

20. Athos and the Enlightenment

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The idea of 'Athos beyond Athos' evokes primarily a movement in space – the transmission of Athonite influence through persons and ideas to Orthodox lands beyond the seas. 'Athos beyond Athos', however, can also be a movement within, the transition inside the culture of the Holy Mountain to modes of thought and feeling extraneous to the Athonite spiritual tradition. The eighteenth century is marked by such movements within the Holy Mountain, which was thereby exposed to secular thought and to ideas emanating from western and central Europe. In conventional Athonite history this century is mainly connected with some protracted controversies which agitated monastic life: the debate over continuous communion and the conflict over the day of the commemoration of the dead, known as the controversy of the Κολυβάδες. This was also the age of the revival of the tradition of hesychastic spirituality and 'neptic' theology, connected with the labours of Sts Makarios of Corinth and Nikodemos the Hagiorite in the later part of the century. The same period, however, is marked by a number of other developments in Athonite history, the most important of which was the conscious attempt to rectify what was felt to have gone astray in monastic life by the initiation of a movement of return to cenobitic monasticism. Linked with the initiative of the patriarchate of Constantinople, under Patriarch Gabriel IV in 1783, to issue a new charter for the organization of monasticism on the Holy Mountain,¹ the return to cenobitic life was initiated shortly thereafter, beginning with the Monastery of Xenophontos in 1784. Several other monasteries followed in the next twenty years.

The concern of the Church with the recovery of the ancient ethos of Orthodox monasticism on Athos could be interpreted as part of a broader

¹ Smyrnakis, *Tò "Άγιον Όρος*, 156–58. The conditions that induced these changes are described in an official document issued by the Community of the Holy Mountain. See *ibid.*, 152–55.

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policy of ecclesiastical reconstruction and reorganization of the resources of Orthodoxy in the Ottoman empire, which can be seen to unfold from around 1750 to the outbreak of the French Revolution. In addition to the initiation of the cenobitic reorganization of Athonite monasticism, the programme of Orthodox reconstruction in the forty years leading up to 1789 involved two other major initiatives: one was a pastoral revival that mostly involved a sustained interest in strengthening and modernizing education; the other was the assumption of wide-ranging missionary activity designed to stem the inroads of Islamization among rural Orthodox populations in the Balkans. Finally a fourth component of the programme could be seen in a policy of *rapprochement* with Russia, pursued by the patriarchs of the mid-eighteenth century, especially Seraphim II (1757–61). What seems to emerge from such a reading of the fragmented and rather anecdotal evidence that constitutes the historical record for this period, is a policy of closing the ranks of Orthodoxy, motivated by the pressure of heterodox propaganda, both Catholic and Protestant, among the Orthodox of the Ottoman empire. Particularly interesting in respect of this policy – if such it was – is the close connection of everything that took place with Mt Athos. Obviously, the patriarchs were well aware of the Holy Mountain's pivotal position in the world of east European Orthodoxy and attempted to capitalize on it.

The sources are, of course, stubbornly silent or non-existent: we can suspect, surmise and suppose, but we cannot confirm or document the content of the *haute politique* transacted by the leadership of the Church. But there is another kind of evidence: that supplied by the movement of people – generally individuals of high calibre and talent who make up the *dramatis personae* of history. There is a great deal of such movement in the Orthodox world in the eighteenth century with Mt Athos as its epicentre. Scholars, preachers, mystics and saints moved continuously in and out of Athos and, because they were all strong personalities who left their mark on Athonite history, we possess just about enough information to try to recover the logic of their movements. On this level, too, it seems reasonable to link these movements and motives with the broader programme of strengthening Orthodoxy. Most of those whom we are going to encounter in this story appear to work for the Orthodox cause implementing the programmes of patriarchs and visualizing a better future for the community of the true faith. But, along the way, as they ventured into the world and retreated to the Mountain seeking replenishment of their spiritual resources in order to continue, they gradually and imperceptibly brought into Athos the secular learning and outlooks of the 'world'. And this is where the crisis for the Athonite conscience might begin.

Let me illustrate what I am trying to convey by putting on to the Athonite stage some of these *dramatis personae*. Soon after his accession to the

ecumenical throne in 1748, Cyril V felt that the church and the Orthodox *genos* were in need of a proper school of higher education – an academy of both religious and philosophical learning. The school at Patmos which, under the teacher Makarios Kalogeras had been the foremost centre of Orthodox higher education in the Greek-speaking world in the early eighteenth century, had fallen into decline. A new school under the aegis of the Church was needed for the higher education of the Orthodox in the empire. To this end the patriarch and the synod, with a decision in the year 1749, gave their blessing to an initiative emanating from Prior Meletios and the brotherhood of Vatopedi monastery, the leading monastery of Athos at the time, to establish a school of higher learning in the vicinity and at the monastery's expense. The supervision of the school was entrusted to Prior Meletios. This is how the Athonite Academy came into being.² The patriarch, however, fell from the throne in March 1751 without completing his programme. When he returned in September 1752 for a relatively longer patriarchate (ending in January 1757), he resumed his earlier project with even greater zeal. On 7 July 1753 the patriarch and the synod of Constantinople appointed Eugenios Voulgaris as the school's chief teacher to instruct in philosophy and the mathematical sciences, as well as theology and ethics.³

This was a remarkable choice. At this time Voulgaris was the leading spokesman for cultural change in the Greek world. He had introduced the teaching of modern philosophy and science into the schools of Ioannina and Kozani in the 1740s and had embroiled himself in serious ideological confrontations with the supporters of Aristotelianism and conventional education in Ioannina. Yet the Great Church selected him with a clear mandate to change and reform the programme of the school at Vatopedi: in the words of the patriarchal *sigillium* appointing him he was charged to ameliorate matters 'ἀλλοιώσεσσι τε καὶ μεταρρυθμίσεσσι' ('with both changes and alterations'). Eugenios thus arrived on Athos with the full confidence

² See the patriarchal *sigillium* establishing the school, dated May 1750, edited by Ioakeim Phoropoulos in *EkAl* 20 (1900), 395–98. For 'vues d'ensemble' of the Athonite Academy see especially, Ph. Meyer, 'Beitrage zur Kenntnis der neueren Geschichte und des gegenwertigen Zustandes der Athosklöster', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1890), 554–60, which can be considered the earliest reliable scholarly account and, *inter alia*, Christophoros Ktenas, *Tà γράμματα ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὁρει καὶ ἡ Μεγάλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησία* (Athens, 1928), 24–31 and *idem*, "Ἀπαντα τὰ ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὁρει ἱερὰ Καθιδρύματα (Athens, 1935), 340–48; both works are interesting for their polemical style. For its literary merit, see Z. Papantoniou, "Ἅγιον Ὅρος", (Athens, 1934), 133–35. On the eighteenth-century background of Athos more generally see F.W. Hasluck, *Athos and its Monasteries* (London, 1924), 44–48. The closest to a full survey of the history of the Athonite academy is the essay by A. Angelou, *Τὸ χρονικὸ τῆς Ἀθωνιάδας*, *Nea Estia* 74 (Christmas 1963), 84–105.

³ The text in Smyrnakis, *Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος*, 143–47.

of the highest authorities in the Church and embarked on a five-year effort to create a college of higher learning on the Mountain.

His teaching was initially marked by great success. He took over a small monastic seminary with about twenty students and turned it into a great academy with two hundred scholars. In line with his mandate he taught mostly philosophy, especially logic and metaphysics, and natural science. In a letter Voulgaris addressed in 1756 from Athos to the deacon Kyprianos the Cypriot in Constantinople, he offers a quite lyrical account of the school's natural surroundings and its intellectual life.⁴ He makes no reference to religious training, but speaks mostly of instruction in the classics and philosophy making specific mention of Demosthenes's Philippic speeches, Homer's *Iliad*, Thucydides, Herodotus, Plato's theological works and Aristotle's diverse writings on natural philosophy. Among the systems of modern philosophy, he informs his correspondent, the French, the German and the English were taught, by which he apparently means his teaching of Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff and John Locke. These were the protagonists among the moderns in his monumental *Logic*, which he published ten years later, but which he was using in manuscript as a manual in his lectures on Athos.⁵

Voulgaris was not the only teacher at the Athonite academy. Two others were charged with the teaching of more basic courses, especially instruction in grammar. These were Neophytos Kafsokalyvitis and Panayiotis Palamas. Neophytos Kafsokalyvitis was the leading Athonite scholar of his time, an authority on grammar renowned throughout the Greek world. He had been the original choice of the Vatopedi brotherhood to head the academy when the school was first founded in 1749 and had apparently stayed on after the reorganization in 1753 but retired from the school soon after Voulgaris's arrival. His early withdrawal saved his future relationship with Voulgaris, who, despite his subsequent trouble with the grammarians at the school,

⁴ The letter was first published by N. Logadis in *Παράλληλον φιλοσοφίας και Χριστιανισμού* (Constantinople, 1830), 82–91. It has since been reprinted repeatedly, occasionally in fuller versions. Many years after he left the Holy Mountain Eugenios still retained a vivid memory of his experiences there, which he recorded in a comment in his edition of Virgil's *Georgics*. See *Georgicorum Publii Virgilii Maronis libri IV studio ac labore Eugenii de Bulgaris* (St Petersburg, 1786), Book I, 46.

⁵ Eighteenth-century Athonite codices which transmit manuscript versions of Voulgaris's *Logic* include Xenophontos ms. 73 (Lambrou 775), Gregoriou ms. 103 (Lambrou 650) and St Panteleimon ms. 223 (Lambrou 5730). Of special interest is the Gregoriou Codex 103 which is based on Voulgaris's lectures on logic at Kozani in 1746 and thus transmits possibly the earliest version of his views. On the philosophical content of his teaching at the Athonite Academy see also Meyer, *Haupturkunden*, 76. On his teaching of Locke in particular see P.M. Kitromilides, 'John Locke and the Greek intellectual tradition: an episode in Locke's reception in south-east Europe', in G.A.J. Rogers, ed., *Locke's Philosophy. Content and Context* (Oxford, 1994), 222–25.

considered Neophytos one of his friends.⁶ The novelty of Voulgaris's curriculum of courses, and probably also his general attitude, soon led to friction and eventually to conflict. The student body was divided into four factions. Voulgaris's main opponents were the followers of Panayiotis Palamas, the teacher of grammar, who turned against him ostensibly on account of his philosophical teaching. Thus Voulgaris was faced with a replay on Athos of the polemic he had encountered in the 1740s at Ioannina from Balanos Vasilopoulos and his followers because of his philosophical and scientific views. In a letter of 25 February 1756 to Cyril V, Voulgaris warned that the academy was in trouble and appealed to the patriarch to save it. Feeling abandoned by the patriarchs who had brought him to Athos, and blaming ex-Patriarch Cyril V himself for actively undermining him, Voulgaris eventually resigned in 1759.⁷

This was more or less the unhappy end of the experiment with secular enlightenment on Athos. The academy lingered on after Voulgaris. A new patriarch of Constantinople, Seraphim II, attempted to save the school by persuading Nicolaos Zerzoulis, a Newtonian natural philosopher from Metsovo, to succeed Voulgaris.⁸ Zerzoulis did not last long on Athos either. In 1761 he returned to Metsovo and thence was invited to Jassy as head of the local princely academy. After Zerzoulis the academy closed down, as the remaining students flocked to Constantinople where Voulgaris had assumed new teaching duties in the Patriarchal Academy until April 1761. The deserted academy, looming on the horizon beyond Vatopedi, was described in 1765 by an alumnus of better days, Iosipos Moisioudax, as a 'nest of ravens'.⁹

The subsequent history of the Athonite academy is a story of abortive efforts to revive it. In 1769 the former Patriarch Seraphim II took such an

⁶ On Neophytos's initial appointment which provided for him to start teaching at the academy on 1 December 1749 see Ph. Meyer in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1890), 555–56. On this important eighteenth-century philologist and his friendship with Voulgaris see Ariadna Camariano Cioran, *Les académies princières de Bucharest et de Jassy et leurs professeurs* (Thessalonike, 1974), 413–31, esp. 414–17.

⁷ M.I. Gedeon, 'Δύο ανέκδοτα γράμματα περί της 'Αθωνιάδος 'Ακαδημίας', *ΕκΑΙ* 3, (1882–83), 699–700. For Voulgaris's own account of his resignation see 'Απολογία πρὸς τὸν Παναγιώτατον Πατριάρχην Κύριον Κύριλλον', in G. Ainian, ed., *Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων συγγραμμάτων τοῦ δοιδίου Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρως* I (Athens, 1838), 54–64. Voulgaris's outspokenness apparently made the text a *cause célèbre* in the eighteenth century, thus securing its transmission by an extensive manuscript tradition, including Dionysiou ms. 250 (Lambrou 3784), fols. 45r–49r and National Library of Greece ms. no. 2390, 750–75. On Voulgaris's resignation and flight from Athos see also C.D. Mertziotis, 'Περὶ Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρως. Διὰ τὴν ἐγκατέλειψεν τὸ 1759 τὴν 'Αθωνιάδα Σχολὴν', *Ιπριωτική Εστία* 5 (1956), 417–20.

⁸ P. Aravantinos, *Βιογραφικὴ συλλογὴ λόγων τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας*, C.Th. Dimaras, ed. (Ioannina, 1960), 62.

⁹ Iosipos Moisioudax, *Απολογία* (Vienna, 1780), 128.

initiative, which, however, was not received favourably by the Vatopedi brotherhood.¹⁰ In 1782 Gabriel IV re-endowed the academy. Kaisarios Dapontes reports that the school was again in operation in the 1780s under scholar Kyprianos the Cretan,¹¹ while in the 1790s the 'School at Vatopedi' features in the financial and fiscal transactions of the community of the Holy Mountain.¹² An important initiative to revive the academy in 1800, undertaken by Patriarch Kallinikos V, was met with enthusiasm throughout the Greek world, including the communities in the diaspora as far afield as Amsterdam, London and the interior of Russia.¹³ In fact Adamantios Korais, otherwise not a particularly sympathetic observer of Athonite monasticism, in his famous memoir to the Société des Observateurs de l'Homme in January 1803, hastened to announce the initiative of the patriarchate to establish, in his words, 'a university on Athos', as the latest evidence that civilization was winning the battle against barbarism in Greece.¹⁴ These great hopes however, came to nothing, inducing Dorotheos Proios, the learned metropolitan of Philadelphia at the time, to note: 'There will never be a college of higher learning on Athos, and if it were to be founded it would be destroyed in a short while.'¹⁵ Thus in the opening years of the nineteenth century, the shadow of the Athonite academy finally faded away, leaving behind the imposing ruins, still visible on the hill above Vatopedi on the north-eastern coast of Athos.

Although Voulgaris's effort to introduce rationalist philosophy and modern science into Athonite intellectual life proved abortive and, on a certain level, might be considered unrealistic, his teaching on Athos was not inconsequential. Among his students in the Athonite academy in the 1750s were some of the most forceful personalities in the Greek intellectual tradition of the eighteenth century. What is more interesting, and perhaps indicative of the character of the intellectual climate of the academy and of Voulgaris's own teaching, was the wide diversity of future ideological trajectories that had their point of departure in the Athonite academy during Voulgaris's tenure there. Among these trajectories were those of two firm future followers of French Encyclopedism, whose names are respectively connected with the most articulate cultural and religious

¹⁰ Aravantinos, Βιογραφική συλλογή, 97.

¹¹ C. Dapontes, 'Ιστορικὸς κατάλογος ἀνδρῶν ἐπιστήμων (1700–1784)', in C.N. Sathas, ed., *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* 3 (Venice, 1872), 133.

¹² *Ἀθωνικά σύμμικτα*, no.2: *Ἀρχεῖο Πρωτάτου*, Ch. Gasparis, ed. (Athens, 1991), 15, 186.

¹³ C.Th.Dimaras, 'Ἡ σχολὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους στὰ 1800', *Hell* 15 (1957), 141–71.

¹⁴ Coray, *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce* (Paris, 1803), 65–66.

¹⁵ In a letter of 14 July 1805 published in 'Ὁ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ἑλληνικὸς Φιλολογικὸς Σύλλογος' 13 (May 1878–May 1879), 238. Cf. N. Doukas, *Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν Παναγιωτάτου Πατριάρχην Κύριον Κύριλλον περὶ ἐκκλησιαστικῆς εὐταξίας* (Vienna, 1815), 54–55.

criticism in the Greek Enlightenment: Iosipos Moisiodax and Christodoulos Pamplekis. Moisiodax was on Athos in the years 1753–56¹⁶ – that is, during the first and most euphoric period of Voulgaris's teaching, while Pamplekis seems to have remained at the academy until Voulgaris's departure.¹⁷ Both of them left accounts of their experiences at the Athonite academy and of their impressions of Voulgaris and his rivals. The accounts leave no doubt about the formative influence of these experiences on the future development and attitudes of both Iosipos and Christodoulos or about the sides they took in the quarrels within the academy during the 1750s. When the two alumni of the Athonite academy met again in Vienna in 1780–81,¹⁸ they still retained very vivid memories of the Academy and certainly must have ruminated on the new turn taken by the career of their former master who was now at the court of the Semiramis of the North.

During Voulgaris's tenure there were also other scholars at the Athonite academy who left their mark on Greek intellectual life. Mention could be made of Gabriel Kallonas from Andros, a moderate future follower of the Enlightenment, who late in life composed a pedagogical treatise drawing on John Locke and Balthazar Gracian.¹⁹ Obviously his first introduction to Locke was through Voulgaris's teaching. Another of Voulgaris's students was Sergios Makraios, later a militant traditionalist and critic of Copernican astronomy. Although he might have had his doubts about Voulgaris's teaching of modern science, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, however, he extols the importance of the Athonite academy as a school 'the equal of which had never been seen among the unfortunate Greeks'²⁰ and he never fails to speak with the greatest admiration of Voulgaris, with whom he continued to correspond as late as 1794.²¹

From 1752 to 1757 the student body also included Athanasios Parios, who later voiced the most violent opposition against the Enlightenment and the ideas of the French Revolution in Greek thought. He had been one of the

¹⁶ P.M. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism. Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1992), 29–35.

¹⁷ Pamplekis's reference to Voulgaris's illness in his *Ἀπάντησις ἀνώνυμου πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοῦ ἀφρονες κατηγόρους ἐπονομασθεῖσα περὶ θεοκρατίας* (Leipzig, 1793) as it appears in *Ἀκολουθία ἑτεροφθάλμου καὶ ἀντιχρίστου Χριστοδούλου τοῦ ἐξ Ἀκαρνανίας* (n.p., 1793), 678, suggests that he was on Athos through 1758, and he was among the thirty-four students who, on 8 January 1759, signed an appeal to ex-Patriarch Cyril V asking him to intervene in order to avert Voulgaris's resignation. See Aravantinos, *Βιογραφικὴ συλλογὴ*, 31–33.

¹⁸ Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism*, 100–101.

¹⁹ E. Kriaras, *Ταβριῆλ Καλλονᾶς, μεταφραστὴς ἔργων τοῦ Locke καὶ τοῦ Gracian'*, *Hell* 13 (1954), 294–314.

²⁰ Sergios Makraios, *Ὑπομνήματα Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Ἱστορίας*, in Sathas, ed., *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* 3, 219.

²¹ Makraios, *Ὑπομνήματα*, 229, 230, 236, 256–57, 513.

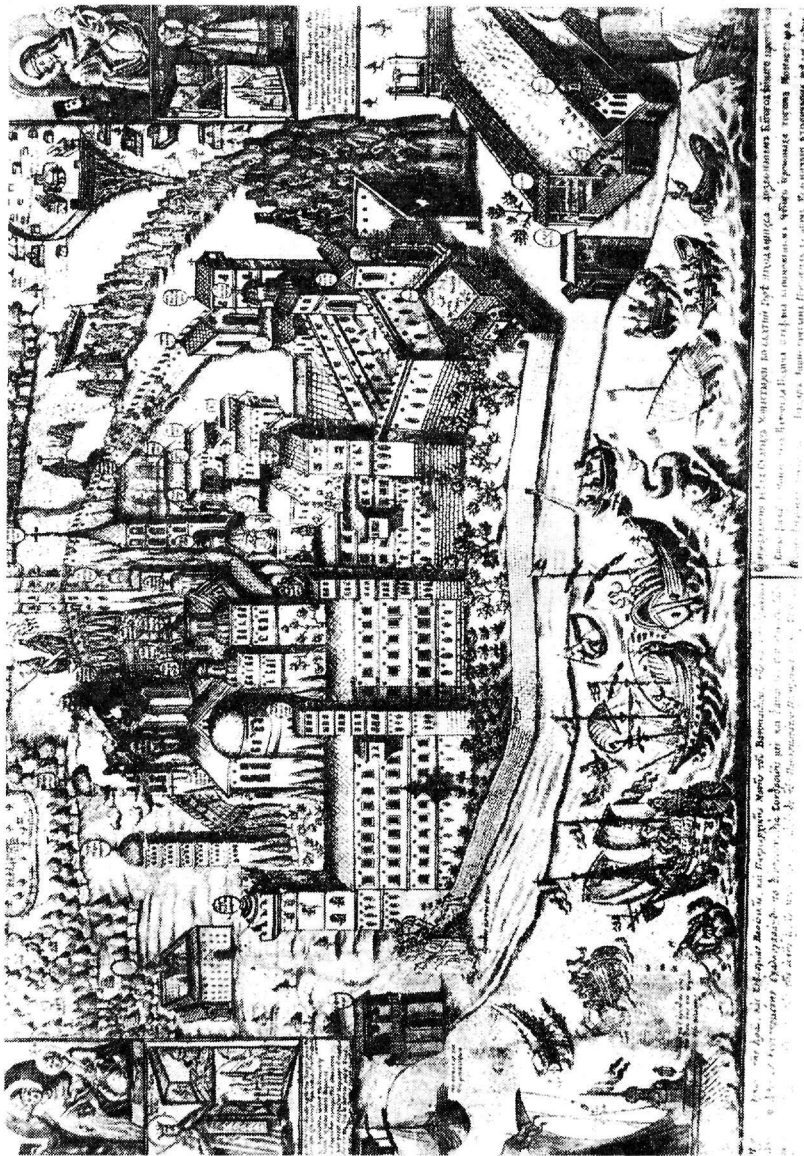


Figure 20.1. Vatopedi Monastery, engraved and printed in Vienna in 1767. The unidentified square building to the left of the walls of the main monastic complex must represent the Athonite Academy. This is the earliest visual record of the Academy. Benaki Museum, Athens.



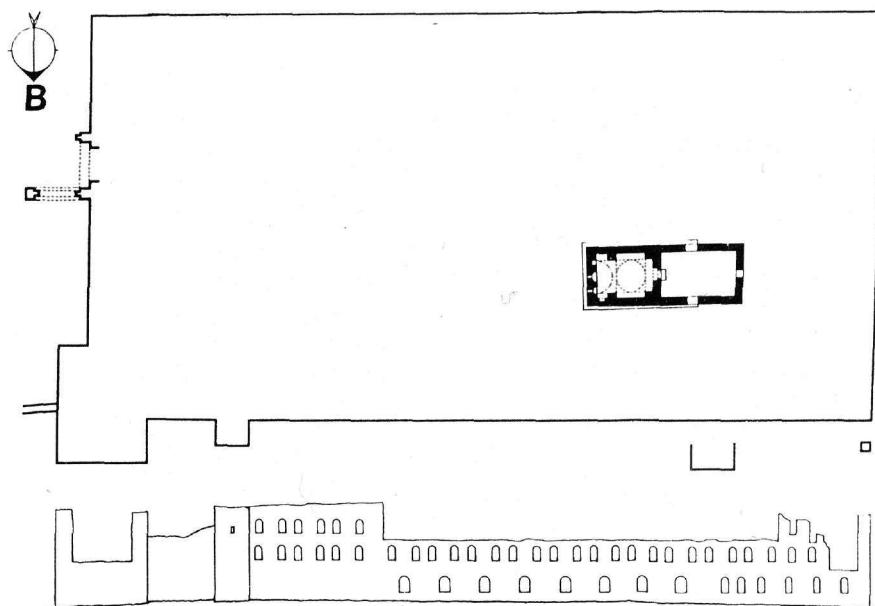


Figure 20.4. The Athonite Academy. Ground plan and north elevation. Courtesy of Athos Archive of Professor Paul A. Mylonas, Athens.



Figure 20.5. Ruins of the Athonite Academy. Photograph by Stavros Mamaloukos, May 1994.

protagonists in the quarrel over the day of the commemoration of the dead and had some association with the leading figures in the Hesychastic revival on Athos during this period.²² Parios spoke from a strictly Orthodox perspective, but this cannot explain his vehemence against his ideological rivals. His position is paradoxical, considering that his only direct contact with the ideas of the Enlightenment was through Voulgaris's rather circumspect teaching at the Athonite academy. There is nothing in the sources to suggest that there was anything in Voulgaris's teaching or attitudes that could be offensive to Orthodox sensibilities. On the contrary, as we will see, his overall posture on Athos evinced remarkable piety, if not personal modesty. That Parios could not have been offended by the substance of the instruction he received at the academy is suggested by the fact that in his subsequent educational career he employed as manuals texts to which he was introduced by Voulgaris, such as Antonio Genovesi's *Metaphysics*²³ and Voulgaris's own *Logic*. It would be somewhat unwarranted, therefore, to attempt to connect Parios's later hostility to the Enlightenment to reactions provoked by the curriculum of studies taught at the Athonite academy.²⁴ On the other hand we may be justified in suggesting that Voulgaris's teaching provided Parios with an adequate introduction to the basic philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment to allow him to focus his polemics on the appropriate targets when he took up the crusade of the Counter-Enlightenment after 1789.

Finally the alumni of the Athonite academy included the future renowned popular evangelist St Kosmas the Aetolian. It is uncertain, however, whether he attended the Academy as a lay student or after joining the brotherhood at Philotheou in 1759. His connection with the academy takes on special significance in view of the missionary work Kosmas undertook in 1760 with the blessing of the Russophile Patriarch Seraphim II whose protection was also enjoyed by Voulgaris after his abandonment by Cyril V. We could therefore speculate that Voulgaris's educational endeavours, Kosmas's evangelizing peregrinations which for two decades brought his preaching against conversion to Islam all over the Southern Balkans, and Seraphim's Russian sympathies formed components of an integral ecclesiastical policy designed to strengthen the defences of Orthodoxy. This programme,

²² For a profile see G. Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Türkenherrschaft (1453–1821)* (Munich, 1988), 358–65.

²³ Parios produced a Greek edition of this work (Venice, 1802) which had also been translated and used as a teaching manual by Voulgaris in Ioannina, Kozani and Athos and finally published in Vienna, 1806.

²⁴ On Parios's attitude cf. his own testimony in *Ἀπολογητικὴ Ἐπιστολὴ* in National Library of Greece Codex 1344, fols. 1r–49v, esp. fol. 6r, arguing that at the 'school' he had tried to stay out of trouble and that if he discussed anything this had to do with the controversy over continuous communion, thus indicating implicitly that he did not recall anything in Voulgaris's teaching with which to quarrel.

moreover, was not limited to Church affairs but was also connected with political long-term objectives, as one suspects from the behaviour of Seraphim II during the operations of the Russian fleet in the Aegean in 1770.²⁵

This is how, on the heels of the Enlightenment, considerations of secular politics infiltrated the Holy Mountain. That Voulgaris was a central figure in this regard too is suggested by the evidence of his ties beyond Vatopedi during his Athonite engagement. Down the coast from Vatopedi, at the other great Athonite foundation of Iviron, Voulgaris had another contact in the person of Theoklitos Polyeidis, who, after a long absence in Europe, had returned to his monastery in 1756.²⁶ Voulgaris speaks warmly of Polyeidis and the assistance he received from him during a serious illness in 1758.²⁷ On that occasion Polyeidis left his own monastery to accompany Voulgaris across Athos to Dionysiou, where Eugenios sought and received a miraculous cure from the Virgin of the Akathist. This seems to suggest that there was an especially close friendship between the two. What brought them together is unclear. We may note, however, that in this period, which coincided with the last phase of Voulgaris's Athonite venture, Polyeidis, a mysterious and elusive adventurer, was composing the famous oracles of Agathangelos.²⁸ In a muddle of prophecies and propaganda, Polyeidis used the language of the millenarian tradition and information about contemporary power politics which he had gathered during his travels in Germany, Sweden and possibly Russia in the 1730s and 1740s, in order to promote the idea of the intervention of some northern European power, the famous 'blonde nation' – variously interpreted as Germany or Russia – on behalf of the subjugated Greeks. In view of the close relationship between Voulgaris and Polyeidis it is rather difficult to deny that Voulgaris could have been completely unaware of his friend's project. As his effort to introduce the Enlightenment into the Athonite intellectual universe seemed to be failing, Voulgaris's interests may have taken a turn toward

²⁵ C. Sathas, *Τουρκοκρατούμενη Ἑλλάς* (Athens, 1869), 513 and Z. Mathas, *Κατάλογος ἱστορικός τῶν πρώτων ἐπισκόπων καὶ τῶν ἐφεξῆς πατριαρχῶν τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Μεγάλης τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας* (Athens, 1884), 153. On Voulgaris's attachment to the policies of the patriarch and their overall close connection cf. M.I. Gedeon, *Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρως ἀνέκδοτος ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν Πατριάρχην Σεραφεῖμ II'*, *ΕκΑΙ* 3 (1882–83), 54–62. See also National Library of Greece Codex 2390, 748–50.

²⁶ M. Gedeon, *Ὁ Ἄθως* (Constantinople, 1885), 223. In the library of Iviron Gedeon noted some books which had belonged to Polyeidis. A record of Polyeidis's travels in Europe is in Iviron ms. 613 (Lambrou 4733).

²⁷ *Ἐπιστολὴ Εὐγενίου τοῦ Βουλγάρως πρὸς Πέτρον τὸν Κλαίρκιον περὶ τῶν μετὰ τὸ σχίσμα ἁγίων τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν γινομένων ἐν αὐτῇ θαυμάτων* (Athens, 1844), 55.

²⁸ Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 336–37.

the more practical possibilities offered by the fluidity of secular power politics. His subsequent career seems to indicate as much.

If this story of the Enlightenment on Athos is turning into a thriller let me add a final dimension to it by way of a question-mark. Polyeidis's oracles somehow found their way into the hands of Rhigas Velestinlis, the revolutionary enlightener and martyr of the last decade of the eighteenth century, who printed them for the first time in Vienna in 1790.²⁹ Could this hint at an Athonite connection in the case of this most secular-minded and radical of Balkan Enlightenment figures as well? It would be tempting to speculate, but the total paucity of evidence yields the ground completely to the imagination at this point, and thus historical analysis must be suspended for the moment on this subject.

It would be perhaps more conventionally appropriate to attempt to draw some conclusions about the character of intellectual life on Athos as illustrated by the story of the Enlightenment on the Holy Mountain. Religious history, like cultural history more generally, often suffers from manicheanism. We tend to think in terms of opposites and lines of confrontation, usually seeing a battle of good and evil according to our subjective understanding of the world. Yet things are rarely as neat and comforting as that. The flow of history is made up, for the most part, of assimilation and osmosis, and the history of culture is usually a record of unanticipated consequences. The experiment with the Enlightenment on Athos is a case in point. The philosophy of the Enlightenment was inadvertently introduced into Athonite culture because a patriarch, in discharging his pastoral duties, judged that he ought to create a school of higher learning in order to produce an Orthodox educated élite. To this end he summoned the leading scholar of the time, who had made a name for himself as a champion of modern philosophy. In this choice the patriarch, as guardian of the Orthodox tradition, acted with remarkable tolerance and open-mindedness. Voulgaris for his part did teach modern philosophy but his intellectual make-up was far from one-sided: beyond the moderns his admiration for ancient philosophy was joint in his conscience to an appreciation of hesychastic theology.³⁰ His behaviour on the Holy Mountain was marked by respect for Athonite traditions as indicated by his account of his miraculous healing by one of the most venerated icons on Athos.³¹ His conflicts with his rivals at the Athonite academy appear to have been

²⁹ A. Politis, 'Η προσγραφόμενη στον Ρήγα πρώτη έκδοση του 'Αγαθάγγελου', *Ὁ Ερανιστής* 7 (1969), 173-92.

³⁰ Cf., for example, his edition of the works of Joseph Vryennios, a late fourteenth-century theologian (Leipzig, 1768, vols I-II with a third volume appearing in Petersburg, 1784).

³¹ *Ἐπιστολή [...]* πρὸς Πέτρον τὸν Κλαίρκιον, 50-56. Cf. Voulgaris's prayer to the Virgin in Ivron ms. 895 (Lambrou 5015), fol. 60v. Voulgaris's letter to Pierre Leclerc in a 1772 copy is also in Great Lavra ms. M68, 26ff.

of a personal rather than ideological nature. His teaching of modern philosophy turned out to be of use even to vocal enemies of the Enlightenment such as Parios. Seen in this light the experiment with the Enlightenment on Athos was not alien to the logic of syncretism which we noted above.

Athonite history is a record of historical syncretism. Although we tend to think of Athos as a surviving piece of Byzantium in the modern world, its history is in fact far from being either static or impervious. In the same way that medieval Athonite libraries transmitted in their manuscripts pagan classical letters as well as the mass of Christian learning, so modern Athonite libraries invariably include the most radical books of the Greek Enlightenment³² and among their eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century codices are to be found some of the most daring texts of religious criticism produced during that period.³³ The question, of course, is who brought and who read these sources? Probably just the same monks who read patristic wisdom and liturgical literature. The tenacity of the Athonite tradition consisted in its ability to absorb and to set in order diverse elements in an overall framework of Orthodox values. No one did this better or more effectively than another great Athonite personality of the eighteenth century, a contemporary and admirer of Voulgaris, Kaisarios Dapontes, the itinerant monk and dedicated restorer of Xeropotamou.³⁴

The ability to absorb and to adapt could be considered as the authentic Byzantine core of the Athonite tradition. Nothing put that ability to a more serious trial or posed a graver danger to it than a new set of secular values, also extraneous to the Athonite tradition, that gradually began to make their way into the monastic republic at about the same time that the drama of the Enlightenment was acted out. In European culture more generally, and in the Balkan intellectual tradition in particular, these new ideas were germinated by the Enlightenment, although they eventually annulled its universalist and humanist principles. I refer to nationalism, whose first, still inchoate, stirrings on the Holy Mountain can be traced in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was in this period – in 1758 – that yet another Athonite monk, with some possible indirect ties to the Athonite Academy and to Voulgaris's teaching,³⁵ left his monastery, the Slav foundation of

³² For example, Moisioudax's *Apologia* (1780) at Vatopedi and Lavra and *Paidagogia* (1779) at Lavra and Koutloumousiou. G. Constantas and D. Philippides, *Νεωτερική Γεωγραφία* (1791) at Vatopedi, Iviron and Xenophontos. All of these books were critical of the Orthodox clergy and the last one was quite hostile to monasticism. The copies mentioned here are only those recorded by researchers or known to me personally from my visits to Athonite libraries. More copies may come to light as the exploration of Athonite libraries continues.

³³ For example, St Panteleimon ms. 755 (Lambrou 6262), fols. 89r–125v.

³⁴ See R.M. Dawkins, *The Monks of Athos* (London, 1936), 65–73.

³⁵ This is suggested by V. Velchev, *Paissi of Hilendar. Father of the Bulgarian Enlightenment* (Sofia, 1981), 84–86, but without any concrete evidence.

Chilandar, for a foray into the world. But unlike his contemporary Dapontes and countless other Athonite monks, before and after him, he did not leave to collect alms for his monastery, nor did he carry an icon or holy relic with him. He left, stimulated by his curiosity to search for the historical origins of his people, and visited Karlowitz and possibly Catholic Dalmatia and Croatia where he collected source material for his own history.³⁶ The work was finally completed at the Bulgarian foundation of Zographou, where the author, Paisi Hilendarski, transferred after his return to Athos in 1762. In his *Slavobulgarian History*, Paisi relied mostly on the work of a Benedictine abbot from Croatia, Mauro Orbini, in order to build his case about the greatness of the medieval past of his despised Bulgarian nation. He thus planted the seeds of a future Bulgarian Enlightenment.

After the completion of his *History* Paisi returned to Chilandar and was sent to collect alms in the Bulgarian lands by his older brother Lavrenti, who was abbot of the monastery. In this mission he carried a clean copy of his *History* with him. When he reached Kotel in central Bulgaria, Paisi apparently met Stoiko Vladislavov, the future bishop Sofroni of Vratsa who made a copy of the *History* for his own instruction. This was the first copy of Paisi's *History* ever made in Bulgaria and it was completed on 29 January 1765.³⁷ Later, amidst the adversities brought into his life by the Russo-Turkish wars, Stoiko sought refuge and spiritual comfort on Athos in 1774–75.³⁸ After his return from Athos he produced a second copy of Paisi's *History* in 1781. Probably influenced by Paisi's arguments, Sofroni, upon his episcopal consecration in 1794, decided to start preaching in the Bulgarian vernacular in order to communicate more effectively with his peasant flock.³⁹ Thus from the unworldly Athonite environment emanated ideas about the differentiation of peoples on the basis of historical origins and language – ideas upon which distinct national identities and sensibilities were to be based and cultivated in south-east Europe. These ideas, once enmeshed in secular power politics, acquired such force that they eventually transformed beyond recognition the common Orthodox culture of the Balkans – a culture that had, for centuries, focused on Athos as its most sacred shared palladium.

Nationalist ideas and motivations proved an unequal match for the capacity of the Athonite tradition to absorb and accommodate within its own framework of values new spiritual outlooks and intellectual challenges, as had most recently happened to a considerable extent with Voulgaris's

³⁶ Ante Kadič, 'The Croatian sources of Paisii's *Historia*', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 10 (1983), 71–82.

³⁷ Sofroni Vračanski, *Vie et tribulations du pecheur Sofroni*, trans. and ed. Jack Feuillet (Sofia, 1981), 14–15, 29–32.

³⁸ Vračanski, *Vie et tribulations*, 80–81.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 91 and 104.

Enlightenment. A century after the re-orientations initiated by the eighteenth century, the millennial ability of Athonite culture to integrate challenges into the fabric of Orthodox values seems to have been giving way under the pressure of conflicts connected with the incompatible interests of the new Orthodox nation-states of eastern and south-east Europe. Under these circumstances, at the close of the nineteenth century it seemed that the very essentials of the Athonite tradition were in jeopardy. In the mid-1880s, after four visits to Athos, Manuel Gedeon, a genuine spokesman for the Orthodox ecumenicity of the Great Church, was alarmed and dismayed at the depth of passions associated with nationalist conflicts on Athos. Gedeon felt that such 'racial recriminations between monks belonging to different nationalities ... disfigure the mission and character of an Orthodox monk'⁴⁰ and, while perhaps appropriate 'to hot-headed politicians', were incompatible with the Holy Mountain's earlier history of 'political wisdom and Christian comportment'.⁴¹ A further century has elapsed since Gedeon wrote, but his warnings still sound paradoxically topical for Balkan Orthodoxy and its Athonite beacon.

⁴⁰ Gedeon, *'O 'Aθwς*, 60–61.

⁴¹ Gedeon, *'O 'Aθwς*, 63.