



legitimizes his policies on spiritual and socio-economic matters. The authority of the ruling Archbishop is also expressed by his Auxiliary Bishops, who have no rights in decision making matters and an Archdiocesan Council consisting from 12 priests and 24 lay persons of his absolute preference. The congregation in the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia plays only an executive role in assisting the pastoral projects conducted by the Archdiocese and administering, together with the clergymen, its charitable, educational and religious bodies. The Archdiocese publishes a monthly periodical (*Voice of Orthodoxy*), a mainstream newspaper (*The Tribune*), produces weekly radio programs in the major urban centers and organizes biennial national youth conferences. The Archdiocese also runs her own Greek Welfare Centers, the St. Basil's Homes for the Aged and Chaplaincy services at certain universities. Most parishes administer their own afternoon schools and ladies auxiliaries, while fewer maintain youth and recreational organizations. Although all Greek Orthodox daily schools in Australia were established by ecclesiastic communities and the laymen, the Archdiocese maintains a spiritual bond contesting a position of status in their School Councils. The Greek Orthodox Church, working closely with the Greek community organisations, portrayed a vibrant social face in Australia, establishing temples of faith, recreational halls and centers, school buildings and welfare institutions, geriatric hospitals and youth clubs, thus developing the network to meet the various needs of the Greek Orthodox.

However the most impressive achievement of the Greek Orthodox Church has been the establishment of the St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College in Sydney at tertiary level in 1986. The establishment of a higher institution for clergy and lay teachers, providing them with instruction in the Orthodox Faith has been the aspiration of the Greek Orthodox Metropolitans since 1934. Metropolitan Timotheos had the initial vision but neither the resources nor the community support. Archbishop Ezekiel, thirty years later, proposed the establishment of the preparatory seminary in Australia "so we may have local clergy who, apart from anything else, would be in a better position to understand the country that we live in, the environment and the attitude of our Australian-born children". He established a foundation account and collected the initial funds for the implementation of his vision. However, it was Archbishop Stylianos who successfully moved in 1981 for the immediate realization of the project, the first Orthodox tertiary college in the Southern Hemisphere. The College commenced its operation in February 1986 as a member institution within the Sydney College of Divinity of the University of Sydney.

The nature of organization of the Greek Orthodox Church as a hierarchical institution ensures its longevity and efficiency as provider of pastoral and spiritual care as well as of Greek language education and culture in Australia. In the absence of a middle class during the first fifty years of Greek migration which could act as the socio-economic backbone of the community and the key stakeholder in enhancing the community members' aspirations for consolidation and internetting, the Greek Orthodox Church covered the vacuum successfully. Despite the severe intra-community dissensions, the institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese benefited the ambitions of the Greek community members in maintaining their ethnolinguistic objectives and promoting their concept of belonging and participating in the Greek culture and identity.

The role of the Greek Orthodox Church in the areas of health, mental welfare and social protection, especially for the elderly has been profoundly important. The growing aging pace of Greece-born settlers (82% of them are currently over the age of 60) necessitated the establishment of a vast infrastructure, which was successfully undertaken by both the Archdiocese and the laity.

The decisive influx of Greek migration generated the genesis of a culturally and socio-economically robust ethnic community, the second largest after the Italian, well impended into the very texture of the Australian society. The Greek Orthodox Church, while it remained loyal to the Hellenic heritage, yet it became also an integral part of the multicultural diverse Australian reality. A self-effacing clergyman, Miltiades Chryssavgis once epitomized the contribution of the Greek Orthodoxy in Australia as follows: “The cultural and spiritual influence of the Orthodox Church on Greek Australian community life is a truly existential enrichment that transcends the narrow limits of conventional religion and embraces the fullness of life as God’s gift to the entire world: baptisms and weddings, dances and songs, food delicacies and social functions are all aspects of culture in which the whole family participates in a spirit of joyful celebration. Guided by such a cosmic vision of life, in which no sharp line of distinction is drawn between secular and divine, Greek Australians are increasingly becoming involved in the Australian society and the spiritual advancement of the community at large”.

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