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RIGHTS AND MIGRATION STUDIES**

Master's Thesis

**THE STANCE OF THE GOC WITH REGARD TO MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN
GREECE DURING THE PERIOD 2011-2021**

by

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Inscription

To my family and everyone that feels like one.

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List of abbreviations used

CSO: Civil Society Organizations

EASO: European Asylum Support Office

ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights

ERP: Ecumenical Refugee Program

EU: European Union

Frontex: European Border and Coast Guard Agency

GOC: Greek Orthodox Church

KSPM: Kentro Symparastasis Pallinostounton Metanaston (Integration Centre for Migrant Workers)

MRA: Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

TCN: Third Country Nationals

WCC: World Council of Churches

Abstract

The present qualitative study examines the stance of the Greek Orthodox Church (GOC) with regard to migrants and refugees in Greece during the period 2011-2021. During this time, mass numbers of these populations arrived at the country's borders, testing and indeed stretching Greece's, leading NGOs' and Europe's entire readiness for the distribution of humanitarian aid as well as international protection to all beneficiaries. From what was concluded through a number of individually conducted one-to-one interviews with GOC clerics, is that the preached philanthropy that the GOC is open to migrants and refugees' diversity is primarily theoretical and not practical and tangible, as the participated GOC clergy wish for themselves- and by extension all Greeks in general- to remain intact and "pure" religious-, language- and culture-wise. Nonetheless, this non-altruistic stance remains a latent reality, as the GOC protects its public standing and image for fear of losing its near state-like power and its numerous loyal-benefactors.

Key words: Greek Orthodox Church, stance, migrants, refugees, Greece, 2011-2021

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1. Introduction

The information and details the reader gets when delving into the most frequent and omnipresent references of migration when reading the Old and New Testament is indeed remarkable. With numerous examples in both texts of the Holy Scripture, one comprehends that part of the quintessence of the Christian theological discourse is the notion of migration and refugee (Margaritsanakis, 2019) and that Bible has rightly been noted by J. Maruskin as “the ultimate immigration handbook”. While perusing the texts in the two Holy books, which are riddled with instances of migratory movements, with the most prominent figure among them being Jesus Christ Himself, the reader becomes plausibly aware of the fact that migration is an internal part of Christian- and indeed every European- church history and community. As such, it would be just to claim that all dissidents- whether that be churches, metropolises, parishes, political parties or individuals- are faulting in supporting anti-immigration policies, as they either suffer from historical amnesia or are willfully blind to the long Christian history of intercultural composition and thus the fundamental value discrepancy in which they are sliding.

What is more, in the bibliography employed, there is also rich information about what is termed under the umbrella term “theological approach to migration”. In this context, an important initiative is worth mentioning and that is no other than the World Council of Churches. The latter comprises an attempt on the part of Christian Churches to achieve religious pluralism and respect towards the religious, cultural and ethnic “Otherness” in this era of globalization that we live in. Undoubtedly, this is a hard-to-achieve task, yet this interreligious and intercultural environment shall be the springboard for a most needed religiosity of “Otherness”, where differences are merged into a brand new inclusive theological approach (Jackson and Passarelli, 2016) and are not seen as impediments that need to be altered for fear of defiling a purportedly “pure” and “inaccessible” religion (Andriopoulou, 2019). At these footsteps, the GOC has in its own right commenced a number of initiatives to contribute to the migration and refugee issue, as it could not have possibly remained passive in light of the new and versatile reality in Greece, as this would amount to its disavowal of its true identity, nature and mission.

In this respect, the KSPM (Integration Centre for Returning Migrants) was founded by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece in the year 1978 in order to offer help to Greek migrants that were returning from Western Europe, and more specifically Western Germany. Later on, however, its scope was extended and it also provided social and legal services to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, while it also filed its views and advocacy before the European Commission and the European Parliament about the need to reshape our modern societies and prioritize every Man- native, migrant and refugee- and ensure his respect and dignity are always- and under no matter how adverse or deplorable the circumstances might be- safeguarded (Παπαντωνίου, 2010).

The Ecumenical Refugee Program (ERP) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that succeeded KSPM in 2012 and is best known as KSPM-ERP. It comprises a special office for refugees and has provided- in collaboration with other national, European and international bodies, agencies and NGOs- great support to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers by means of legal assistance, representation and social support (Andriopoulou, 2019). Additionally, it is an implementing partner of UNHCR in its task in organizing training activities for the Greek police, coast guards and other civil society actors with regard to refugees' urgent needs and their subsequent protection.

For the second part of the thesis, statements of consequential members of the clergy have been consulted with regard to some of their personal views on the migration and refugee issue as well as initiatives, services and their apostolate. Among these outlooks, a variety of different-and often completely antipodal- stances have been publicly expressed. On the one hand, a distinctive, dissenting- and, admittedly factious- pure anti-immigration voice is that of the former Bishop of Kalavryta, Amvrosios. His many statements about the migration and refugee issue could be concisely summarized in the following: migrants and refugees' arrival to Greece is part of a well-organized attempt on the part of people that are in positions of great power both on a national and a supranational level with a view to consolidate and materialize their plans of a mass scale globalization and thus impose a diversity in Greece, which will allegedly completely destroy the "pure" and "pristine" Greek nation-ethnicity, culture, language, religion, civilization and values that we, as Greek peoples, are endowed with. According to this thinking, these foreigners very much differ from us, they are not welcome in Greece and they should somehow be sent back to their homes or to other European countries, hence proving the perception that migrants and refugees are a burden

that needs to be tolerated, thus implicitly pointing to a theology of tolerance towards the “Others”, the “Foreigners”, instead of that of a full embracement and acceptance.

On the other hand, the majority of the GOC clergy members is not of the same opinion with the aforementioned bishop and is prone to declaring and effectively adopting a solidarity-based stance towards them. Their apostolate is factual and their preach and work have been significant by taking versatile forms of benefaction towards migrants and refugees such as: provision of food, clothes, psychological, social, legal and any other needed support and services, shelter in special facilities and centers owned by the GOC as well as old and vacant monasteries that have been ceded by the Church’s leadership to particularly vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors or single-parent families. Overall, the official stance of the GOC has been that of love and compassion towards the persecuted “Others”, recognizing the reality and the horrific circumstances and experiences that have driven them out of their country and have brought them in a new country in search of a new and hopefully better life. Inarguably, this virtuous, merciful and altruistic stance is consistent with, and actually embodies, the teachings of Jesus Christ that Christian Orthodoxy primarily rests on and aims to minimize and ease the pain and sufferings of these peoples, assist them in the hostile bureaucratic system of the acquisition of asylum, the necessary controls and checks they need to go through as well as the totality of the required papers for their identification, classification into one of the available categories of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker and, in essence, the determination of their future.

In broad terms, in recent years, a salient interest has been noticed in the theological world, thought and discussions about the migration and refugee issue and this can be perceived by the plurality- relatively to the scarcer earlier migration and refugee deliberation- of the relevant bibliography and the ongoing and vibrant theological discourse around it. Yet, one cannot but notice when researching and setting to approach today’s migration and refugee issue from a theological and religious perspective that the information and data available refer to a reality and a GOC’s stance that was at stake in earlier years or at best during the first years of this new migration and refugee movement that Greece has found itself in. One then ponders whether this reality that is being discussed remains still in effect or whether along with the escalation- and indeed deterioration- of the issue, the views and stance of the GOC have changed respectively and, thus, whether the available information in the bibliography is a bit outdated.

Yet another question that we end up with when engaging with the topic under discussion is whether religion should actively engage in the pressing sociocultural issues of the time. Does- or perchance should- the GOC acquire an active role due to the fact that the migration and refugee issue pertains to humans, who are- individually and withholding from any discriminatory behavior- all perceived to be equal in the Christian Orthodox teachings? Furthermore, bearing in mind the position, power and influence that the GOC has always enjoyed, what ought to be the most virtuous handling of the issue? Should the GOC raise its voice against the tremendous injustices and difficulties that migrants and refugees, falling under the more generic category of the “Other”, face? Wouldn’t this defense of the fundamental rights of these weak, and oftentimes desperate, people comprise a practical and concrete interpretation and realization of the quintessence of Christian Orthodox theology? Should the GOC act as an independent agent or is a joint effort along with the Greek state’s political parties and ruling class advisable and necessary? Moreover, are all these questions an ongoing topic that still troubles the GOC or is it viewed by the body of the clergy as a problem for which purely the political leadership is responsible and accountable? These, along with further, questions about the modern and most updated reality of the GOC on the ongoing and ever-involving migration and refugee issue is attempted to be answered through the meetings, interviews and discussions with members of the priesthood.

All in all- and in an attempt to sum up- the current thesis comprises a study of the role and stance that the Greek Orthodox Church- henceforward termed as GOC- adopts with regard to the excessive- in terms of numbers and difficulties-migration and refugee issue that the European South, and subsequently Greece as well, has been confronted with for the last decade. The first part of the study is the theoretical framework, which is a secondary study, namely a text-centric approach through the study of verses in the Old and New Testament that verify that “Otherness”-whether that be religious, cultural, ethnic, racial etc.- is preached in the Holy book of Bible as something that ought to be accepted and upheld. The second part is the empirical and methodological part, which is a qualitative research, consisting of the study of statements of members of the clergy as well as a number of self-conducted one-to-one interviews with members of the priesthood and a subsequent analysis and interpretation of the collected information and data. The end results and final conclusions of the conducted study follow, which are indeed quite surprising and perplexing, as they create an image of the GOC as an iron mechanism that far differs from its magnanimous preachings and Christian principles. A mechanism that protects its public image and likeness no matter what, often

concealing its true- and frankly not so benevolent- stance to anything and anyone that is “incompatible” with pure Greekness and Christian Orthodoxy, in the way these two are perceived in terms of language, religion and culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Migration- refugee issue

Throughout global human histories of trade, transportation and colonialism (Allen et al., 2018), people have been leaving their lands and transcending- today’s term would be migrating- all around the globe in an attempt to satisfy their acute need to improve their life. In essence, migration is not a modern-day phenomenon, as one- admittedly rather naively- might think, as people have been moving since the dawn of mankind for different-and ever-changing reasons (instability, geopolitical turmoil, poverty, climate change etc.) and, hence, it could be considered a diachronic (Borkert et al., 2006), intrinsic and natural part of human experience.

As such, it is also moderately fit to claim that humans shall not cease to move sometime in the near future and as long as they pursue a most intrinsic and fundamental human right of theirs, which is search for a better life (Dragostinova, 2016), a sense of security and dignity as well as the necessary survival means (Allen et al., 2018) for self, family and others. So if migration has always been an indispensable part of humanity, why has it, as of late, revived as a topic and spurred a debate with regard to its association with such diverse issues as economic, sociopolitical, cultural and religious ones?

The answer to the preceding question is because of the new reality¹ that is at stake. This new reality refers to a mass and intense emigration on a global scale that has naturally brought about many changes and, oftentimes, hard-to-confront developments to host countries and even entire supranational organs like the EU.

¹ For the purposes of the current thesis, this new reality will only cover the timeframe from 2011 onwards. Yet, only some of the indicative examples of events of the recent past that have induced significant migration waves prior to 2011 can be termed under the heading “post-socialist transition” and include the fall of the Iron Curtain; the breakup of the former Soviet Union; the secession wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the subsequent emigration waves to Bosnia and other Yugoslav areas as well as to Western Europe.

This reality has come to be understood as a complex sociopolitical phenomenon (Boghean, 2016), also termed as a migration and refugee crisis, and it has reached Europe causing mass displacements and an ensuing unprecedented refugee surge on the EU's external borders. Its roots can be traced to conflicts, persecutions, political upheavals, high poverty rates, dire economic distress, infringement of fundamental human rights as well as widespread unrest, destabilization and turmoil (Dragostinova, 2016) in Middle Eastern (Syria, Iraq, Iran, Palestine), South Asian (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and North African (Algeria, Morocco) countries (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011 ; Schloenhardt, 2019).

Although these countries already had a history of legal migration towards Europe, their outflowing numbers reached a climax after 2011, following the revolts that came to be known under the term “Arab Spring”. Further terrorist insurrections in Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Eritrea as well as “Mediterranean migrant crises” (Fakhoury, 2016) created a versatile mass public mobilization (Allen et al., 2018), in which a pronounced number of people became internally displaced or sought refuge and resettled in a country in the vicinity of their homelands, namely Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Yet, their stay there was not permanent, as they realized that the ongoing war in their countries was not to end anytime soon and their living conditions in these neighbouring countries were quite wretched. As a result, some of them- fewer in number with regard to the ones that initially fled their homelands (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012)-embarked on and reached by the year 2015 the European “fortress” with a view to seek sanctuary and along with it a brighter future.

Nevertheless, this flee has not always been safe or bloodless. In their attempt to flee persecution in their countries, irregular migrants and refugees resort to smugglers and such networks in an attempt to reach Europe on unsafe vessels, a lot of which were oftentimes tragically capsized and led to thousands of human casualties in the Mediterranean (Fargues & Bonfanti, 2014). By 2015, this situation of exigency and mass influx had reached unprecedented numbers and fueled a most thorny discussion about the pressing need to equitably share the responsibility of these peoples among the totality of the EU Member States.

In this context, and as an immediate outcome of the post-2011 Arab revolts, the disconcerting discussion of securitization of migration has come to the forefront of the EU

agenda. That is to say that these huge human outflows arriving at the Mediterranean region are essentially perceived as a high national, geopolitical and societal security threat and this has come to be understood under the term “migration-security nexus” (Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012). As a result, the status quo is understood as an emergency situation, in which exceptional measures are not only legitimized but are rather inescapable and, in a sense, imperative (Fakhoury, 2016).

The emergency measures of many EU countries to these remarkable soaring numbers of arriving migrants and refugees, have diversified and political leaders have not, as of yet, reached a consensus as to how to collectively address them (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011). Instead, incoherent migration policies have been adopted, by means of building fences, enhancing their terrestrial and maritime borders or altogether denying entry and assistance to asylum seekers by using force, something that has polarized the unity and consistency within Europe (Fakhoury, 2016).

The reactive way in which Europe and by extension individual Member States like Greece have responded to this humanitarian crisis, instead of attempting to address its root causes, testifies that further investments in managing this humanitarian emergency as well as changes in related key policy areas need to be implemented (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011).

2.2. Migration-refugee issue in Greece

Greece- being one of Europe’s external borders and belonging to the Southern “neighborhood”- already since the beginning of 2000s has become one of the main targets of this catapult called “European migration and refugee crisis”, as it comprises the most prominent entry point, via neighboring Turkey, into Europe for African, Asian and Middle Eastern undocumented migrants and refugees. Among other countries of the European South, Greece was left to act on its own in a discordant and far from solidary way, as if this crisis was a national issue and was, therefore, expected to be solved as such, thus proving the absence of an effective joint EU response (Skleparis & Armakolas, 2016).

To this, if we add the binding effects of EU's Dublin system², the country's poor and inefficient migration policies and flaws in processing asylum requests, the ever-evolving deep financial and sociopolitical crisis that Greece has found itself in since 2009 and the subsequent harsh austerity measures and severe cuts to its social spending (Papatheodorou, 2014, as cited by Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2021), one might as well speak of an 'extraordinary crisis within the crisis', a double humanitarian impasse (Cabot, 2019) that is allegedly perceived to threaten the country's foundational values as well as its economic³ and sociocultural⁴ cohesion (Kalfeli et al., 2020).

On account of the mass influx, some of the country's inherent bureaucratic deficiencies, its understaffing and its long history in being a migrant-sending and not a migrant-receiving country (Cavounidis, 2004), Greece proved to be unable and ill-prepared to address the issue and process all these huge human outflows. This can be demonstrated in the following shortcomings: processes like asylum applications and their examination as well as relocation and family reunification applications continue to proceed at a hopelessly slow pace (Skleparis, 2017), leaving these people in despair and in a limbo situation (European Commission, 2017); systematic, indiscriminate and arbitrary detention is employed as a tactic in detention centers; forceful pushbacks and deportations of irregular migrants or TCNs originating from what were declared as "safe countries" (NIEM, n.d.) also take place without any examination of their asylum applications and, hence, one could speak of breachings of fundamental principles of European and international law, such as the principle of *non-refoulement*⁵; Indubitably, the COVID-19 pandemic added to this already bleak situation, induced additional discriminatory and restrictive measures (Human Rights Watch, 2021) and put in disproportionate danger the displaced communities.

² The Dublin system establishes the first country of arrival as being responsible for an individual's asylum application.

³ A share of Greeks fears that labor competition is greater nowadays owing to the arrival of migrants and refugees (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Mayda 2006; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Facchini and Mayda 2009, as cited by Sekeris & Vasilakis, 2016).

⁴ A share of Greeks fears that the "purity" of their culture, language and nation will be impaired because of the arriving populations (Arzheimer 2009; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Barone et al. 2016, as cited by Sekeris & Vasilakis, 2016).

⁵ Under international human rights law the principle of *non-refoulement* guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. This principle applies to all migrants at all times, irrespective of migration status." Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/ThePrincipleNon-RefoulementUnderInternationalHumanRightsLaw.pdf>

Undoubtedly, a most salient manifestation of this inappropriateness and inhumanity of Greece in receiving, processing asylum applications and respecting these peoples' inalienable rights is the fact that the vast majority of them only enter the country temporarily and with a sole view to onward migrate to another Western EU Member State, such as Germany or Sweden (Stavropoulou, 2016). Yet, even for those that arrive in Greece as their final destination, such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshi (Louka & Papangeli, 2015), legal employment in such times of acute crisis and xenophobia remains merely a wishful thinking. The hostility and exploitation they encounter add to their already burdened and ever-downgrading status and makes it exceedingly difficult for them to lead a life with dignity and self-respect.

Furthermore, over the course of this decade of humanitarian crisis (2011-present), the country has also systematically adopted laws, policies and practices that concertededly hinder asylum seekers' support, protection and integration and, hence, exacerbate their much-needed protection (Panayotatos, 2020). An indicative example of this would be the "International Protection Act" that normalizes and promotes the use of detention even for unaccompanied minors, the acceleration- also known as "fast-tracking"- of the asylum application processing, while access to legal assistance, appeal and reversal of rejections to applications also become ever harder.

Yet another failure of Greece is the ineffectiveness of recognized refugees' socioeconomic and linguistic integration, as the country- and by extension Europe- considered the crisis to be a temporary one, these people to be a burdensome and undifferentiated sum (Panayotatos, 2020) and instead invested its funds in emergency services, such as their housing in camps. Subsequently, it has not managed over the past decade to provide the necessary incentives for the MRAs to amalgamate and integrate in the local societies and labor market via the development of state-funded employment or training programs, which are virtually non-existent (Kourachanis, 2018b, as cited by Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2021). This state void and fragmentation lies with and is only partly covered by various CSOs and NGOs that offer their responsive actions and humanitarian aid in an attempt to protect the rights and address the imminent needs of these people. To these efforts, Greek authorities cannot but have an assisting and contributory role by monitoring them and allocating the EU-originating funds (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2021).

The aforementioned route of migrants and refugees from Turkey to Greece is either taking place from the country's land borders or from the Mediterranean, and mostly the Aegean Sea, depending on the severity and intensity of controls by Greek law enforcement officers, port authorities or Frontex. For instance, when sea patrols by Frontex were reinforced, irregular migration followed a new path taking place in what comprises the biggest part of the northern Greek-Turkish borders, Evros (Triantafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012). This comprised a most salient proof of the fact that under such intense crises illegal border crossings do not stop, but are merely displaced (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011) and just shift from land to sea routes.

Another case in point is when "Operation Shield"⁶ and "Operation Xenios Zeus"⁷ controls in Greece were fortified and new barbed wire fences were built to deter irregular migration. Naturally, the latter did not cease but instead took a new turn, demonstrating the resilience and versatility of irregular migration (Triantafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012) with migrants and refugees now taking the sea journey from Turkey's west coast to one of the Greek eastern Aegean islands, namely Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos and Rhodes.

These people, facilitated by unscrupulous smugglers, reached a climax number of several hundred thousand⁸ in the year 2015 and despite the short distance between the two countries a lot were drowned en route in the Mediterranean due to bad weather conditions, overloaded and poor-quality vessels or due to a combination of them (IOM, 2016).

What is more, in 2016 a highly controversial (Arribas, 2016) yet determining agreement between the EU and the government of Turkey was signed, which came to be known as the EU-Turkey statement. It aimed at discouraging irregular migrants from arriving to the EU by enforcing Turkey to take back and provide shelter- receiving huge financial EU resources- to Syrian migrants who entered Greece illegally and Turkey in its turn would resettle legal Syrian refugees to Europe.

According to IOM (2018), this measure indeed mitigated the influx of migrants and refugees arriving to Greece in 2016, but also led to a considerable number of them becoming

⁶ According to Triantafyllidou & Mantanika (2014), the aim behind "Operation Shield" was to increase controls at the Greek-Turkish borders with a view to deter irregular migration. For this reason, additional police officers and technical equipment were employed in the region.

⁷ According to Voutira (2016), the aim behind "Operation Xenios Zeus" was to deter irregular migration in Athens as well as other urban areas through inspections, arrests and detentions.

⁸ 857,363 in total- both by land and sea arrivals- according to the IOM (2016).

temporarily or permanently stranded in the country's congested reception and identification camps⁹ that, as a rule, operate way beyond their maximum capacity limit and, hence, comprise high risk environments. The situation there remains dreadful and resembles a “living hell” for migrants and refugees, as the living conditions are exasperatingly poor and abhorrent and could amount to inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 3 of the ECHR), while people are exposed to distressing sanitation, water, food, psychosocial and healthcare services as well as accommodation conditions (Chtouris & Miller, 2017).

As a rule, and without turning a blind eye to the truth, migration is perceived negatively and contributes to the flourishing of anti-immigration feelings and discourses (Dustmann et al. 2011; Hopkins 2010, as cited by Sekeris & Vasilakis, 2016) especially when the arriving numbers are significant. As a result of the latter, the resentment, unwelcoming stance and hostile dispositions on the part of the host communities are fueled, while a shift from the established political order to populist, nationalist, ethnic and even far-right mentalities (Allen et al., 2018) and political parties like the Greek “Golden Dawn” (Sekeris & Vasilakis, 2016) is also discerned. This xenophobic rhetoric is also apparent in Greece with the ever more frequent news of racism-induced violent attacks and assaults against these populations making it to the headlines of national and international news¹⁰, while serious misconducts by Greek law enforcement officers have also been noted¹¹ but the Greek government has bluntly denied their validity without bringing forth any counter evidence (Panayotatos, 2020).

Furthermore, according to Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart (2009), the press can have an impact on how people perceive such controversial issues like the current “European migration and refugee crisis”. Oftentimes, journalism reduces the issue's complexity by only selectively presenting it, often resulting in its securitization and the demonization, victimization, marginalization and ultimately exploitation of migrants and refugees (Milioni et al. 2015, as cited by Bosilkov & Drakaki, 2018). Nevertheless, during the first years of the crisis this was not the case in Greece, as found in a 2016 research by Kalfeli et al., the results of which showed that arriving populations were more often than not portrayed in Greek

⁹ The most hard-hit camp as well as the biggest and most conspicuous manifestation of the failure of Greece and Europe's migration and asylum policies is the Moria camp in Lesbos.

¹⁰ See for instance UNHCR Greece (2020) and “Ανησυχία για επιθέσεις σε πρόσφυγες” (2020).

¹¹ See shootings of asylum seekers at the Greek-Turkish border available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/04/migrant-killed-by-gunfire-while-trying-to-cross-border-from-turkey-to-greece-turkish-autho>

newspapers with a victim frame-image and less frequently with an intruder sub-frame, hence indirectly creating a feeling and ambiance of commiseration towards them.

As the refugee issue, however, went on and the arriving numbers kept growing, the discomfort, frustration and national anti-immigrant sentiment as well as the way refugees were presented in the media gradually changed. Refugees in Greece were now commonly described as living in a limbo situation and owning a rather liminal and almost invisible and rightless identity. Greek media- along with the systematic procrastination of the official state institutions- created a criminal, clandestine and dangerous image of the refugees, hence reinforcing securitization of migration (Chtouris & Miller, 2017) and the continuation of hate crimes against them (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

2.3. GOC stance with regard to the migration and refugee issue

The study of the stance of the GOC with regard to the migration and refugee issue is really important, as the former has always been identified with the entire Greek nation-state¹² (Trantas & Tseligka, 2020) and almost functions, of its own volition, like a parastatal institution (Νικολόπουλος, 2016) that is, allegedly, entitled to appear as a most appropriate and authentic representative of it. Undoubtedly and as might be expected, the fact that it is the official state religion¹³ and, thus, enjoys a great influence and power on the various domestic political parties and the country's sociopolitical issues, undoubtedly, also adds to it.

This salient role, power and prestige that the GOC enjoys, ought to comprise a strong moral motive and obligation for its members, and even more so its leadership, to eloquently and unambiguously take a stand against any kind of racist and pejorative discourse and practices (European Union, 2015), as the opposite might lead to misconceptions and disconcerting attitudes among the citizenry (Σαμαλέκη, 2012).

Nevertheless, the former is not entirely true in effect and one could even speak of an ethno-religious populism among a share of the GOC. The latter could be summarized in an “us-them” mentality that draws a distinctive line between a “blessed” group of Orthodox

¹² So strong is the correlation of the GOC with the entire Greek nation that whoever is not Orthodox has been typically considered to be less of a Greek (Αγγελίδης, κ.α., 2020).

¹³ According to PEW Research Center (2017), 90% of Greeks identify as Orthodox Christians, hence eloquently proving that Christian Orthodoxy in Greece comprises the vast majority among the country's religions.

people that are, purportedly, bombarded by various enemies, who are said to contaminate, taint and aim to islamize the “pure” Greek Christian Orthodoxy (Αγγελίδης, κ.α., 2020)

Given that the totality of the GOC clergy is essentially a compilation of its individual Fathers and with a view to draw a most comprehensive and representative picture of the stance and views of the GOC with regard to this modern crisis, it is moderately sound to examine and present an indicative chronicle of individual clerics’ opinions and public statements regarding former (1990-2010¹⁴) and present (2011 onwards) migration and refugee crises that the country has experienced.

2.4. 1990-2010

During this period, and following a number of events like the fall of the Berlin wall (Triandafyllidou, 2019), the mass exodus of Albanians and refugees from former Yugoslavia (Domachowska, 2019), the mass unstructured and spontaneous population movements from Eastern to Western European countries as well as from other continents to Europe as a result of coups, civil wars and serious human rights violations, a new migration and refugee wave was instigated (Σαμαλέκη, 2012).

To this pluralism, cultural and linguistic diversity, multiformity and world, as well as national, order that comprised the new reality of Greece during this period, the GOC responded in a conflicting and discordant manner, with some of its members sharing positive views and portraying a positive stance while a share of others did not quite empathize with that. The first response of the GOC is consistent with its Christian teachings and centuries-old perception of “Foreigner” and hospitality, that is to say to a great extent jointly and driven by solidarity. This positive stance is practically portrayed in its many actions, work and initiatives in all of its levels, namely from the smallest parish to its most prestigious and highly regarded Metropolis (Σαμαλέκη, 2012).

On a theoretical and ideological level, the rationale behind GOC is that of a merciful and charitable Body of Church that caters for and succors in the best of its powers all people in need, namely the prodigious numbers of arriving migrants and refugees within the

¹⁴ The majority of the information pertaining to this time period is based on the valuable work of Σαμαλέκη (2012) under the title “Η στάση της Ελλαδικής Εκκλησίας απέναντι στους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες κατά την εικοσαετία 1990-2010”.

country's borders. During this period, this theoretical empathy was also practically portrayed on the part of the GOC by means of its versatile and practical apostolate, social and philanthropic work¹⁵ as well as its clergy's fervent advocacy of these people's protection. Nonetheless, according to Παπαντωνίου (2010), this effort has not, as of yet, been painstakingly, and to an extent that does it justice, recorded or kept track of.

Yet, from what has been found in the relevant consulted bibliography the following can be noted. Unarguably, the figure of the Archbishop is a determinant and catalyst one, as it influences the relationships both between Church and State as well as the society as a whole. More specifically, Archbishop Christodoulos, who headed during the period 1998-2008, had on multiple occasions expressed his views and charitable stance towards migrants and refugees, among which one could indicatively mention his, and Greece's first, participation in the WCC, in which he advocated for the prioritization of the needs and difficulties that these people encounter (World Council of Churches, 2006); his visit and collaboration with international organizations such as the UNHCR (UNHCR- The UN Refugee Agency, 2006) as well as his call towards political and religious leaders in the Middle East to initiate a dialogue between Islam and Christianity in an effort to lay the groundwork for a harmonious coexistence between the two.

Such a positive stance and standpoint towards migrants and refugees has also been adopted and expressed by the Archbishop Ieronymos, who voted for the erection of the first mosque in Athens (Σαμαλέκη, 2012). Moreover, on an Archdiocese level, the Non-Governmental Organization "Solidarity" (Κέντρο Αλληλεγγύης Αθήνας, n.d.)- later renamed "Mission"- and Parish Philoptochos Societies and Funds, which over the years have distributed millions of food portions, have also been founded.

Yet, the GOC showed its support not only through official programs and services but also on a Metropolitan- especially in borderline areas (i.e. Mytilene, Samothraki)- and parish, clergy and congregant level in big cities, where migrants usually huddle.

Other initiatives have also come from individual members of the clergy. Some of the cases in point include the NGO established by priest Papanikolaou A. "Ark of the World¹⁶"; the remarkable work of priest Zois Th. of Agios Spiridonas in Igoumenitsa with the

¹⁵ Provision of material, psychosocial, legal and other aid

¹⁶ Further information can be found in <https://www.kivotostoukosmou.org/en/>

thousands of meals he has offered to migrants (“Παπάς με 11 παιδιά”, 2011); priest Dimou¹⁷ S. of the church of Keramiou in Lesvos, who coordinates a most cardinal material aid for migrants and refugees arriving from the Turkish coasts; and the priests Petridis P. and Papagiannis M. in the temple of Saint Panteleimonas Acharnon, who have incessantly, for the periods 1992-2009 and 2009 thereafter respectively, contributed much to the amelioration of these people’s condition in the area.

Nevertheless, despite the aforementioned positive stance of the GOC with regard to the migration and refugee crisis, there are also nationalistic, conservative and oftentimes negative views among the Body of the GOC itself as well as the clergy and its numerous brotherhoods and societies and one could mention its state and ethnic character¹⁸ as the causes of it. The latter hinders the development of its ecumenical mission and its active involvement in such challenging issues that could potentially harm and undermine the homogeneity of its flock.

As a result, a most “pure”, xenophobic and static community can be found within the GOC; one that sees anything extraneous as a threat, develops symptoms of self-defense and ancestor-worship¹⁹, encourages a fixation to a purely Orthodox past and even goes on to apportion various other economic and social issues that the country confronts on a domestic level to these populations and not the ones at fault, hence demonstrating a selective memory loss (Λίποβατς, 2017). Certainly, these publicly expressed xenophobic views come from individual exponents and are not representative of the view of the GOC in its entirety but they, admittedly, make up a considerable share of the GOC clergy (European Union, 2015).

Furthermore, ethno-religious populism is salient both in the GOC’s official public statements and its actual practices with an even fiercer and more unsympathetic part of the Body being pitted against these perceived “enemies”. By doing so, they completely fail to grasp the magnitude of the new and ineluctable reality of willful and forced flight that has been unfolding- and indeed is expected to continue to unfold in the upcoming decades

¹⁷ Further information can be found in <https://ikivotos.gr/post/8880/o-papa-straths-ths-agaphs>

¹⁸ See also Greece’s “ethnic communalism”, as noted by Λίποβατς (2017)

¹⁹ Orthodoxy, being interwoven with the Greek identity, language, culture and nation itself demonizes anything that falls out of its Greek Orthodox trajectory, which has been almost sacralized (Μανιτάκης, 2000). This leads to the GOC exhibiting a rationale, according to which there is an evident idealization and heroization of the country’s glorious past and a concurrent renunciation of its modern and discouraging present, part of which are the huge numbers of foreigners that are hereby discussed (Λίποβατς, 2017).

according to Migration data portal (2020)- as well as the pluralistic societies and concomitant fall of the unequaled and almighty religious dominions that the future holds.

According to Μανιτάκης (2000), the response of the GOC from 1990 to 2010 could be characterized as silent and even indirectly indifferent to the many coreligionist migrants that were coming from the former Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia. This may appear as a paradox, bearing in mind the material and practical assistance that these people received upon arrival by the various Metropolises and parishes, yet their most notable economic and sociocultural inclusion was never prioritized, as it would disturb and alter the prevailing Greek Orthodox identity (Καλαϊτζίδης, 2004).

Even for those foreigners that decided- either out of a genuine feeling or out of a need to assimilate and establish a point of contact and reference with the local population- to get baptized and thus welcomed to the Christian Orthodox world, the GOC solely settled for it but did not practically encourage their gradual and sound integration in the local communities (Καλαϊτζίδης, 2004), hence, diverging from what Christ Himself has taught and left as His most valuable legacy. As it follows, one could even go on to speak of a GOC philanthropy that is nothing but a superficial, temporary and responsive measure and is instigated by a spirit of tolerance instead of that of unconditional love and self-sacrifice for its beloved flock.

This share of the GOC supports that Greek Orthodox people are the favorites of God Himself, namely His chosen ones, and with their contact with other cultures and religions this exceedingly important feature and blessing that Greek Orthodoxy has been endowed with shall be lost once and for all. This is plainly understood as opposing God's plans and committing a great sin (Μανιτάκης, 2000). Overcome by such thinking, a number of racist, xenophobic and despicable anti-immigrant rants and incidents have taken place.

According to Σαμαλέκη (2012), an example of this would be the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Panteleimonas, who during the early 1990s made use of a very derogatory language when referring to Albanian, Macedonian and other foreigners, while in 2002-2003 in a Holy Synod meeting the then Archbishop Christodoulos²⁰- in response to the Metropolitan of Kozani, Amvrosios, who stood up and raised his voice against nationalism, racism and xenophobia (Κατά του εθνικισμού και του «ελληνοχριστιανισμού», 2003)- spoke

²⁰ What can be drawn as a conclusion from the example of the Archbishop Christodoulos is that across time conflicting and inconsistent views regarding the hosting populations can be discerned not only among different clerics but in the same person as well.

of a dilemma between choosing the maintenance of either Greek traditions and culture or a multicultural and atheist society. Oftentimes, racist discourse has also been voiced by various hierarchs, such as the comments and discriminatory language employed by the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Anthimos («Ξεσπάθωσαν» Άνθιμος - Ψωμιάδης, 2011).

In 2005 a considerable debate was also initiated and it divided the public opinion with regard to the decision of the Holy Synod to grant a financial allowance only to Greek Orthodox families having a third child, hence excluding all others on the basis of their religion (“Επιδότηση Ελληνοχριστιανικών γεννήσεων στη Θράκη”, 2005). Moreover, in 2010 an agitated discussion and debate was spread on a Holy Synod level as a consequence of the decision to grant citizenship to migrant children that have been born and raised in Greece (Παπαχρήστος, 2010).

As mentioned above, an official Muslim mosque was agreed to be erected in the center of Athens (Triantafyllidou & Gropas, 2009), but not without pronounced controversy on the part of the GOC about its official stance about it. Eventually, it stated that it did not oppose it, out of a need to respect and consider the need of heathens residing in the country to worship, yet, it went on to express its deep concern about a follow-up request for the concomitant erection of a Muslim cultural center, as the latter, the GOC claimed, might become unruly and, hence, initiate treacherous anti-islamic conscience (“Οι θέσεις της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος”, 2006).

What is more, according to Σαμαλέκη’s (2012) research and concluding remarks following an interview with Mr. Papantoniou and contact with Mrs. Dourida- who are in charge of the KSPM and the ERP respectively- the much praised and acclaimed work of these two organizations that specialize in migrants and refugees, are not fairly and adequately managed by the GOC, which often employs them as its most resonant alibi in an attempt to hide away its true indifference. Moreover, the financial contribution of the latter to the operation and running of the two programs is also exceedingly limited, with its expenses being covered to a great extent by funds from European bodies and organizations and with the operation of the programs being largely feasible thanks to the personal regard and interest of the ones in charge.

2.5. 2011-present

In the course of the recent (2011- present) migration and refugee crisis that Greece has been hit with, the GOC has once again responded differently over the years. During the first years of this humanitarian crisis, the GOC, along with other state mechanisms, civil society organizations and NGOs, has expressed its concern about these people and has adopted a deeply Christian, humane and charitable stance. This stance was evidenced by the GOC's "thundering" to politicians, governments and major governing classes on a national, international and supranational level (i.e. Europe) in order for them to prioritize these people, advocate for their inalienable rights, be attentive to their imminent risks and subsequent need for protection and succor and try, collectively and in collaboration with other Member States, to restore a viable status quo in their homelands, out of which they shall no longer need to emigrate or flee ("Πάπας-Πατριάρχης-Αρχιεπίσκοπος", 2016).

On a Holy Synod level, the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council (2016), which was convened in 2016 in Crete, Greece, spoke of and criticized the issue of globalization and the latter's share in creating new forms of injustice, social and economic unrest as well as the subsequent induced waves of migrants and refugees and these people's despair (Ανδριοπούλου, 2019). The Holy Council went on to state its stance with regard to the migration and refugee issue and argued that it is historically and unvaryingly on the side of all people that have been persecuted and remain in danger, hence showing its support to today's refugees (Σιωζήλης, 2019).

The GOC- being a part of the European Churches- also made a public plea to European countries, which adopt anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes as well as ever-more deterring measures for their arrival on their borders, to change these practices and follow a truly humanitarian approach. The latter is perceived in terms of consistency with the international and European institutional framework, while also respecting and championing these people's inalienable rights ("Metropolitan Bishop of Ilio, Acharnon & Petroupoleos", 2015).

As time went by, however, and with the acceleration of the humanitarian crisis, the increase in numbers of migrants and refugees staying willfully or by force- i.e. in a stranded condition and primarily as a result of their rejected asylum requests- the stance of the GOC, along with that of a big share of Greek citizens, gradually changed. Contrary to the first years of the crisis, more and more clerics were gradually voicing their doubts, and oftentimes anger and exasperation, about migrant and refugee populations in Greece and were starting to

express their concerns of whether this crisis could be feasibly and humanely administered on a national level alone.

According to Ανδριοπούλου (2019), the most recent stance of the GOC to this major issue can be discerned in three approaches. The first one is the xenophobic stance, according to which migrants comprise a threat and the Greek Orthodox identity is subsequently overly valued, prioritized and securitized. The second approach is quite moderate and is interrelated with the works and philanthropy of various Metropolises and parishes, i.e. KSPM and ERP, assisting in every way possible the struggling migrants and refugees. The third approach could be characterized as compassionate with its share of advocates sympathizing with migrant populations but concurrently claiming that during this humanitarian crisis not only the arriving migrants, but also Greeks themselves face a challenge and are in a predicament.

An indicative and indeed quite representative example of the first xenophobic approach and share of clerics is the whimsical and quite vagarious and discernible figure of the Metropolitan Bishop Amvrosios of Kalavrita and Aigialia, who has, on multiple occasions, elucidated his views about migrants and refugees and has, as a result of the latter, divided the public opinion. Some of these manifestations of hate speech include the fact that he has spoken of and characterized refugees as a threat for the nation and the country's religion (Αμβρόσιος: «Πρόσφυγες και αριστερά, 2016); he has expressed his heartfelt concern that they intend to islamicize the country, while their culture and customs very much differ from the Greek ones and therefore Greek society cannot but reject them (“Αμβρόσιος για πρόσφυγες”, 2016); he has also victimized migrants and refugees, warned of a planned conquest, ethnic annihilation and criminal behaviors on their part (Κάτσικας, 2017) and has even called for a people's rising to prevent this from happening (“Μακριά από το δόγμα της χριστιανικής αγάπης”, 2017).

Another example is the Metropolitan of Syros, who published an article in 2015 on his thoughts about the refugee waves that were reaching Greece, which was promoting rallying and deeply Christian values and ideas about these arriving people in need. In 2020, however, and after the situation and numbers of the refugees in Greece were indeed quite different and higher respectively, the Metropolitan, on the occasion of a journalistic republication of his 2015 views as current, made sure to clarify his change of views regarding refugees and shared his current concern about Greece being invaded (Καλλιμάνης, 2020).

Yet another such xenophobic fervor surfaced in February of 2020 following the developments in Evros by the Metropolitan of Didimoteicho, who described the country's situation as a war that was initiated against Greece and the weapon behind it were irregular migrants (“Διδυμοτείχου: «Ένας ακήρυχτος πόλεμος»”, 2020).

Additionally, it has often been the case that clerics are present in protests against migrants, thus sending out a resounding anti-migration and anti-islamic message. A case in point is the bestowal by the archbishop of Athens to the Ministry of National Defense of four thermal binoculars (worth €40.000) in an attempt to contribute to and enhance the efforts in safeguarding the Greek-Turkish borders from irregular migrants. Another example of ethno-religious populism and the inconsistency of how the GOC reacts and intervenes to the migration issue is the fact that the latter backtracked and withdrew its decision to concede part of its acreage that was designed to become a refugee shelter facility (Ιερά Σύνοδος: Δε θα νοικιάσει το χώρο της, 2020).

A most representative example of the second moderate approach is KSPM that was founded by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece in the year 1978 in order to offer help to Greek migrants that were returning from Western Europe, and more specifically Western Germany. Later on, however, its scope was extended and it also provided social and legal services to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, while it also filed its views and advocacy before the European Commission and the European Parliament about the need to reshape our modern societies and prioritize every Man- native, migrant and refugee- and ensure his respect and dignity are always- and under no matter how adverse or deplorable the circumstances might be- safeguarded (Παπαντωνίου, 2010).

Furthermore, ERP is an NGO that succeeded KSPM in 2012 and is best known as KSPM-ERP. It comprises a special office for refugees and has provided- in collaboration with other national, European and international bodies, agencies and NGOs- great support to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers by means of legal assistance, representation and social support (Ανδριοπούλου, 2019). Additionally, it is an implementing partner of UNHCR in its task in organizing training activities for the Greek police, coast guards and other civil society actors with regard to refugees' urgent needs and their subsequent protection.

As regards the third approach, according to a 2018 Pew Research Center Survey, more than half of Greeks (74%) experience the ongoing migration and refugee exigency as a

burdensome situation for their country, in which they are disproportionately affected job- and social benefits-wise. Additionally, according to previous (2014) results of the same survey, a considerably different and more positive image of Greece's public opinion on the issue was portrayed, which shows that after 2015- when the country received huge human volumes- the public sentiment towards the hosted populations conspicuously started to change.

3. Research question

Theoretically and as long as the GOC dates, its look on migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and foreigners altogether has customarily and as a rule been that of a magnanimous and munificent body of Church that profoundly commiserates for the latter. Most certainly, this official stance has been well established and, hence, widely known to the public perception and mind. Notwithstanding, what is not distinctly and thoroughly apprehended are the individual views of the GOC priesthood, namely what is termed as the GOC's unofficial stance with regard to the issue under discussion.

These individual views of Greek Christian Orthodox clerics on the recent (2011 onwards) migration and refugee crisis that Greece has been compelled to confront are identified as the most notable gap of the above-noted literature review. As a consequence, this gap arises as the main research question of the present thesis. To this end, it shall comprise the core of the questions in the impending interviews in an attempt to not only shed light upon this under-discussed- yet, indeed, quite engrossing- issue of the interviewees' personal opinions as regards the point at issue but also arrive at distinct and, therefore, veritably quite weighty answers and conclusions.

4. Methodology

Qualitative research has been selected as the most appropriate research approach for the present thesis. Qualitative research is defined as the research method that is not concerned about the collection and analysis of numerical data (Babbie, 2014) but instead focuses on the understanding and study of the social world and more specifically human behavior, views, stances, feelings and experiences (Bhandari, 2020), while it also helps the researcher develop explanatory models and theories (Morse & Field, 2022). Indeed, qualitative research has been employed early on in social sciences (Vidich & Lyman, 2004), as it is often impractical, if not infeasible, to study aspects of human behavior by means of employing quantitative tools.

Moreover, qualitative research approach was considered as the most appropriate, since it enables the researcher to be more flexible and more interpretative, in order to produce the desired and targeted contextual real-world knowledge about the perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, experiences, thoughts and social structures of the people under study (Creswell, 1998, p. 14; Patton, 2005). In addition, qualitative research methods also allow the researcher to focus on body language or/and other visual elements (Barriball & While 1994; Kallio, et al., 2016). Nevertheless, qualitative methods are more subjective than the quantitative methods, and that is why the personal reflection of the researcher and the detailed explanation of his/her choices are important (Choy, 2014; Horsburgh, 2003; Merriam, 2002).

«The goal of qualitative research is the development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants» (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 43).

Thus, more specifically, concerning the present research study, because of the fact that the individual views and stances that members of the GOC clergy hold with regard to the migration and refugee crisis in Greece candidly comprise an under-discussed and no-no issue, which has been barely studied and hence no main qualitative dimensions have, as of yet, been discussed, the use of qualitative research has been assessed as the most appropriate method of approaching and studying this condition. Besides the individual semi-structured interviews, another qualitative research method that was mainly used was the literature and document

review of existing material on the research topic, in order to identify if the research questions have been partly or fully answered in the past.

4.1. Data collection method process

The data collection method that has been chosen and employed for the undertaking of the present research were interviews, as they allow researchers to conduct an in-depth study of the experience of the interviewee with regard to the phenomenon under study. More specifically, individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews were employed for the present research study, and these were carried out by means of employing open-ended questions, as the latter tend to give interviewees the freedom to speak of what is being discussed quite openly as well as enable the interviewer to study and infer meanings that would otherwise not be feasible to collect with other methods. The structure of the interview guide was constructed by the researcher and it was determined by the bibliographical gaps in the relevant literature -as already mentioned- about the GOC clerics' stance with regard to the most recent (2011-present) migration and refugee crisis in Greece on cyberspace as well as the research questions and the ultimate goals of the research.

The main goal, and concurrently the driving force, of the research was to bring to the fore the views and standpoint of GOC members about the ongoing migration and refugee issue that the world, and Greece even more so, has been compelled to bear the brunt. In particular, the views and stances of individual members of the GOC clergy were examined through open-ended questions and examined their perceptions, personal views and opinions, on migrants and refugees, how they experience this evolving crisis, if and what they fear about it, their agreement and disagreement with xenophobic voices and outbursts as well as their thoughts and wishes on how the situation is to unfold in the near or distant future in one-on-one interviews. Interviews were conducted by Danai Tsatsani, with predetermined questions, same for all interviewees, yet the chance to more or less deviate on the interviewees' part by bringing to the discussion topics of personal interest was also feasible. The aim behind the aforementioned choice was to give the researcher the chance to deviate from the original questions and initiate more open-ended and free discussions with a view to answer the main research questions of the current research study.

Prior to the initiation of most of the interviews a telephone meeting was conducted with regard to the purposes of the research and the interviewees' role. Later on, a consent and briefing form was sent to the participants' mail addresses with a view to inform them of the process of the research as well as their voluntary participation in it. A prerequisite prior to the initiation of the interviews was that each interviewee had signed and sent electronically the consent form. All interviews were recorded with a microphone for the better processing of the data and to ensure that all necessary- for the drawing of conclusions- information is included, as it was the first time the researcher undertook to conduct a qualitative research. Finally, with the aim of ensuring interviewees' discretion and anonymity, passwords were used during the transcription stage of the interviews. Transcribed files and consent forms are stored in a safe folder on the researcher's personal computer and will be used only for the purposes of the present thesis, after the completion of which will be deleted.

Data collection lasted 1 month, from February to March of 2022. All interviews were conducted in person and lasted between 20 and 100 minutes, with the majority of them lasting 30 minutes.

4.2. Research Sample

The sample comprised ten (10) Greek Christian Orthodox clerics that were obtained through the non-probability convenience sampling method (Stratton, 2021) through personal contacts, door-to-door visits to churches in Thessaloniki as well as snowball sampling (Bryman, 2017, pp. 469), a recruitment technique in which participants in a research are encouraged to identify other potential respondents in an attempt to assist researchers. The researcher's aim was not to have a representative sample, but a small sample that reflects all the required characteristics of the participants (Young & Casey, 2019), while it is important to be mentioned that using a convenience sample rather than a random sample, the results cannot be generalizable (Stratton, 2021). In addition, all interviewees were male, as the Orthodox Church does not allow women's ordination to these orders.

Seven (7) of the interviewees were Archimandrites²¹, with only one (1) Archpriest²², one (1) priest and one (1) vicar. Their ages ranged from 29 to 63, with their mean age being

²¹ Archimandritis is a title of honor bestowed by Eastern Orthodox Church on a monastic (non-married) priest that has been a tonsured monk.

41,7 years and their mean years serving in the body of the Greek Orthodox Church being 18. Among them five (5) hold a Bachelor's degree, two (2) a Master's degree, one (1) a PhD and two (2) are graduates from a vocational training institute. By all accounts the vast majority of them are educated and quite broadminded people and indeed quite fervent supporters of knowledge as well as lifelong learning. Apart from their duties as liturgists, six (6) of them also serve as ministers in Sunday schools in their parishes, while only one (1) works as a psychologist in the psychological support office of the Metropolis, as he is entitled to, as a psychologist, and has the license to practice. Additionally, another thing that needs to be mentioned and is viewed as important is the fact that six (6) members of the GOC clergy that were approached both via telephone and door-to-door visits in churches, emphatically denied concession of an interview, while another two (2) members that were conducted on the phone and initially accepted to give an interview, later on hesitated and firmly or politely denied giving the interview after all.

Hence, what becomes apparent quite expeditiously and is of importance is the fact that refusals from these latter two categories of clergymen comprise a considerable share of the totality of the respondents, namely that, and in a rather numerical manner of speaking, eight out of the altogether eighteen asked (8/18) denied, which amounts to a refusal rate that is something less than fifty percent. That is to say, that almost one out of two clergymen that was asked to participate in the interviews of the current research denied it, which assuredly reveals a reluctance and hesitancy on their part to take a stand, leaving us contemplating whether only fear and modesty or perchance also resentment and contempt about these people lie in these clerics' minds and hearts.

Moreover, almost all interviewees alluded to the fact that they-referring to themselves- comprised the share of the GOC that was willing to speak of and touch upon the issue. They also suggested other clerics that would also be like-minded and, hence, eager to give an interview, yet what was noticed quite early on was that the same names of clerics were brought up over and over again, which left the researcher wondering whether indeed only a handful of the totality of the GOC clergy is open to discussions around the topic and even more so curious and pondering about the strong, intractable and aptly concealed opinions of the "extreme voices"- using the words of some of the interviewees per se- of certain members of the GOC clergy.

²² Archpriest is a title of honor bestowed by Eastern Orthodox Church on a monastic (married) priest that has been a tonsured monk.

Interviewee	Age	Rank in the Clergy	Educational Background	Other priestly duties	Years in the Body of Church
A	55	Archimandritis	Master's degree	-	37
B	52	Priest	3 Bachelor's degrees Master's degree	Pneumatic, Sunday school minister	23
C	32	Archimandritis	Religious degree from a vocational training institute	-	8
D	29	Archimandritis	Bachelor's degree	-	5
E	30	Archimandritis	Nursing degree from a vocational training institute	Sunday school minister, responsible for the social clinic of the Metropolis	8

F	37	Archpriest	Bachelor's degree	Sunday school minister	13
G	40	Archimandritis	Bachelor's degree	Sunday school minister	20
H	63	Archimandritis	Bachelor's degree	Sunday school minister	32
I	38	Vicar/ chaplain	Bachelor's degree	Sunday school minister, Goodwill (philoptochos) president	14
J	41	Archimandritis	Bachelor's degree, 3 Master's Degrees, 1 PhD	Psychologist in the psychological support office of the Metropolis	20

Table 1: Sample characteristics

4.3. Research Tools

The research tools that were employed in order to facilitate and enrich the data collection process were a personal notebook/ diary as well as a mobile phone's recorder. It was essentially the latter that best documented the interviews in order for a detailed and thorough transcription to be feasible at a later stage. Yet, simultaneous hand-written notes, references, allusions, words per se as well as body language, facial expressions, reactions and generally eagerness to respond to the research questions were kept track of by means of writing them down in a notebook.

Later on, during the transcription stage no particular software was used, as the number of interviews to be transcribed as well as the duration of each interview was rather wieldy and comprised no serious impediment to a most orderly and progressive advance of the present thesis.

4.4. Research Data Analysis Method

For what it concerns the data analysis method of the present research study, the qualitative method will be followed. Qualitative data analysis method aims at describing, analyzing, interpreting, and understanding religious and philosophical phenomena, providing answers to questions of “how” and “why”. Contrary to quantitative research, in which theories and concepts are in essence tested through research, qualitative research is an inductive approach that ordinarily denotes that theory and categorization emerge out of the collection and analysis of data (Ahmad, et al., 2019).

Despite the fact that there is no specific formula for the analysis of qualitative data, there are three basic requirements, which are the a) detailed description of the data and the sample collection methods and techniques, b) the carefully specified data analysis, focusing on issues of reliability and validity, and c) the triangulation with other methods and techniques of data collection (Cassell & Bishop, 2019; Mezmir, 2020; See also Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2018).

4.5. Code of Ethics in research

When research requires and entails human subjects, it is, undoubtedly, the case that ethical dilemmas may indeed occur at various stages of the research process. For this reason a number of ethical principles ought to be respected with a view to achieve a high ethical standard when conducting research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003, p. 131). In an attempt to abide by these principles, honesty, objectivity and integrity have been employed for the purposes of the current thesis by not fabricating or falsifying data, avoiding biases and deception during all stages of the research as well as striving for consistency respectively. Confidentiality, especially in so sensitive an issue as the topic of the present thesis, has duly required a delicate and ethical handling of what has been conveyed by the interviewees by means of ensuring their anonymity and avoiding the invasion of their privacy (Bryman, 2017, pp. 175-176).

All participants in the interviews were informed of the true purposes of the research, received a consent form, participated voluntarily, had the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process at any moment of any stage and could stop or ask to omit an answer to a question that made them feel uncomfortable or they simply regretted giving without any sanctions whatsoever. Their rights and freedoms were respected at all stages and access both to the transcribed texts of the interviews and of the final and complete results of the research have already been and will be available to them upon request. Moreover, the research experience was most certainly altogether not a disturbing one for any of the subjects involved- both interviewees and researcher- and no harm whatsoever came or was inflicted upon the participants, whether that be physical harm, harm to their personal development or self-esteem, stress or ‘indulging them to perform reprehensible acts’ (Resnik, 2015).

4.6. Research limitations

The Greek Orthodox Church (GOC) seems to have been exceptionally present in previous years, namely prior to 2011, in engaging with and assisting in every way possible economic migrants arriving and living in Greece. Nevertheless, the bibliography and the available relevant sources appear to decline in an analogous way with the efforts of the GOC to contribute to the state’s management of the recent (2011- present) migrant and refugee waves that the country has been forced to confront.

Initiatives like the KSPM, ERP as well as the Archdiocese's and parishes' work have indeed contributed much to the overall amelioration of the situation of economic migrants in Greece, yet, they comprise an earlier effort and contribution of the GOC to a reality that was at stake. To this, an unprecedented number of refugees and asylum seekers has also been added, for which an official and universal stance of the GOC is, yet, to be adopted.

A structural predicament and limitation of the current study is that it comprises a challenging undertaking to research and track GOC's stance, as there is no available official public statement with regard to this new migration and refugee crisis. Hence, the GOC stance is perceived in terms of individual clerics' views along with their public opinions and practical stance, which are nonetheless only available online and through journalistic, primarily, and only a few academic sources. These sound adversities as well as the fact that it is an under-discussed issue fueled and comprised the driving force behind its selection as a topic for the current thesis.

The latter, namely the scarcity of the sources of the hereby presented information, renders the present thesis and the subsequent produced knowledge from the conducted interviews with members of the GOC clergy a most valuable means in order to collect further information about the topic. Furthermore, the present thesis may perchance comprise an attempt to fill in the void that arises in this academic knowledge field, instigate further research as well as initiate a most helpful and much-needed discussion around this major issue.

As previously mentioned, main objective of the present thesis was to study the opinions and stance of a share of members of the GOC clergy with regard to the migration and refugee issue in Greece from 2011 onwards. To that end, ten (10) clergymen were selected and asked in one-to-one interviews their views and insights into the ever-evolving issue of migrants and refugees in Greece. The positive effects of this study are beyond a doubt numerous and insightful, as the latter sheds light on a major and ever-relevant issue and approaches it from a most influential and mighty, through the course of history, institution, that of the Greek Orthodox Church. Nonetheless, some limitations in the research of this topic are also entailed and are best pointed out, with a view to comprise a most fertile ground for the investigation and resolution of some limitations.

One of the limitations encountered had to do with validity, namely to what extent data collection responds to the initially posed research question. Yet, as qualitative studies are more flexible and open in comparison to quantitative ones, the issue of validity was addressed to a certain extent during the conduct of research. What were also of concern were reliability issues, as the conducted research was a qualitative one and focus was placed upon investigating a certain point of view in greater detail rather than measuring a certain characteristic among a wide range of people.

Additionally, sample representativeness was also something that concerned the researcher, as qualitative research, contrary to quantitative, is usually carried out with a small number of people and its data analysis comprises a most time-consuming process. Consequently, the sample of the present study, composed of ten (10) individuals, could not be considered representative and, therefore, generalization of the results is viewed as too risky and naïve, as already mentioned here above. Qualitative research also tends to entail a subjective element and, hence, findings might have been influenced, despite all efforts, from the researcher's sociocultural background and identity as well as her inexperience in qualitative research.

That is why, then, it will be suggested that more research be done on the same issue in the future, including a larger number of participants for more reliable and valid outcomes.

5. Analysis of the Results

5.1. Opinion about comparison between modern refugees and the people of Israel and Christ Himself.²³

The overwhelming majority (seven out of ten) of the interviewed clerics conceded that there is indeed a most discernible and conspicuous commonality between Christ Himself and substantially the entire country of Israel and modern-day refugees. More particularly, according to **interviewee E**, the comparison is timeless, which expressly means that refugees comprise a category of destitute persons taking flight from immense pain across time (*«Η σύγκριση είναι διαχρονική νομίζω»*). That is to say that some clerics, the most prominent of which whose thinking and exact words deserve to be mentioned would be **interviewee A** and **interviewee F**, as they maintain that migrants and refugee waves have been an inter-temporal phenomenon that is present throughout all times of human recorded history and hence constitute an indispensable and integral part of the latter (*«Η προσφυγική κρίση στην ανθρώπινη ιστορία υπάρχει πάντοτε...»* and *...«υπήρχαν και πριν τον Χριστό τέτοιες καταστάσεις...»* respectively).

While **interviewee C** is of the opinion that just like Jesus Christ, who was a refugee Himself, today's refugees are driven to flee their countries out of pure exigency and in an attempt to survive, others are quite skeptical about these people's true identity, background and ultimate intentions upon arriving to a foreign country. They fear that behind their "refugee façade" miscellaneous, insincere and malevolent motives lurk. More specifically, **interviewee H** expresses a cautious agreement with the statement and feels the need to discern and clarify the meaning behind the word "refugee" in order to make sure that the interlocutors in the interview as well as the future readers of the present thesis and in essence anyone interested in engaging with the point at issue all employ the exact same terminology and ultimately refer to the same category of people (*«...δεν θεωρώ ότι οι πρόσφυγες είναι μια μεγάλη κατηγορία που τους εντάσσει όλους μέσα. Οι άνθρωποι γίνονται πρόσφυγες για πολλούς διαφορετικούς λόγους σε διαφορετικές περιοχές και περιόδους...»*).

²³**1st Interview Question:** Γνωρίζουμε από τα πατερικά κείμενα ότι ο Χριστός και ολόκληρος ο Λαός του Ισραήλ υπήρξαν πρόσφυγες και μάλιστα καταδιωκόμενοι και κνηγημένοι όπως και οι σημερινοί ως επί το πλείστον πρόσφυγες. Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για αυτό, συμφωνείτε με αυτή τη σύγκριση; (GR)
We know from patristic texts that Jesus and the whole People of Israel were refugees and they were persecuted and hounded like modern- for the most part- refugees. What is your opinion about this? Do you agree with this comparison? (EN)

Interviewee G does not quite agree with the comparison, as in today's refugees, he notes, there is also a share of other people who avail themselves of the current humanitarian crisis and arbitrarily present themselves as victims and hence as well-worthy recipients of international help (*«Διότι, ναι μεν υπήρχαν πρόσφυγες εκείνη την εποχή στο Ισραήλ, στην παλαιά διαθήκη και στην εποχή του Χριστού, η μητέρα του Χριστού η Μαρία έφυγε από τη Βηθλεέμ και πήγε στην Αίγυπτο, ενώ σήμερα υπάρχουν μεν οι πρόσφυγες αλλά υπάρχουν και άλλα άτομα που δεν είναι πρόσφυγες»*). Yet another cleric (**interviewee D**) only partially agrees with this comparison, as among arriving “genuine refugees”, there are also irregular migrants who aim to benefit and reap political benefits (*«...εν μέρει συμφωνώ αλλά δεν συμφωνώ με αυτούς που είναι λαθραίοι και άρα όχι νόμιμοι και αποσκοπούν σε πολιτικά συμφέροντα»*).

Interviewee F even takes it a step further and goes on to express his opinion about today's refugees fleeing their homelands more easily and painlessly than refugees of the past. By saying *«...τότε οι άνθρωποι ακόμα περισσότερο ίσως...»*: he alludes to past challenging times, conditions of poverty and refugee crises that were more adverse and challenging than the present ones. By extension, what could be inferred from this is the fact that modern refugees are not living up to certain expectations, requirements and “pain standards” that the interviewee has in mind to be fully deserving of the term “refugee” as well as the succor and abettance on the natives' part.

What is more, hesitation on the part of **interviewee J** to express and discuss his opinion on the topic is also discerned. He does not seem confident enough with openly taking a stance on the issue, which can be attested by his body language (change of posture), speed of answer delivery to the question posed (long pauses) as well as the frequent use of filler words²⁴ throughout his speech (*«εε», «μμ»*). He himself attributes this diffidence to his personality traits (inhibition) as well as his professional quality as a psychologist.

5.2. Opinion about migrants and refugees in Greece²⁵

During the interview there is a clarification request on the part of **interviewee B** so as to elucidate the time period during which he is asked to express his opinion about migrants

²⁴ Short and often meaningless sounds or words we use during pauses in our speech, during which we decide what to say next. Examples of filler words in English include “ums” and “ers”.

²⁵ **2nd Interview Question:** Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα; (GR)
What is your opinion about migrants and refugees in Greece? (EN)

and refugees in Greece («Τη συγκεκριμένη χρονική περίοδο, έτσι;»). Based on this, we can infer that this category of people does not carry a universal and diachronic meaning for the interviewee but that it is rather place- and time-specific and subsequently subject to periodic changes according to his mentality. Yet another interviewee answers the question by means of clarifying that currently speaking his opinion is positive. This again could be perceived as an indirect way of saying that should time elapse and their numbers and overall standing not only do not decrease but are also on the rise or, even worse, deteriorate, his opinion might as well change and conceivably become negative.

Interviewee B is skeptical and troubled about his response to this question («Ναι, λοιπόν»... [long pause, during which he is organizing his thoughts and thinking of what to say next]), while frustration is also apparent with **interviewee F**, as the topic under discussion is something that troubles and incommodes him. This is connoted by his body language, namely the fact that he starts answering the question with a really deep sigh and pause. What is more, although **interviewee J** commiserates for migrants and refugees and hence in a way tries to empathize with them, he feels the need to further clarify his feelings towards them and mentions that he does not pity²⁶ them.

Yet another interviewee, on a negative-neutral-positive scale with regard to his feelings towards migrants and refugees, places himself in the neutral position. This could be seen as a proof and confirmation of the numbness, puzzlement and frustration that the tremendous arrival of these peoples has induced upon the native population along with the prolonged and systematic negligence to their imminent needs on the part of involved states and supranational organs.

A recurring theme among the majority of the interviewed clerics is also an allusion to Christ's teachings. By this, we denote that there is a frequent allusion to evangelic verses and teachings that pave the way and guide Christians and clerics to a stance of inclusion, aid and embrace of anyone that is in need with every possible means. What stands out and arises as interesting among these religious, Christian, compassionate and charitable approaches to the issue that are almost entirely driven by Christ's teachings is something that **interviewee F** maintained. With saying «Έχουμε τον Χριστό και αφού έχουμε τον Χριστό οφείλουμε να τον δίνουμε και στους άλλους...» another subject matter emerges that is indeed quite interesting and is no other than the need that the interviewee feels to impart Christianity to the arriving

²⁶ The Greek equivalent employed by the interviewee is «οίκτος».

populations. What could be inferred from the latter is the viewpoint that the interviewee's religion- and entire value system if we shall extend it- is superior to that of the arriving populations and thus an intention of saving them emerges. In turn, this intention could be seen as a subtle perception of these people's inferiority and the moral duty on the interviewee's part to act as a modern savior.

Interviewee B attempts to empathize with these peoples' struggles, as he tries to get in their shoes and in this way comprehend the magnitude of their exigency and problems («...είναι να μπούμε στη θέση τους. Να πούμε εγώ αν πήγαινα κυνηγημένος από κάποιον ή οτιδήποτε πώς θα ήθελα να μου συμπεριφερθούν;...»). He also claims to be an avid supporter of these people's rights and acknowledges their need for solidarity, yet he maintains that the official state response to the issue seems to undermine this effort and make things worse instead of resolving them and ameliorating their struggles. This comprises an open quest for efficient intervention towards meeting these people's immediate needs as well as a subsequent and explicit cry of frustration, if not despair, with the general failure to handle the situation effectually and the subsequent extension of human affliction that comes with the latter. But for that, however, colonial interests and prominent people are also identified by another priest as the causes and agents of this humanitarian calamity.

Interviewee C is favorably disposed towards migrants and refugees and this, he maintains, is a typical trait of Greece as a country on the whole, as the latter has already proven in various turbulent moments across time. Here an ethnocentric approach of the issue is discerned, with the idealization of the interviewee's country, namely Greece, and its emergence as a bright and exemplary country example, where the migrant and refugee arriving populations are seemingly most welcome. Additionally, the country's deep economic crisis and the subsequent aftermath are identified as the reasons behind "some"²⁷ frustration and negative views that have been expressed towards these people, which in turn add to the aforementioned idealized, ethnocentric, biased and, perchance, quite distorted depiction of the country's response to the migration and refugee issue.

²⁷ The very wording that the interviewee employs («Δεν πιστεύω ότι η Ελλάδα ήταν ποτέ λαός που έδιωξε κόσμο. Απλώς ίσως οι καταστάσεις, το ζόρισμα των ανθρώπων τώρα με την οικονομική κρίση, να υπήρξαν οι αφορμές ώστε να υπάρχουν **κάποιες** εντάσεις και μίλησαν **κάποιοι** άνθρωποι άσχημα, το οποίο δεν πιστεύω ότι το νιώθουν, απλώς ήταν της στιγμής.») to describe the adverse and often hostile disposition of Greeks towards migrants and refugees, which has already emerged and become perspicuous through the current dissertation's literature review but is also common knowledge for everyone living in Greece, is mitigating and comprises an attempt to belittle the issue and for this reason idealizes the situation, is deceptive and hence does not reflect reality.

Interviewee F attributes his not so frequent contact, and hence experience, with migrants and refugees to the locale of the parish (Veroia, Macedonia). Hence, what could be deduced from this is that were the present research and interviews conducted in a different geographical place of Greece, where migrant and refugee populations were numerically more, the results and subsequent conclusions would in all likelihood be completely different. It is exactly for this reason that further research needs to be carried out on the topic in multiple parts of Greece that have distinct migrant and refugee populations from one another so that a complete picture and truthful understanding and “reading” of them shall be feasible.

5.3. View of migrants and refugees as brothers and the role that the Christian doctrine “love one another” has played in it²⁸

Interviewee C feels that it is a moral duty on the part of the GOC to approach heathens, whether that be migrants and refugees- or even Greek Christians that disregard Jesus Christ- and endow them with Christianity, which is implicitly portrayed as a most superior religion, with the help of which these people can and shall be saved («...και στην Ελλάδα έχουμε πολλούς χριστιανούς, οι οποίοι δεν γνωρίζουν για το Χριστό. Δεν είναι απαραίτητο να είσαι μετανάστης για να μη γνωρίζεις για το Χριστό. Άρα το αν θα πρέπει σαν εκκλησία κάποια στιγμή να πλησιάσουμε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους, να τους μιλήσουμε για το Χριστό, νομίζω πως θα ‘πρεπε να γίνει.»). Christianity then appears to be a tangible solution to all problems and difficulties, including the ones that migration and life as a refugee pose.

Interviewee J, speaking from his psychological professional standpoint as well, appears to have come to terms with different²⁹ people and, thus, accepts and embraces them as fellow brothers. What is also interesting in his response is that he differentiates himself from various adverse and confrontational opinions coming from the body of the GOC, referring to this difference of opinions with the term “war”, hence connoting that there is a

²⁸ **3rd Interview Question:** Αφενός το γεγονός ότι ο Χριστός μάς δίδαξε το “αγαπάτε αλλήλους” και αφετέρου το γεγονός ότι οι σημερινοί μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες αναγκάστηκαν να έρθουν εδώ και είναι ως επί το πλείστον αλλόθρησκοι, σας έχει επηρεάσει στο να τους δείτε ως αδερφούς; (GR)

On the one hand, the fact that Christ taught us to “love one another” and on the other hand the fact that today’s migrants and refugees were forced to come here and are for the most part heathens, has it influenced and facilitated your viewing them as brothers? (EN)

²⁹ This difference had to do not only with religion but with the whole spectrum of sexuality as well, as the interviewee indicates.

considerable and quite fierce share of members of the GOC clergy that are opposing migrants and refugees (*«Και μέσα στην εκκλησία υπάρχουν πάρα πολλές απόψεις. Πρώτα από όλα δηλαδή καλούμαστε να αντιμετωπίσουμε μια τρέλα από απόψεις διστάμενες, έναν πόλεμο, μέσα στην εκκλησία.»*). This cannot but leave us pondering as to what beliefs and views would be expressed in an interview with one of these clergy members as well as the extent to which they would diverge from the ones collected in the present research.

Interviewee F appears somewhat hesitant to answer the question, which is apparent with the fillers he intuitively employs. (*«Εεε, προσωπικά εμένα... Εντάξει τώρα...»*). Apart from the benevolent view of migrants and refugees as brothers, the interviewee appears to have some negative and dismissive “flashes” and sentiments towards them as well (*«Βέβαια υπάρχει το ανθρώπινο στοιχείο που έχουμε όλοι μας και ας πούμε καμιά φορά μια κακή ίσως συμπεριφορά και αρνητική ας πούμε πολλές φορές που βγαίνει προς τα έξω αλλά αυτό είναι το ανθρώπινο, δεν είναι και πολλές φορές είναι και χωρίς να το θέλουμε, δεν είναι εσκεμμένο δηλαδή»*). Nonetheless, he quickly attributes them to his human nature, hence normalizing and sloughing away his guilt, classifying them as a universal, and hence less reproachable, human shortcoming.

Moreover, when saying *«...Μουσουλμάνους που αυτοί ίσως έχουνε μια επιθετική διάθεση προς τους Χριστιανούς.»*) the perception that all Muslims antagonize Christians is expressed, which clearly and unquestionably comprises a naïve and unsafe overgeneralization. Yet, what needs also to be mentioned is the fact that he also alludes to initiatives on a Metropolitan level to help alleviate these people’s struggles by distributing material things they were in need of (*«Και παλιότερα και στο νοσοκομείο που είχα επισκεφτεί υπήρχαν κάποιοι και πήγαμε και βοηθήσαμε και με τη Μητρόπολη έχει τύχει παλιότερα να δώσουμε κάποια πράγματα σε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους»*).

Interviewee A expresses a concern about migrants and refugees’ different religion (*«Το ότι είναι σε άλλο θρήσκευμα αυτό ασφαλώς και μας απασχολεί»*) and is, therefore, implicitly alluding to the fact that their creed is a thorny problem that needs to be thought over, assessed and resolved in one way or another so that Christian Orthodoxy remains intact.

Interviewee B’s experience and “tenure” in multicultural environments like Constantinople, Turkey and the USA were enlightening for him by means of better equipping him with love and compassion towards anything different and foreign. With these skills, knowledge and involvement in such mind-opening practices under his belt he now feels

somewhat more prepared to tackle Greece's recent woes (*«Βέβαια, διαμόρφωσα μια άποψη μέσα μου, η οποία με βοήθησε τώρα να αντιμετωπίσω στη χώρα μου αυτήν την κατάσταση»*). For the latter, the interviewee patently attacks both the Greek state as well as Europe for exploiting and systematically neglecting them, while he also maintains that for their successful integration, they need to be assigned to a job so as not to become “soft” but instead valuable members of a given society. Concurrently he alludes to the need of cultural mediation when approaching Muslim individuals, as the latter have been born and raised utterly differently in some respects in relation to the native population. The very fact that the interviewee speaks of this need to pay heed to these distinct features of these individuals, highly values, respects and honors them.

The remaining five (5) interviewees spoke of migrants and refugees as brothers that they love and embrace in accordance with Christ's teachings. Among other things, they alluded to these people's inclusion in the country, equal standing before God as well as their own share of responsibility in commiserating and sympathizing with them not on a sentimental but rather ontological level of speaking. The latter was to a great extent attributed to an existential approach of their anguish, which plainly translates into relating to the nature of being. The driving force and nucleus behind this ontological viewpoint is an overt concern about the fall of man³⁰ and the subsequent obscurantism of the human mind and deviation from God's etched path.

5.4. Migrants and refugees' impact on Greece³¹

Interviewee F sets off on this question with a filler (*«Την ελληνική κοινωνία εν γένει. Νομίζω σίγουρα υπάρχει, εεε»*), which inclines us towards expecting a negative continuance in his answer. Indeed, the interviewee mentions that migrants and refugees' impact is negative but with that he only expresses Greek modern public opinion on the topic (*«Γιατί ίσως έχουμε γαλουχηθεί έτσι. Είμαστε και λίγο, οι νέοι τώρα, οι Νεοέλληνες, φοβόμαστε το διαφορετικό και το ξένο, το κάτι άλλο από εμάς»*). The first plural that he unconsciously employs, however, in the subject is also inclusive of him and consequently we could deduce

³⁰ In Greek: *πεπτωκία φύση*

³¹ **4th Interview Question:** Κατά τη γνώμη σας, έχει κάποιο αντίκτυπο στην ελληνική κοινωνία η παρουσία των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα; Αν ναι, είναι θετικός ή αρνητικός; (GR)

According to your opinion, has migrants and refugees' presence in Greece had an impact on Greek society? If so, is it positive or negative? (EN)

that the aforementioned also comprise a personal opinion of his. Notwithstanding, what he goes on to describe as his own perception of the situation is that these people do not comprise a threat for the country, as they are forced out of need to flee their countries. By doing this, however, the interviewee never really explicitly answers the initially posed question, while his account also contains successive inconsistencies.

Another thing that this interviewee also alludes to is the strong anti-immigrant views and stances inside the GOC. Speaking of this extremity, he expresses a personal desire of his, which is no other than the idea that such extreme anti-immigrant and almost chauvinist-like ideas are to be found primarily in rural areas³² and not in big city centers, where the foreign element has undoubtedly been an integral part and hence much more accepted and embraced. Here, again, we get to acquire a short glimpse of the reality that is taking place behind GOC's closed doors as well as the well-hidden mindset of some of its members. The interviewee still appears optimistic and confident enough that this constitutes a small share and not the totality of the clergy, yet only exact numbers deriving from a quantitative analysis of the issue could constitute an accurate answer to the question.

Interviewee C speaks of a negative impact of these populations on Greece but- once again, as with the aforementioned interviewee- this is portrayed as what the vast majority believes and not what the interviewee personally maintains. This seemingly hesitant and even decidophobic lack of determination to take a stand on the issue and express his personal opinion, whatever that might be, is indicative of remorse and lack of courage. Hence, according to the majority's view, these people are not viewed as enemies that need to be fought back, yet they remain an outer, unfamiliar and in essence unwanted part of society, of which they are in effect not allowed to be functional members but instead ones the native community wishes to cast off, if not ostracize.

Three (3) of the interviewees also suggest that migrants and refugees' impact is positive, as they shall enrich and rejuvenate Greek society. What can be inferred from this is the fact that these populations are not expected to let go and, hence, drop their individual traits, such as customs, traditions etc. but instead contribute them to the already existing Greek ones. Thus, we are talking about a mutual exchange and "borrowing" on both sides, namely Greek nationals and migrants and refugees.

³² Like the one in which the majority of the interviews were conducted.

Yet another interviewee alludes to migrants and refugees' contribution of ideologies and traditions to the Greek ones and deems it as a positive aftermath of their stay in the country. In addition, the stereotypical view that these populations negatively affect the economy of a country by antagonizing locals over job positions as well as disrupt the country's social cohesion is also expressed.

Even **interviewee J**, who had previously expressed a positive and solidary stance towards migrants and refugees, perceives their impact on Greek society as primarily negative and/or neutral. He justifies and attributes the latter to the "silence" and lack of commotion that is observed around the issue, which leaves the predicament as it is, hence perpetuating the whole exigency. Notwithstanding, the negative impact of these populations on the country is solely mentioned with no further elaborations, as if any reasoning on this is self-evident and, thus, merely superfluous.

Interviewee G, who had demonstrated a neutral stance and perception when asked in a previous question about his opinion about migrants and refugees, now also takes it a step further and thinks of their impact as negative. Again, the interviewee does not feel the need to add something to this negative stance of his, manifestly supposing that this opinion per se would suffice and consequently needs no further elucidations.

Furthermore, a really creative, imaginative and allegorical response is given by **interviewee A**, who draws an extreme comparison between a healthy organism with a receiving community and a germ with an arriving migrant and refugee population. Albeit extreme and disturbing at first sight, the interviewee comes up with this example so as to conclude that when migrants and refugees bring in something good then with love as well as a proper and most willing attitude and disposition on the part of the natives, it cannot but benefit the totality of the host community. Consequently, what is implied is that natives have nothing to fear, as this contact with foreign elements shall either leave them intact or better off help them improve and diversify.

5.5. Impact of migrants and refugees on the flock/fold³³.

One of the interviewees maintains that if one looks back at the country's history, he quite effortlessly gets to comprehend that harmonious contact and association with people belonging to different religions³⁴ has always been a part of it, without this meaning that either part ever lost its unique and distinctive features. The same goes for today's migratory and refugee challenge, as by definition, and as past times themselves testify, it can only enrich and benefit both newcomers and the hosting community.

According to another interviewee, the flock follows devotedly its preacher and shepherd who in his own turn is assumed to preach and act following Christ's teachings and own paradigm. Therefore, based on His nondiscriminatory living and "hug" that could fit all without questioning their political, social or religious affiliation as well as keeping in mind this chain relation and dependency link that exists between them, the flock is not to fear losing anything of their religious identity whatsoever.

An interesting opinion is also voiced by **interviewee B**, who considers faith as a personal and intimate matter that is not affected by external factors (*«Όχι, θεωρώ πως η πίστη είναι κάτι πολύ προσωπικό»*). Hence, were we to extend this idea and apply it to the issue under discussion, we could claim that as long as someone is self-aware and confident enough in his own religion, a most peaceful and benevolent coexistence is feasible between him and other heathens, while a fear of losing once and for all any of his most precious religious traits is simply ingenuous.

Nevertheless, some contrary approaches and insights to the question were also expressed during interviews. For instance, it is believed and expected that GOC's flock will be negatively affected by migrants and refugees residing in the country. This, as one of the interviewees maintains, is reproachable and should not properly take place, as it shows a

³³ **5th Interview Question:** Κατά τη γνώμη σας μπορεί να επηρεαστεί αρνητικά το ποίμνιο της εκκλησίας από τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες; Εάν ναι, πώς;

According to your opinion can the Church's flock be negatively affected by migrants and refugees? If so, how?

³⁴ See for instance Jewish, Armenians, Muslims.

weakness in a Christian's identity and fervor, while it also comprises a deviation from Christ's teaching.

Additionally, a fear that in the years to come migrants and refugees will intermarry in Greece and perchance prevail³⁵ as a result of the country's low birth rates is also expressed. This exactly highlights an agitation over "defiling" the country's purity, although **interviewee J** acknowledges that migrants and refugees are not the ones solely responsible for the country's gradual loss of traditions, customs as well as transition to a "regime" of multiculturalism.

«Καμιά φορά υπάρχουν και άνθρωποι από την εκκλησία μας που δεν το βλέπουμε θετικά και το βλέπουμε αρνητικά και όντως καταργούμε λίγο το "αγαπάτε αλλήλους" και εκεί μπαίνει λίγο και η διχόνοια κατά κάποιον τρόπο» mentions **interviewee G**. According to this, some members of the GOC clergy are afraid of the repercussions of these populations' presence on their flock, hence undermining the very essence of the central dogma of Christianity "love one another" and sowing discord not only among the GOC clergy but also among their flock, considering the substantial influence that the former exert on the latter. What is more, another thing that is also worth reflecting upon is the first singular that the interviewee employs, which in turn implies that what is mentioned is in agreement with the interviewee's views as well.

On the same page, **interviewee D** mentions *«Κοιτάζτε, φυσικά υπάρχουν τα δύο άκρα ο ακραίος συντηρητισμός και ο φιλελευθερισμός και στην εκκλησία ακόμα. Ο συντηρητισμός που λέει δεν τους θέλουμε, και αμάν και τέτοια και δηλαδή είναι στα άκρα»*, which once again confirms the grim, and indeed distressing, reality of the prevalence of conservatist, if not radical right, opinions with regard to migrants and refugees among the GOC clergy.

Shielding of Christianity as a most precious belonging and treasure, which the GOC and its flock aren't to surrender or lose is also another theme that arises. It goes without saying that this claim promotes the idea of superior and inferior religions, with the former being in need of protection and safeguarding from the latter, while the very believers of these different religions arise as pure or benevolent and intervening or malicious respectively.

³⁵ Whether the interviewee is referring to an economic, social, religious, demographic or any other prevalence is not specified or mentioned.

As claimed by **interviewee A**, in order for the GOC to remain protected, syncretism ought to be avoided, as the opposite would comprise a threat for its body. As a result, and what could be suggested based on this response, is the fact that the flock ought to remain intact and far away from contacts with different elements, religions and heathens, as the latter would not only endanger and threaten this but also every human aspect, whether that be religion, political life, sciences etc. To put it in another way, what is suggested is that a dividing line ought to be present in all things; notwithstanding, this undoubtedly is not only absurd but also entirely infeasible in this day and age of globalization with the very essence of syncretism as a political ideology being present and almost prevalent nearly in every human facet.

5.6. View of migrants and refugees as an economic, physical and religious threat³⁶

Interviewee C endorses the idea that migrants and refugees comprise an economic threat and antagonize Greeks in job positions, as they are seeking work for their breadwinning and in order to survive and feed their families in the foreign land that they have found themselves in. On the contrary, quite the reverse is the case with natives, who are described as getting a job so as to make money and profit. The interviewee also mentions that migrants and refugees do not in actuality steal natives off of their jobs, hence contradicting what he had just previously maintained (see above) and at the same time diverging from an opinion that is most often employed in anti-immigrant and anti-refugee discourse in Greece. Instead, Greeks' stubbornness and "headstrongness" is described as the sole reason that various job positions are covered by these people, and not an ulterior motive to take over the country and prevail over the native population.

Interviewee J maintains that these people should not be viewed and perceived as any kind of threat and goes on to encourage them to embrace their presence in view of the ever-changing modern reality and more specifically the era of multiculturalism that we, as humanity, are experiencing. In spite of that, this acceptance of multiculturalism on his part

³⁶ **6th Interview Question:** Κάποιοι άνθρωποι νιώθουν ότι απειλούνται οικονομικά, σωματικά, θρησκευτικά λόγω της παρουσίας των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα. Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για αυτό; (GR)

Some people feel that they are under an economic, physical and religious threat due to the presence of migrants and refugees in Greece. What is your opinion about it? (EN)

appears to be somewhat forced and not a result of spontaneous and sincere interest for these fellow humans (*«Ευτυχώς ή δυστυχώς είναι μια κατάσταση χωρίς εύκολες λύσεις, χωρίς γυρισμό. Ζούμε σε μια πολυπολιτισμική κοινωνία, που ο καθένας πρέπει να το αντιληφθεί και να δράσουμε με τα νέα δεδομένα, να το αποδεχτούμε κατά κάποιο τρόπο»*). Another interesting thing that is mentioned is the fact that the interviewee does not really speak about the topic from a point of personal experience, which he attributes to the geographical position of the parish, hence implying that the situation and thus the economic, physical and religious threat that these people comprise for Greek nationals might indeed vary in big city centers, like those of Thessaloniki and Athens.

According to another expressed opinion, one cannot overgeneralize and speak of migrants and refugees as if they were a homogeneous and uniform aggregate of people, as that would be a particularly arbitrary inference. As in any other group, among them there are both benevolent and maleficent individuals.

Interviewee G expresses the view that migrants and refugees comprise a real threat for Greek people without however explicitly naming what kind of threat that is. Concurrently, though, the interviewee maintains that these people are also taken advantage of by Greek people, most probably economic-wise. Based on these two expressed ideas, we could claim that the interviewee is actually saying contradictory things, as someone who supposedly comprises a threat could not possibly be taken advantage of. The first plural that he employs when referring to these people's exploitation (*«Αλλά και από την άλλη κάπως τους εκμεταλλευόμεθα κατά κάποιον τρόπο τους ανθρώπους αυτούς»*) is also including him as an agent and rendering him part of the Greek individuals that take advantage of these people.

Another interviewee acknowledges the exigency and breaking point in which these populations are when arriving in a foreign land and attributes any delinquent behavior on their part to poverty and their loss of anything valuable and precious to them-whether that be loved ones, relatives or belongings and fortunes.

According to **interviewee A**, the view of migrants and refugees as an economic threat for Greek nationals is absurd and illogical, as these people take over job positions that are not practiced by Greeks anymore. Since the 1990s, the interviewee continues, job positions like field or construction work have been abandoned by Greeks and hence taken over by migrant and refugee arriving individuals. Undoubtedly, this has sparked a debate as well as a cycle of negative reactions and feelings among Greek nationals, yet it is only reasonable for these

people to search for a source of income upon arrival to Greece. This conscious yet constant abstention from specific sectors ought to be viewed as a “bilateral agreement”, while one’s own malaise should not be a burden laid on these people.

Interviewee B mentions that such claims have indeed come to his attention, hence verifying that they are quite commonplace as well as an issue of popular discourse. When saying «...ζούσε με σπόρια και στραγάλια στη χώρα του...» there is an overgeneralization of the idea that refugees used to live in their countries on exorbitantly low incomes and verily on the verges of poverty. This is undoubtedly not the rule, as a refugee that is driven out of need out of his country could exercise any profession, even eminent, prestigious and highly profitable ones like that of a doctor or a lawyer³⁷. This comprises an indirect attempt on the interviewee’s part to undermine and dent the arriving populations, their overall standard of living and ultimately their countries.

There is also an obvious devaluation of these people, as the interviewee explicitly undermines and belittles their level of education, their religion as well as their access to material goods back in their countries. All these, he continues, contribute to these people’s not having any boundaries and limits and hence being disrespectful, arrogant and even perilous towards the receiving community (*«προέρχονται και από κοινωνίες που δεν είχαν πρόσβαση στα υλικά αγαθά, δεν είχαν το δυτικό τρόπο ζωής, τον υπερκαταναλωτισμό, είναι σαν να παίρνεις έναν άνθρωπο από ένα ερημονήσι και τον βάζεις στη Νέα Υόρκη. Χαζεύει. Αυτός ο άνθρωπος όταν δεν έχει και βάσεις και παιδεία από τη χώρα του, από την πίστη του και από οτιδήποτε άλλο και δεν έχει φρένο, δεν σέβεται, επόμενο είναι να οδηγηθεί σε τέτοιες καταστάσεις»*).

The very wording “cultural shock” that the interviewee employs in his speech is also indicative of the interviewee’s inclination to undermine migrants and refugees’ culture and heritage and indirectly describe his own country and culture as superior and of utmost importance, as opposed to the former ones. There is also a diminutive use of the words “Afghans” and “Pakistanis” in the context of discussing natives’ fear of these two groups of nationalities physically attacking them.

³⁷ It is also quite often the case that only quite affluent individuals and families can cross the borders and afford to pay their most dangerous journey to another country in order to flee their own. Less prosperous and fortunate ones are forced to either stay in their country or flee to a neighboring state under exceedingly unfavorable, adverse and menacing conditions.

The interviewee, although being a native of this country- as if he speaks from a superior place and is entitled to more freedoms and rights- mentions that he is neither attacking nor bothering these people and in this way implies that the reverse is not happening, namely that these people are indeed attacking and bothering him and by extension all Greek nationals («...εγώ δεν σε χτυπάω, δεν σε πειράζω, δεν σε ενοχλώ που είναι η χώρα μου...»).

Yet another pejorative sentence, according to which migrants and refugees remain deeply unlettered and uncivilized, follows («Εσύ δεν μπορείς να το καταλάβεις από μόνος σου γιατί δεν έχεις την παιδεία από εκεί που προέρχεσαι, δεν είσαι από τη Γαλλία»). This is attributed to their origin, while the interviewee even mentions that they are not from France, a most illustrious European and cultural art center, thus implying that anyone falling outside this Caucasian, European, westernized spectrum is essentially a vicious and worth-averting human trash.

Interviewee D makes an interesting verb choice («Είναι ένα είδος πρόκλησης, να δείξουμε πώς μπορούμε να τους αντιμετωπίσουμε τους αλλόθρησκους ή αυτούς που δεν πιστεύουν στο Χριστό. Για να δούμε, μπορούμε να βοηθήσουμε;»), as the verb “help” hints at the fact that these people are in need of help, hence discreetly positioning their religion at a lower place when compared to Orthodox Christianity. What emerges out of this is a subsequent heroization of Greek nationals, who lend a helping hand to these people, prove themselves to be big-hearted, benign and gracious.

Yet another interviewee artfully seems to hide himself behind society as a whole and hence finds difficulty in welcoming and embracing the economic and religious coexistence with these people, as the latter constitutes a prerequisite in today’s ever-changing, globalized and increasingly multicultural societies that we live in.

5.7. Opinion about migrants/ refugees as criminals/bad people³⁸

A common ground for nearly all interviewees is the fact that they feel the need for the state and supranational organs like the European Union to better handle the situation under

³⁸ **7th Interview Question:** Οι μετανάστες και οι πρόσφυγες περιγράφονται συχνά όσο κακοποιά στοιχεία/ κακοί άνθρωποι. Συμφωνείτε με αυτό; (GR)

Migrants and refugees are often described as criminals/ bad people. Do you agree with this? (EN)

discussion, as it is the one at fault. The national and supranational handling of the situation so far appears to be falling somewhat short, with some interviewees maintaining that it endows too many freedoms and financial benefits to these people at the expense of natives, while others believe that there is a systematic disregard and negligence of these people's affairs and hence an infringement of some of their most fundamental rights and freedoms.

One interviewee recognizes that these people are driven out of need to move or flee to another country and are often destitute. As a result, upon arrival to Greece, they might find themselves in such a pressing and dire need of even the "simplest" and most rudimentary things and commodities- like food, medicine or a roof over their and their families' heads- that they are driven to commit minor or major crimes. This is also apprehended by the majority of the clerics that were interviewed, as they admit that it is a universal human trait that even they themselves would resort to were they to experience these hardships and be in these people's shoes.

In an attempt to illustrate his opinion that migrants and refugees are indeed often viewed as persons who commit wicked acts, **interviewee G** brings up as an example the case of Albanians arriving to Greece during the 1990s. These people were at first viewed and considered as criminals that spread the fear among the natives; nonetheless, as time went by the vast majority of them proved to be valuable working hands for the country as well as worthy and most dignified people that built their own future and were able to settle in this new country.

The detrimental impact of the promotion and salience of only delinquent migrant and refugee behavior and the subsequent xenophobic and racist public molding and "nourishment" is also expressed by **interviewee I**. Indeed, in Greece mass media- especially TV, radio and the press- are essentially bribed by the ruling political party and hence exceptionally biased. Reasonably, it is most often the case that for migrants and refugees to make it to the news, wrongdoings and misbehaviors have been selected as a headline and only scarcely, if ever, a committed benefaction on their part.

Yet another interviewee maintains that not all migrants and refugees are criminals, while he also attributes this delinquent behavior on their part to the situation, violence and hostility of the habitat that they had to leave behind and flee. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the majority of them leads a peaceful life among Greeks and they are in

actuality the ones that are afraid of the native population, as they are in a precarious state, without knowing whether they will stay in the country or depart to another one.

Interviewee B makes an indirect allusion to the fact that the experiences and upbringing of these populations could be a most fertile ground for the demonstration of delinquent behavior later on in life. In other words, here we see an attack and undermining of these people's culture and standards of living (*«Από εκεί και πέρα πώς μεγαλώνει ο κάθε άνθρωπος παίζει το ρόλο του»*). Furthermore, national, supranational and other non-governmental organizations all contribute and sustain, by means of their help with material goods, these people's so called "softness" and chronic dependence on external and readily delivered aid, without any toil or preoccupation on their part. This, the interviewee continues, turns them into ungrateful individuals, which could resemble spoiled children, that would feel like they can be and behave however they want and would not even hesitate to act unlawfully. Notwithstanding, he continues, even when they are penalized for their offenses, the latter are rather minor and negligible, if any at all (*«...υπάρχει μια ατιμωρησία γιατί το κράτος έχει δεσμευτεί με κάποιους όρους από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση. Μια κοινωνία όμως δεν μπορεί να συνεχίσει έτσι, οι κανόνες πρέπει να είναι κανόνες για όλους. Δεν μπορώ τώρα εγώ να βλέπω να μπαίνει ένας κλέφτης στο σπίτι μου, δεν έχει σημασία αν είναι Έλληνας ή ξένος, να μην του φέρω μια γλάστρα στο κεφάλι γιατί φοβήθηκα, είναι φυσιολογικό. Ή είχα ένα πιστόλι, αεροβόλο, και τον χτύπησα, δεν τον σκότωσα, τον τραυμάτισα, δεν μπορεί εμένα να μου γίνεται δικαστήριο γιατί μπήκε στο σπίτι μου και αυτός σε ένα μήνα να είναι έξω, να μην τιμωρείται. Η τιμωρία πρέπει να είναι για όλους, να έχει παιδαγωγικό χαρακτήρα»*).

Interviewee E endorses the idea that migrants and refugees are criminals and/or bad people and also justifies it by saying that this is because of where they grew up in and their culture (*«Είναι δύσκολο, έτσι μάθανε από εκεί από το δικό τους τον πολιτισμό»*). Undoubtedly, this comprises a direct and unswerving attack to their ethos and moral standing not only as individuals but as a worldview and country as well. In addition, the fact that he mentions that these populations are hard to acclimate to Greek culture and desires, indicates that for a coexistence between the two-Greeks and migrants/refugees- only the latter are supposed to alter and adapt their overall heritage and identity so that it resembles or rather approaches that of the native community (*«Οι άνθρωποι αυτοί είναι δύσκολο να εγκλιματιστούν στο δικό μας πολιτισμό, στα δικά μας θέλω»*). Of course, this is another depiction of how unilateral and one-dimensional the multifaceted and intricate issue of a harmonious "marriage" and coexistence between different groups of people is approached by the interviewee.

5.8. Opinion about the noted change of attitude towards migrants and refugees over the years and over the climax of the crisis³⁹

Interviewee C employs a first singular pronoun and is thus expressing a personal opinion («...δεχθήκαμε...», «...είδαμε...», «...μας βλέπουν...» etc.). What he essentially claims is the fact that the problem with migrants and refugees is numerical, with Greece being only able to receive a specific amount of these populations. This number of arriving individuals has long been trespassed- the interviewee emphatically and indeed quite exaggeratedly mentions that their numbers have long trespassed the threshold of 1.000.000 and are approaching that of 10.000.000 (*Άλλο 1.000.000 πρόσφυγες άλλο 10.000.000 πρόσφυγες, δεν μπορούμε πλέον να το διαχειριστούμε. Έχουμε όντως πρόβλημα, θέλοντας και μη, όταν ο αριθμός ξεπεράσει τους αριθμούς τους δικούς μας υπάρχει πρόβλημα. Δεχόμαστε ένα κομμάτι πρόσφυγες αλλά δεν μπορούμε να δεχθούμε περισσότερους από όσους είμαστε, είναι θέμα επιβίωσης μετά, δεν θα λεγόμαστε Ελλάδα μετά*)- and it is for this reason that they are starting to comprise a threat for the country, as they threaten to exceed even the native population. The latter would be a worst-case and detrimental scenario, as it would fundamentally strip the country of its very essence and identity.

Yet another interviewee claims that the ever-growing numbers of migrants and refugees might have been the reason for a change in the way Greek minds and hearts view them. What is also verily interesting is the fact that the interviewee adduces some tangible evidence and example from an acquaintance of him that illustrates this change in beliefs and attitudes. According to this, a formerly positive stance about these individuals turned into a negative one due to some delinquent behaviors («...με έχουνε ρημάζει...») as well as their systematic refusal to contribute even to the slightest to keeping the camp, in which they are housed, clean («...συχνά μου έλεγε ότι επειδή ζούσε ακριβώς δίπλα τους, δεν παίρνουν ούτε ένα χαρτί από κάτω να σηκώσουν... Δε φταίνε αυτοί, μου είπε, αλλά φταίει η γενική πολιτική που ακολουθήθηκε»).

³⁹ **8th Interview Question:** Τα πρώτα χρόνια της μεταναστευτικής/ προσφυγικής κρίσης ένας αριθμός Ελλήνων πολιτών εξέφραζε και επιδείκνυε θετική στάση προς τους μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες, η οποία με την πάροδο του χρόνου και την κορύφωση της κρίσης έγινε αρνητική. Γιατί πιστεύετε ότι συνέβη αυτό; (GR)

During the first years of the migration/refugee crisis a number of Greek people expressed and practically demonstrated a positive stance towards migrants and refugees, which in the course of time and with the crisis reaching a climax it became negative. Why do you think this happened? (EN)

Interviewee F provides a tangible example of this turnaround with regard to Greeks' opinion about migrants and refugees. What is essentially described in it is the fact that an acquaintance of the interviewee had some negative experiences with some of them, as the latter had been disrespectful by means of destroying small churches and country chapels (*«...έχουνε κάνει καταστροφές σε κάτι ζωκλήσια και σε κάτι ερημοκλήσια που δεν πατάει άνθρωπος, και αυτοί βρίσκουν ευκαιρία και κάνουν ζημιές και δεν σέβονται...»*). The interviewee identifies as possible causes of this turnaround the divergence of religions of the two distinct groups (*«...βασίστηκαν στο θρησκευτικό κομμάτι που υπάρχει αυτή η διαφορά της θρησκείας μας και ήταν η αιτία αυτή να αλλάξει η συμπεριφορά απέναντί τους...»*) as well as the rising numbers of these people arriving to Greece. What is more, these populations are also most often described as desperate and thus driven to engage in unlawful activities, which again may have comprised yet another cause of this change in the way they are received.

Interviewee I maintains that apart from possible personal experiences, people are also influenced by the mass media. Since the latter are incessantly displaying a most negative reality of these people's presence in Greece, it is more than reasonable for the public opinion to be overwhelmed and affected by it and hence uncritically adopt and present it as one's own (*«Η γνώμη τους βασίζεται κυρίως σε αυτά που ακούν, από τα μέσα ενημέρωσης. Οπότε κατά κάποιον τρόπο η άποψή τους είναι κάπως διαστρεβλωμένη»*).

Although **interviewee A** acknowledges that migrants and refugees are not liable to any harm or malice, he notes that frustration and despair are in a sense inescapable sentiments on the part of the native community, as the latter understands that the status quo is not to change any time soon and individual initiatives can no longer stem, let alone resolve, the crisis. Another aspect that is extensively discussed and contributes to this change of opinion with regard to these individuals is also the major effect that the mass media in Greece have on shaping public opinion as well as the almost destructive, biased, unilateral and almost exclusively negative depiction and public attention these people get, with their positive portrayal being minimal and almost non-existent (*«Η εγκληματικότητα έχει μεγάλες διαστάσεις αυτή την εποχή όπως επίσης και μεγάλη διαφήμιση... Οι άνθρωποι ακούνε διαρκώς ό,τι κακό γίνεται και όχι ό,τι καλό προέρχεται από αυτούς τους ανθρώπους. Ακούμε ας πούμε ότι ένας αλλοδαπός μπήκε σε ένα μαγαζί και το διέρρηξε. Εγώ ξέρω όμως επίσης ότι στην ιδιαίτερη πατρίδα μου ένας αλλοδαπός έπεσε μέσα στη θάλασσα, με κίνδυνο της ζωής του, και έσωσε μία ηλικιωμένη γυναίκα από βέβαιο πνιγμό. Δεν το είδα σε κανένα*

κανάλι αυτό, κι αν το έβλεπα θα το έβλεπα μια φορά για ένα δευτερόλεπτο, χωρίς επανάληψη, δεν θα έπαιρνε την διάσταση που έπρεπε. Στις κακές ειδήσεις υπάρχει μία συνεχής επανάληψη, μπορεί να παίζει και 1 και 2 και 5 μέρες. Μία καλή είδηση ή δεν θα παίζει καθόλου ή θα γίνει μία απλή αναφορά.»).

Another interviewee identifies three main reasons as the underlying ones for the issue under discussion. The first cause that Greek public mindset and attitudes towards migrants and refugees have changed for the worse is the overall misery and hardships of life in Greece. Indeed, the harsh economic repercussions that came along with the global financial crisis of 2009⁴⁰ as well as a number of erroneous and systematically inappropriate subsequent handlings of public funds have established a climate of insecurity, austerity and deprivation that is hard, if not unfeasible, to relinquish. The second reason, the interviewee continues, is that migrants and refugees are regrettably the scapegoats of Greeks' accumulated anger, frustration and despair, while as the final reason the fact that this humanitarian exigency does not seem to change and no viable solution is discerned in the foreseeable future is mentioned.

Interviewee G maintains that some of the arriving individuals are neither migrants nor refugees and perchance this has sparked a change in Greek people's sentiment, as they might feel that they have been deceived and individuals that do not deserve international protection and benefits are actually reaping them (*«Ίσως επειδή ενώ περιμέναμε ανθρώπους, οι οποίοι να προέρχονται όντως από έναν πόλεμο, άνθρωποι που έχουν χάσει τα νοικοκυριά τους, τα σπίτια τους, τη χώρα τους, και ήρθαν σε μια χώρα για να βρουν κάτι καλύτερο, αλλά δυστυχώς μέσα σε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους υπήρχαν και κάποιοι, οι οποίοι δεν ήταν ούτε πρόσφυγες ούτε μετανάστες»*). The very same claim could be quite perplexing and puzzling in the sense that it could insinuate that these people, not being real refugees that flee their countries out of pure need, might just as well be criminals, offenders as well as engage in unlawful behavior.

As stated by **interviewee B**, Greeks lost their jobs, European funds were launched to assist migrant and refugee populations, the country's unemployment rates were increased and all these constitute feelings that one cannot hold back for long. Instead, the easiest and most convenient channeling of such emotions is undoubtedly scapegoats, namely migrants and refugees. These individuals, however, are not responsible for depriving Greeks of their jobs, as they could and ought to have met with different reactions from Greeks. For

⁴⁰ Also known as Great Recession.

instance, as the interviewee characteristically mentions, Greek craftsmen could have upgraded their services in order to antagonize immigrant Albanian ones or try to associate with them and convince them to become their business partners, yet they did nothing of the sort, hence essentially giving out their jobs and clients to the newcomers (*«Εγώ μαλώνω σε εισαγωγικά πολλές φορές με Έλληνες μαστόρους που λένε ότι οι Αλβανοί μάς πήραν τις δουλειές. Ωραία, συμφωνώ ως ένα σημείο. Εσύ τι έκανες για να μη χάσεις τη δουλειά σου; Δούλευες; Λέει ναι. Θα σου πω εγώ ότι δεν δούλευες όπως δουλεύουν αυτοί γιατί μου έλεγες τώρα θα κάνω διάλειμμα, τώρα πρέπει να φάω, τώρα θα με κολλήσεις ένσημα παραπάνω για τον υπάλληλό μου. Αυτοί, πονηρά σκεπτόμενοι πολλές φορές, είπαν δεν θέλω ένσημα, δεν θέλω τίποτα, θα σου κάνω τη δουλειά σε μία δύο ώρες. Κρατήσατε τις δουλειές σας, συμπεριφερθήκατε σωστά, τους βοηθήσατε αυτούς να ενταχθούν, να συνεργαστείτε, να κάνετε οτιδήποτε;»*).

According to **interviewee E**, among the refugee populations there were many that were not really deserving of the term “refugee”, as they were choosing to leave their countries in search of a better financial and professional future, namely they were nothing more than migrants. A personal experience of his is also narrated, according to which these people refused to receive the material aid, i.e. food, that Europe sent them (*«...μας έστειλε η Μητρόπολη να πάμε στους ανθρώπους αυτούς, στο Κλειδί Ημαθίας που τους άφηναν τα λεωφορεία, να τους πάμε νερό, γάλατα, χυμούς, τρόφιμα για τα μωρά τους, τέτοια. Δεν τα έπαιρναν, δεν τα ήθελαν υπήρχε μία άρνηση από μέρος τους...»*). Another surprising thing that is mentioned is the fact that they had mobile phones of the latest technology that were better in relation to the ones those that were responsible for the distribution of aid had, which as an event in turn, the interviewee notes, established a mutual dislike on both sides (*«είχαν καλύτερα κινητά από μας, πιο εξελιγμένοι από εμάς. Οπότε αυτό δεν το είδαμε ούτε εμείς καλά ούτε αυτοί, επηρεαστήκαμε όλοι»*).

5.9. Interviewees’ own change of opinion and attitude towards migrants and refugees over the years and over the climax of the crisis⁴¹

⁴¹ **9th Interview Question:** Έχει αλλάξει η δική σας γνώμη για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες κατά τη διάρκεια της μεταναστευτικής προσφυγικής κρίσης; Αν ναι, γιατί; (GR)

Has your opinion about migrants and refugees changed in the course of the migration/refugee crisis? If yes, why? (EN)

Five (5) of the asked interviewees have expressed a deeply humanitarian view, according to which their stance and opinion has not changed about migrant and refugee populations in Greece. To this positive disposition they seem loyal and consistent through time-that is to say they hold a firm and constant view-, as they perceive these categories of people as a group that is by definition in need of their support and solidarity without further temporal, regional or numerical asterisks and exceptions.

Interviewee C's opinion about migrants and refugees has not as of yet changed but he quite eloquently declares that it shall change if these populations keep arriving at Greece, as the latter will then lose its distinguishing features once and for all (*«Δεν άλλαξε, αλλά αν συνεχίσουν να φέρνουν μετανάστες τότε ναι, θα αλλάξει»*). The interviewee is also only open to migrants and refugees residing in the country only for a limited amount of time and not for long. If need be and if the situation indeed demands it, these populations will be forced out of the country, hence pointing to a benevolence and compassion that is running out of time and is in effect for who knows how much longer (*«Και από το να φτάσουμε στο σημείο να τους διώχνουμε καλύτερα να πούμε ένα stop. Δεν είπα να μην τους δεχτούμε για λίγο καιρό αλλά δεν ξέρεις πώς θα καταλήξει αυτή η κατάσταση»*).

A change that yet another interviewee speaks of is attributed to his gradual habituation and normalization of this highly unsettling and unfair human exigency. The initial fear and unease that he was experiencing have now receded, which in its turn is disconcerting, as at the epicenter of what is discussed are suffering human souls and not just a blob.

Interviewee G had previously adopted and expressed a negative stance about these individuals, hence, he goes on to clarify that this negative behavior of his has not changed and remains as such until the present day.

Interviewee F clarifies that his opinion about migrants and refugees has not as of the time of the interview changed and it remains positive (*«Τώρα, σήμερα που μιλάμε ναι»*). It becomes clear that this constitutes an indication of the fact that it could be subject to changes, which can be triggered by these individuals' behavior and conduct in a foreign country, hence highlighting the subtle perception that they need to effectively and in the long run prove that they are worthy of the natives' continuous support and solidarity.

Interviewee B, in turn, mentions that the primary reason for his change- from a positive to negative stance- with regard to migrants and refugees is the latter's increasingly

arriving numbers. An immediate stop needs to be put by the competent state authorities that are systematically failing to handle the situation, as the country is already burdened with a seemingly endless list of problems and financial obligations and hence its citizens cannot, as it can be reasonably expected, endure and remain indifferent to such mishandlings any longer.

As opposed to Skopjans, **interviewee B** continues, who have maltreated and even killed such people arriving at their territory, Greeks would have never resorted to such atrocities. Consequently, both the country and its people are glorified and surface as superior and more civilized than the former. Greece and its natives are also once again idealized with an example that dates back to a long-gone past during the Greek revolutionary war against Turkish people two centuries ago (1821), during which they hardly ever engaged in monstrosities with their rivals, as opposed to Turks.

The interviewee goes on to speak in quite an absurd way, as he asks for the European Union to offer to Greek people a good amount of money just like it offers to migrants and refugees. Clearly, this comprises an irrational request, as no matter how deep in a financial impasse Greeks find themselves, the European Monetary Fund could not possibly hand out financial aid freely, as the latter is reserved for the accommodation and integration of migrants and refugees⁴².

What is more, the interviewee also brings up a tangible example of the inequality that he mentions and feels, by contrasting the hard-earned money that his son sweats for with the exact same and effortless money that these people are entitled to, while their vegetative existence in the country and their full dependence on European funds is also indicated (*«Αλλά από τη στιγμή που φυτοζωούν δεν γίνεται»*). What is also mentioned is the fact that one cannot but be disturbed with this transition of these individuals from hunger to merriment, while the reverse is discerned among Greeks.

⁴² See Migrant and Refugee Fund (MRF).

5.10. Common and/or different features between migrants/refugees and Greeks⁴³?

Five (5) of the interviewed clerics maintained that what is more prevalent are the common traits between migrants/refugees and Greek nationals. This opinion was established on the fact that both categories share a most cardinal trait, that of their common human nature. What this essentially translates into is the fact that all individuals included in these categories are entitled to the same rights, dreams, needs and desires and, hence, far outweigh the differences and disparities that realistically exist between any dissimilar- whether that has to do with ethnicity, religion, sociopolitical, economic or any other standing- groups of people. Undoubtedly, it is a most compassionate and humanitarian approach that respects and sees the other- no matter if he is from Syria, Pakistan, France or Switzerland- in the same way, that is as a fellow human being, with which he shares more in common than the extent to which they differ.

Interviewee C maintains that the differences, rather the common traits, are numerically more between the two groups, as the very way they have been raised is different, thus implying that the latter comprises an immense hindrance to a harmonious coexistence between them. What is more, the fact that these groups come from multiple and indeed quite different countries and areas, hence having different backgrounds and experiences, in its turn further complicates the situation under discussion. Concurrently, some of these populations' customs and practices- see for instance Muslims' habit of returning a bad deed to someone or Syrians' opportunistic claim of anything they set their eyes upon (*«Επίσης για τους Μουσουλμάνους ισχύει όταν σου κάνει κάποιος κακό πρέπει να του κάνεις κι εσύ το ίδιο, οι Σύριοι έχουν μεγαλώσει με το να διεκδικούν με το έτσι θέλω αυτό που θέλουν»*)- comprise unjustifiable overgeneralizations pointing to racist mentalities, as they are unfoundedly claimed to be valid for entire religious and ethnic categories of people respectively.

Interviewee G notes that not only do the differences outweigh the commonalities between the two groups, but that the latter are essentially non-existent (*«Όχι, δεν υπάρχουν*

⁴³ **10th Interview Question:** Θεωρείτε ότι είναι περισσότερα τα κοινά ή τα διαφορετικά γνωρίσματα (γλώσσα, θρησκεία, ήθη και έθιμα, παραδόσεις, πρακτικές) μεταξύ Ελλήνων και μεταναστών/προσφύγων; (GR)

Do you consider (numerically) more the common or different characteristics (language, religion, customs and practices) among Greeks and migrants/refugees? (EN)

κοινά...»), with migrants and refugees' language, religion, customs and practices all being remote and starkly divergent from Greek ones. What also emerges as another difference between the two categories is the fact that migrants and refugees arriving in Greece disregard and in this way disrespect the country and its various distinct customs and practices, as opposed to the way Greeks of the past that had migrated to a foreign country respected and embraced them, without however necessarily adopting them.

Interviewee F mentions that although there are both differences and similarities between the two categories, what are more prevalent are the differentiating traits among them. He goes on to speak of a divergence that is evident in practical everyday things, for instance specific foods or drinks⁴⁴ that Muslims are not allowed to consume, hence constituting even the simplest act of eating, getting one's shopping list and becoming convives in a shared table a most challenging undertaking (*«Βλέπετε απαγορεύεται να φάνε κάποιες τροφές οπότε βλέπω και πολλές φορές μου κάνει εντύπωση στο σούπερ μάρκετ που έχει πληροφορία πάνω, γράφει ποιο είναι κατάλληλο για Μουσουλμάνους για βρώση. Οπότε βλέπω ότι υπάρχουνε και στην πρακτική την καθημερινότητά μας έχουμε διαφορές»*).

Nevertheless, and despite the aforementioned objective differences and difficulties, what is also mentioned by the interviewee is the fact that, a most profitable, for both parties involved, coexistence is also feasible. As history reveals, Greeks were able to fully and harmoniously coexist with Turks in Asia Minor and Pontus by means of mutually respecting and endorsing each other's individuality and heritage, while they were not losing or changing concurrently any of their idiosyncrasy. Hence, what is suggested and emerges as a viable solution for the present population and situation under discussion is a "marriage" and not an acculturation and assimilation of the one into the dominant culture.

Interviewee E is expressing an extreme and racist opinion, according to which Islam as a religion is identified with Jihadists- namely Islamic fundamentalists that fight in defense of the Islamic faith- and hence blatantly criminalized. As a result, and by extension of the latter, an entire category, Muslims, are in turn outlawed and criminalized and for this reason implicitly declared as unwanted and unwelcome in the country, which implicitly emerges as an antipodal of what can be inferred about Greek nationals.

⁴⁴ The consumption of alcohol is considered to be haram, namely prohibited and sinful.

5.11. The impact of the different traits between migrants/refugees on the entire society⁴⁵

According to **interviewee I**, the different characteristics between migrants/refugees and Greek nationals neither should nor could be bridged, that is to say we are speaking of a formidable, yet not detrimental, void.

Interviewees H and D also report that these different characteristics of the involved groups, namely migrants/refugees and Greek nationals, do not have to alter in a context where everyone is to retain his individuality, while contemporaneously being part of a wider collectivity.

Interviewee G claims that this bridging of the differences between Greek nationals and migrants/refugees could have happened, but it did not take place primarily because of the latter's refusal to embrace Greek culture and values, hence indicating once again that this symbiosis is an unbalanced and one-sided procedure that falls exclusively on migrants/refugees.

Three (3) of the interviewed clerics have expressed moderate views, which can be summarized in the following: it lies within the discretion of both sides to actually enrich and not weaken a given society, while the latter, realistically speaking, cannot only be comprised of congeneric groups of people. Hence, what emerge as essential means and tools for a most fruitful and enriching coexistence between different peoples are mutual respect and embrace of each other's differences and individuality.

According to **interviewee A**, this contact and association with these diverse groups of people is not something that should frustrate and keep one uneasy and distressed for long, as it has been taking place since ancient ages. Greek history itself testifies that it is capable of exporting what it has in abundance as well as importing what it lacks and finds along the way, namely social, religious, cultural and any other stimuli. An indeed insightful comparison is also drawn by the interviewee, who resembles Greek culture with a sculptor; just like the latter gives form and shape to a piece of marble, Greek culture has across the years proven to

⁴⁵ **11th Interview Question:** Κατά τη γνώμη σας τα διαφορετικά αυτά γνωρίσματα μεταξύ Ελλήνων και μεταναστών/ προσφύγων αποτελούν επιπλέον βάρος ή όφελος για το σύνολο της ελληνικής κοινωνίας; (GR)

According to your opinion, do these different traits among Greeks and migrants/refugees comprise an extra burden or benefit for the entirety of the Greek society? (EN)

be able to revive and give birth to anything that arrives in its “gulfs” (*«Θα λέγαμε ότι ο ελληνικός πολιτισμός μοιάζει με έναν γλύπτη [«Όπως ο γλύπτης πρέπει να δώσει μορφή σε ένα κομμάτι μάρμαρο, το ίδιο έκανε και ο ελληνικός πολιτισμός»]*).

Interviewee J maintains that this pluralism, interaction and need for a peaceful coexistence already comprise a defining and inextricable part of modern societies. As a result, it is believed that confronted with and facing this new reality, one suffers from vertigo and does not have a fixed and permanent place to rest anymore. This in turn leads to people suffering from neuroses, depression and anxieties and, hence, it could be claimed that this heterogeneity comprises a burden that brings about a negative impact not on a society but rather on an individual level. This induced bewilderment, the interviewee continues, that one experiences is to be dealt with not by opposing what is foreign to us but by means of embracing pluralism as well as resorting to what is safe and truly liberating for one’s soul and well-being.

Interviewee C expresses the opinion that Greek society is expected to bear the brunt of these people’s different traits. The latter seem to be particularly negative, as migrants and refugees refuse to let go of past habits that they used to have in their homelands, such as defecating in the street, throwing rubbish or eating dogs, which are described as being most normal and natural for them, and which they bring in the hosting country as well (*«Δηλαδή όταν ο άλλος θέλει να κάνει αυτό που έκανε εκεί που ήτανε, επηρεάζει και το καινούριο μέρος που έρχεται. Δηλαδή αν μάθει αυτός να κάνει την ανάγκη του όπου θέλει, όταν περπατάς στο δρόμο και το βλέπεις αυτό, επηρεάζεσαι, ή πετάει τα σκουπίδια... ακόμα και οι διατροφικές συνήθειες, μπορεί να φάνε ζώα και σκυλιά, μπορεί να το κάνανε, σε αυτούς ήταν κάτι το φυσιολογικό, σε εμάς δεν είναι φυσιολογικό»*). What is really crucial here to note is the fact that these people’s everyday lives and actions are described in a most derogative way as being really despicable and vile, resembling more the habits of a stray animal rather those of a civilized human being. The interviewee also notes that the bridging of these differences is something hard, yet not infeasible to achieve as long as there is mutual will on both sides, as the saying “it is easier to let go of one’s soul rather than his habits” goes (*«Λένε χαρακτηριστικά “καλύτερα να σου βγει η ψυχή παρά το χούι»*).

Interviewee B notes that this contact could be interpreted as a chance for a connection and coexistence, for which, nonetheless, migrants and refugees will have to concede and give way some of their traits, hence pointing to an acculturation and unilateral

change on their part, as the interviewee does not seem to want to relinquish any qualities of his own culture. What is more, the interviewee's allusion to the origin of migrant and refugee mothers, who are not from Monaco or Switzerland («...καλή μου κοπέλα έχετε πέντε παιδιά, δεν ήρθες από το Μονακό, την Ελβετία...»), is an evident attack and a derogatory comment about these people's countries, which are, according to the interviewee, not as affluent and should, thus, come to terms with their questionable fate and need to kneel in respect and even disavow some of their traditions («Σου προσφέρεται ένα φαγητό, δέξου το και βάλε μέσα την διάκριση, δηλαδή έχουν και μια έλλειψη διάκρισης αυτοί γιατί έχουν μια σύγχυση, δεν ξέρω αν μπορούν να συνέλθουν, να πουν δεν θα κάνω τώρα τη νηστεία μου κι όταν συνέλθω την κάνω») before other, ostensibly superior, traditions and heritage.

The interviewee goes on and mentions that the gap of differences among the groups can only be bridged in a miraculous way. This is attributed to the fact that migrants and refugees are portrayed as being really stubborn and not giving in to any of their beliefs or habits in an attempt to facilitate this coexistence. An indicative example of the latter would be their insistence to refuse to eat pork in such times of crises, which undoubtedly apart from being a demonstration of one's faith is also a projection of one's selfishness.

Interviewee E appears firm in what he claims with regard to migrants and refugees being an apparent burden for Greek society («Βάρος, βέβαια, βάρος»), while also noting that it is impossible for these differences to be bridged, as neither of the involved sides wants it. He justifies it by espousing a most prominent, yet false, idea among Greek nationals that these individuals exacerbate the already burdened financial status quo of the country and steal them of valuable and much-wanted job positions, thus driving a great deal of their fellow citizens out of the country in a search of finding a better future abroad (*Γιατί η κοινωνία μας ήτανε που ήτανε δύσκολη από το 2009 που ξεκίνησε η κρίση, ήρθανε και αυτοί επιπλέον και επιβαρυνθήκαμε. Κοίτα και το αντιμετωπίζουμε με το να φεύγουν πολλοί νέοι στο εξωτερικό για να βρούνε ένα καλύτερο μέλλον*). Needless to say, a more scientific approach to this alleged competition would reject these claims as unfounded and bring forth arguments that substantiate that these people can in essence contribute to the country's economy and overall development.

5.12. Opinion about migrants and refugees' arrival as a result of need or an ulterior plan of leaders and their interests on a national and international level⁴⁶

Eight (8) of the interviewed clerics maintained that the answer to this question might lie somewhere in the middle, as these people are not to blame for any of these discomforts and hardships that they are forced to endure. Perhaps there is indeed a bigger game, which we might however never get to learn of its true existence or not; one that is directed by leaders who initiate wars and so seamlessly and shamelessly inflict human misery and use as their tolls- their chess pieces if we may- these innocent and civilian populations, who burden themselves with the subsequent expatriation and lifelong suffering. Nevertheless, wherever truth may indeed lie, what is certain and undeniably disheartening is the fact that millions of people are led to abandon their lives, homes, familial places and people and search for a better future in another country, often not in the vicinity of their homelands but far off. In the latter case they are to encounter an entirely different status quo from what they knew of so far and to which they have to adapt and learn to live in, most often meeting with unfavorable and indeed quite hostile sentiment and reception from the native community in the hosting country.

Interviewee B endorses the idea that migrants and refugees are arriving in Greece out of need and due to the state of armed conflict in their countries, whether that be Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria or Morocco. However, the fact that he refers to what an acquaintance of his told him about people on refugee boats tearing up their identities and documents upon arrival to Mytilene in an attempt to claim a false Syrian origin («...ερχόντουσαν και πριν πατήσουν το έδαφος στη Μυτιλήνη έσκιζαν μπροστά στο λιμενικό και την αστυνομία τα διαβατήριά τους, τα πετούσαν στη θάλασσα και τους ρωτούσαν οι λιμενικοί: “Πώς σε λένε;”. Έλεγαν αυτοί “Χασάν Χασάν”. “Από πού είσαι;” “Από τη Συρία”. “Ελα”, χωρίς έλεγχο άλλο...»), proves that he embraces this idea and might believe that all supposedly arriving refugees might be in

⁴⁶ **12th Interview Question:** Αντιλαμβάνεστε τη μαζική άφιξη των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων ως κάτι που προκλήθηκε από την ανάγκη αυτών των ανθρώπων ή ως μέρος ενός απώτερου σχεδίου ηγετών και των συμφερόντων τους σε Εθνικό και διεθνές επίπεδο; (GR)

Do you perceive migrants and refugees' mass arrival as something that was caused from these people's need or as part of an ulterior plan of leaders and their interests on a national and international level? (EN)

essence migrants or that they pretend to be of another war-torn country in an attempt to claim a refugee identity and subsequently enjoy international protection.

This frustration and resentment towards Greece's state controls on the arriving populations is further accentuated with the interviewee's extensive description, and indeed admiration, of a personal experience of his of the meticulous, as opposed to the alleged almost non-existent Greek one, US border control that anyone entering the USA has to go through. Additionally, another information that he brings up in its turn adds to his frustration and anger due to the lack of an organized, humanitarian state response to the issue; according to this, Greek police is essentially escorting on foot during nights, and hence in secret, what they term as "illegal immigrants" to Germany just so they can pass their responsibility somewhere else, in this case Germany (*«Εμάς περνάνε τώρα λαθρομετανάστες από το χωριό εδώ και δύο χρόνια βράδυ. Περνάνε βράδυ για να βγουν Αλβανία και να φτάσουν Γερμανία. Και ποιος τους συνοδεύει παρακαλώ σε αυτό το ταξίδι; Περιπολικό, το οποίο δεν τους συλλαμβάνει και δεν τους αγγίζει καν... Τους συνόδευαν γιατί τους θεωρούσαν λαθρομετανάστες και τους έλεγαν θα σας οδηγήσουμε στη Γερμανία με τα πόδια αρκεί να φύγετε, αυτό δεν είναι πολιτική, αυτό δεν είναι σοβαρότητα, αυτά είναι εμένα που με ενοχλούν»*). Unquestionably, this is a most conspicuous manifestation of the country's inability to effectively and lawfully, according to all relevant national, European as well as international legal provisions, moderate the migration and refugee issue and the hundred thousands of individuals that are left utterly unprotected and mistreated within the country's borders.

5.13. View of migrants and refugees as victims or perpetrators of this humanitarian crisis⁴⁷

Three (3) of the asked clerics noted that among migrants and refugees there could be both victims and perpetrators, the latter of which wish to avail themselves of the criticalness of the times, while more than half of the totality of the interviewees, namely six (6), agreed that they are victims, with **interviewee F** stressing once again the importance of the source of

⁴⁷ **13th Interview Question:** Εσείς αντιλαμβάνεστε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους ως θύματα ή θύτες της κρίσης αυτής; (GR)

Do you perceive these people as the victims or perpetrators of this crisis? (EN)

a given news. That is to say that one ought to be attentive to where he acquires his information from, indirectly alluding to the fact that Greek mass media are generally neither valid nor credible, as they serve political interests and for this reason are biased and discriminatory. Another thing that should be taken into account is how an individual interprets information, namely the extent to which one allows himself to accept news as valid and by extension be shaped and in a sense manipulated by them (*«Ναι, είναι πράγματα που ίσως και πώς μεταφέρονται και στον κόσμο, πώς τα δέχεται ο καθένας, τι διαβάζει, πώς ενημερώνεται, από πού ενημερώνεται; Είναι πολλά τα ζητήματα»*).

Although **interviewee B** views these individuals as the victims and not the perpetrators of the situation under discussion he goes on to describe them as “sheep”, namely timid and even submissive people, who are not opinionated, vocal and determined enough to communicate and claim what is best for them (*«Παρασύρονται εύκολα, είναι πρόβατα»*). This comprises an attack to these people’s meritoriousness and value as well as a belittling of their personal quality and determination for the greatest possible claim for themselves and their families.

5.14. Opinion about the possibility of a linguistically, culturally, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous Greece in the future⁴⁸

Four (4) of the interviewed clerics are in favor of this multicultural environment and this can be proven by the very past of Greeks, as they were able to preserve their identities across centuries even in deeply multicultural environments. Nevertheless, this could also be interpreted as a fear of losing even the slightest of one’s traits and pointing to a desired purity amongst a plurality. Half of the interviewees also acknowledge that it is a situation that does not comprise a distant future but rather an already existent, and ever more common, in the years to come, reality that humanity shall have to come to terms with, while others maintained that it is a situation that ought not fright people but instead be embraced, as this diversity comprises the quintessence of humanity (*«Και προσωπικά το αγκαλιάζω, δεν με*

⁴⁸ **14th Interview Question:** Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για το ενδεχόμενο μιας γλωσσικά, πολιτισμικά, εθνικά και θρησκευτικά ανομοιογενούς Ελλάδας στο μέλλον; (GR)

What is your opinion about the possibility of a linguistically, culturally, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous Greece in the future? (EN)

τρομάζει. Αυτή είναι η πεμπτουσία και ο πλούτος της ανθρωπότητας, η διαφορετικότητα», according to **interviewee H**).

According to **interviewee J**, only by individual simplicity can one be entirely himself in a context of complexity and intricacy that will be the foundation of future, if not present already, societies. In other words, in all this plurality and multitude, people are to retain their individuality in terms of maintaining their own personal characteristics, such as language and convictions. To this heterogeneity, the interviewee appears to be somewhat skeptical and reserved (*«Έχει πολλούς, πολλούς άξονες αυτό το πράγμα, πολλές παραμέτρους. Δεν μπορώ να πω...»*), as he notes that it is expected to bring about tremendous pain and struggles for some of the involved parties (*«Ξαναλέω ότι είναι κάτι το οποίο μπορεί να είναι οδυνηρό για κάποιους»*).

Interviewee G seems concerned, daunted and indeed intimidated about the ethnic and religious purity of his country as a result of prospective intermarriages of these populations with Greek nationals in combination with the country's low birth rates (*«Υπάρχει ένας φόβος, φοβάμαι αυτό το ενδεχόμενο, διότι στη χώρα μας υπάρχει μία υπογεννητικότητα, και σε συνδυασμό με τους γάμους μεταξύ χριστιανών και μουσουλμάνων, μεικτοί γάμοι, μεικτής θρησκείας μπορεί να υπάρξει πρόβλημα, δεν ξέρουμε στο μέλλον τι θα γίνει»*).

Interviewee F notes that this pluralistic- in terms of languages, cultures, ethnicities and religions- Greece and humanity in general that is discussed is not a recent or modern phenomenon but rather one that has always been existent to a lesser or greater extent everywhere. Nevertheless, despite acknowledging the long history and inevitability of human diversity- he distinctively calls it a necessary evil-, the interviewee goes on to say that he would indeed mind and perceive it as a danger if this so-called heterogeneity and pluralism affected his own, as he quite possessively claims, customs, culture, church, flock and overall identity as a Greek Christian Orthodox (*«...θα με πείραζε αν αυτό είχε αλλοίωση στα έθιμα τα δικά μου, στις παραδόσεις τις δικές μου σαν Έλληνας Ορθόδοξος και επηρέαζε την εκκλησία μου και το ποίμνιο. Αυτό θα με ενοχλούσε και θα το έβλεπα ως κίνδυνο»*).

Hence, the interviewee might be theoretically in favor of pluralism and multiculturalism but only on the condition that Greek people are not influenced by it and do not lose traits of their idiosyncrasy. The latter is further reinforced and supported by means of once again alluding to bright and impressive examples of the past in Asia Minor, where Christians of different dogmas, namely Greeks and Armenians, wonderfully coexisted with

Muslims. What is more, another thing that arises from what the interviewee says is an idealization of what Greece has to offer as a country to arriving populations and thus a subtle perception of it as being more valuable and superior to others (*«Και αυτό που έχουμε είναι θησαυρός και θα πρέπει να το δώσουμε και στους άλλους»*).

According to **interviewee A**, the plurality under discussion comprises a problem and this can be seen in the long Turkish occupation of Greece and the subsequent tampering and impact it had on Greek language, culture, customs and practices. Nevertheless, what is stressed as an even bigger threat for the aforementioned Greek traits is the negligence on the part of Greek people of the traditional Greek way of living. Instead, if Greek nationals lead a traditional way of life, they can comprise a most necessary “vaccine” and leading light- what we would term as a “lighthouse”- for others, indirectly positioning the former to a higher and the latter to a lower place in a most arbitrary hierarchy respectively.

The interviewee also interprets the current situation as a positive challenge and parallels it with Christianity’s glorious past. More specifically, he notes that Christianity was essentially born into the Roman Empire, which was a globalized environment, which actually embraced each and every individual, leaving no one behind. Consequently, what is suggested by the interviewee is the fact that by means of learning about the very history of Christianity and simply following its teachings, one comprehends how to approach and react to the current humanitarian crisis and era of constant and successive changes as well as becomes aware of what true equality really translates into, namely respecting and loving one another anyhow, practicing, embodying and proving that Christ’s order *“thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”* is nowadays just as practical as when it was first written.

Interviewee B in his turn appears concerned about the effects that linguistic plurality is bound to have on the Greek language in the future, as he fears it will not even resemble the Greek language of the present and will, thence, lose its distinctive idiosyncrasy and wealth (*«Εμένα αυτός ο πλουραλισμός με τρομάζει ως προς τη μη ενθύμηση της γλώσσας μας τα επόμενα έτη στις νέες γενιές, ήδη γίνεται αυτό το πράγμα, κάτι που είναι θλιβερό»*). Nevertheless, this fear about the repercussion of this pluralism is not extended to religion and faith, as the interviewee claims that the latter are not altered by language, but on the contrary multilingualism is actually reinforcing faith (*«Η πίστη δεν αλλοιώνεται από τη γλώσσα, ίσα ίσα εγώ πιστεύω ότι η πολυγλωσσία βοηθάει πάρα πολύ την πίστη»*). This last argument is further explained by the interviewee, who refers to a Church tradition during the evening of

Easter Sunday, which is called the “evensong of love”⁴⁹. For its duration the Gospel is no longer preached in Greek but in any language the congregation has a command of and in this way, as the interviewee characteristically says, there is a much-needed unity and diversity within the context of the GOC, where all languages and nations are unified even for a single day in the year (*«Έστω και μία φορά στο έτος στην εκκλησία έχουμε μία ενότητα, πολυπολιτισμικότητα»*).

Interviewee D’s response (*«Ίσως θα είχα έναν ενδιασμό σχετικά με το θρησκευτικό κομμάτι μετά από τόσους αιώνες, ως προς το πώς θα αφομοιωνόταν αυτό το πράγμα»*) is quite inconclusive, as he speaks of being skeptical about the subsequently induced religious assimilation, yet he does not specify whether this assimilation will be bilateral or unilateral and if the latter is indeed in effect the believers of which religion will have to acculturate and adopt to the teachings of the other.

On the other hand, **interviewee E** is overly dogmatic and confident in what he claims (*«Όχι, όχι εμένα δεν θα μου αρέσει... Βέβαια, βέβαια θα με φόβιζε...»*). He is firm about not liking and even being afraid of a heterogeneous Greece and would more specifically abhor others’ impact on Greek religion and traditions as well as the imposition of their beliefs, customs and practices, culture and even cuisine on the Greek ones. Hence, from what the interviewee claims, but also the very way he claims them, it becomes apparent that he holds some illiberal and prejudiced views, the main essence of which can be encapsulated in viewing anything Greek as superior and worthier than anything foreign and the subsequent feeling of urgent need for maintaining Greek purity.

5.15. Opinion about whether migrants and refugees will be able to fully integrate in Greek society⁵⁰

Albeit a candidly challenging endeavor, this inclusion is not something unattainable or completely infeasible. If individuals from both sides involved are willing and amenable to some changing and retreating as well as practically creating bridges of communication and of

⁴⁹ In Greek it is called «Ο εσπερινός της αγάπης»

⁵⁰ **15th Interview Question:** Θεωρείτε ότι θα μπορέσουν κάποια στιγμή να ενταχθούν πλήρως στο σύνολο της ελληνικής κοινωνίας; (GR)

Do you think that a complete integration of these people in the entirety of Greek society is possible? (EN)

a common future, for instance by intermarrying, a mutual approaching and harmonization is most likely to come about.

Interviewee H maintains that migrants and refugees' inclusion is feasible, yet concomitantly something that requires not only their own will, determination and effort but also that of the native population, namely Greeks (*«Απόλυτα, αν πραγματικά το θελήσουν και οι δύο πλευρές, και οι Έλληνες και οι μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες»*). We are, thus, speaking of a bilateral situation, rather scenario, that needs both sides to consent as well as practically make an effort and undertake whatever is possible for this to gradually come to fruition. According to this reasoning, it becomes easily intelligible that even if one of the two groups of people does not approve- either theoretically or practically- this inclusion, the latter is not virtually viable, hence equally distributing the same amount of importance and clout to both sides.

Interviewee E maintains that migrants and refugees will eventually be integrated, yet this will be neither a personal choice of theirs nor a mutual effort on the part of both involved parties, that is the receiving community and the arriving populations. Consequently, as it is explicitly stated (*«Με το ζόρι θα τους εντάξουμε, αυτό πιστεύω. Ούτε και οι ίδιοι το θέλουνε αλλά με το ζόρι θα γίνει κάποια στιγμή, το πιστεύω»*), inclusion is an inevitable event, which will however take place by mere force that the former can and will impose on the latter, thus alluding to an imbalanced relationship between these two by means of having the upper and lower hand respectively.

Interviewee J believes that with the current data and numbers of migrants and refugees in the country, their inclusion is feasible and is already underway (*«Θεωρώ ότι με βάση τα υπάρχοντα δεδομένα, γιατί σε ένα σενάριο υποθετικό, υποθετικό έτσι, να έρθουν άλλα 10 εκατομμύρια μετανάστες, τότε αλλάζουν οι ισορροπίες, τότε ίσως... »*). In the exceptional case, however, that many more keep arriving in millions, inclusion would not be an option, as in that case it is implied that perhaps the very Greek identity and idiosyncrasy would be threatened with extinction.

Interviewee F notes that if this potential inclusion of migrants and refugees indeed takes place, it will come with considerable difficulties and only after a genuinely long time, hence proving that it will not be an effortless result of the former's coexistence with the native population (*«Εεε, ίσως. Θέλει πολύ χρόνο...»*). The interviewee also claims that a further limitation or barrier to this inclusion is these people's hesitation, if not unwillingness (*«Εξαρτάται αν θέλουν κι εκείνοι, γιατί από ό,τι ακούω και βλέπω δεν θέλουν οι ίδιοι να*

μείνουν μόνιμα εδώ τουλάχιστον, στην Ελλάδα»), to permanently settle in the country- and not move on to another northern European country, where most probably their living standards will be higher and their level of comfort, quality and affluence finer- as well as the most improper Greek state management of the issue («Έχει πολλές δυσκολίες από πλευράς μας, από ελληνικής πολιτειακής, ας πούμε, διαχείρισης του πράγματος»).

For those of them that choose to stay in Greece and do not move on to another European country, inclusion will eventually take place indeed. What is worth mentioning, however, is that the majority of the interviewees that hold this opinion consider that responsibility lies primarily with these populations and not so much with the native ones («Το αν θα ενταχθούν ή όχι εξαρτάται κυρίως από αυτούς τους ίδιους...», as **interviewee D** notes»). Undoubtedly, this constitutes a disclaimer of liability on the interviewee- and by extension natives'- part, as they place the entirety of the responsibility on these people and publish a disclaimer themselves for the subsequent fruitful or unsuccessful outcome of their integration.

Half (5) of the interviewees maintain that such an inclusion is not possible, as migrants and refugees themselves do not wish to become a functional part of Greek society and do not wish to be integrated.

Interviewee B parallels migrants and refugees in Greece with Turks living in Germany for the last 70 or so years. The latter, despite being established there for three generations already, have remained misfits and ghettoized and have not managed to integrate into Germany, which is by all accounts considered to be a liberal, free and affluent country riddled with opportunities and job positions. The fact that Greece does not essentially have all this and could, thus, not be termed under the same category with Germany with regard to its development and overall receptiveness, embrace and utilization of the available working force within the country's borders, is what leaves the interviewee skeptical and troubled about a viable inclusion of migrants and refugees in Greece.

Another contributing factor to this numbness and uneasiness to answer the question is a personal experience that the interviewee had with these populations. Despite being in a destitute and despairing state, starving refugee mothers refused to take and eat pork meat that clerics distributed to their refugee camps due to their Muslim quality, thus displaying an unjustified obstinacy, which they refused to let go even in view of the immediate need, in which not only they but also their children found themselves. This intransigence, the

interviewee fears, is hard to discard and it is to be evinced and displayed also on their eagerness- or rather lack of it- to integrate or acculturate to the native Greek culture and community. (*«Όταν εμείς πήγαμε φαγητά, τρόφιμα στον προσφυγικό καταυλισμό εδώ στις Βαρβάρες, πεινασμένα παιδάκια και μανάδες... και να λένε δεν τρώμε χοιρινό γιατί είμαστε Μουσουλμάνοι, αυτό λέει κάτι, αυτό σε θλίβει μέσα σου. Γιατί η ανάγκη καταργεί το νόμο... όταν υπάρχει ανάγκη καταργούνται αυτοί οι κανόνες για να σωθεί ο άνθρωπος, να σωθεί μια κατάσταση. Αυτοί είναι αμετακίνητοι σε αυτό. Αυτό για μένα είναι πολύ δύσκολο να το αποβάλλεις»*).

According to **interviewee G**, migrants and refugees' inclusion emerges as a unilateral matter, in which the hosting community apparently plays no salient role. The interviewee is unequivocal and determined (*«-Δε νομίζω, όχι. Το θεωρώ ανέφικτο από κάποιους ανθρώπους. -Από την πλευρά των Ελλήνων πιστεύετε ή από την δική τους πλευρά; -Από τη δική τους πλευρά»*) that these people's inclusion is impossible, without however specifying the reasons or giving further details about this.

By saying *«...αν έχουν τις προϋποθέσεις σίγουρα θα μπορέσουν να αφομοιωθούν»*, it seems as though **interviewee D** believes that for someone to be able or rather deserving of acculturation and effective integration into another country, specific premises need be fulfilled. Notwithstanding, these are not further specified or elaborated upon, leaving one contemplating whether they could also include traits such as skin darkness, language proximity, common history, individual perception of one's country or other such arbitrary perspectives and frames of reference.

5.16. Opinion about the necessity of a cultural, religious and ideological assimilation on the part of migrants and refugees in their attempt to integrate in the arriving country⁵¹

Half (5) of the interviewed clerics are in favor of the fact that anyone, no matter how different he might be, can veritably integrate into another foreign society or community and

⁵¹ **16th Interview Question:** Για να γίνει αυτή η ένταξη, που είπαμε τώρα, θεωρείτε ότι πρέπει να αφομοιωθούν πολιτιστικά, θρησκευτικά, ιδεολογικά; (GR)

For this integration to take place, do you think that these people will have to assimilate culturally, religiously, ideologically? (EN)

maintain his idiosyncrasy- as the opposite would indeed amount to a deprivation of liberty- and all the dissimilar and distinct traits that differentiate him from the others. Thus, what is suggested is that there is no need to change for either of the involved parties, yet it is considered necessary for the newcomers to respect and abide by the written and unwritten rules of the new country as well as be employed so that they can serve a “utilitarian” and practical purpose within the country. In this way, a new cultural, religious and ideological “mixture” will be created, which will comprise the norm and future of societies, if it is not the present already. Another recurring pattern among the interviewees were the recurring allusions to past exemplary examples of Greek presence in another country (Germany, America, Asia Minor etc.), which give prominence to an extended ancestor-worship among Greek Christian Orthodox clerics.

Interviewee G maintains that migrants and refugees ought not give up their idiosyncrasy and in this way assimilate to the values of the dominant community but instead keep their unique characteristics and respect the already existing ones of the new country. Concurrently, however, he hints at the fact that the latter is virtually impossible with these populations, as a complete lack of respect, tampering and damage towards Greek customs and practices is very typical of them, as opposed to prior movements of Greeks to Australia, the US and Africa that were exemplary and indeed practiced and respected local distinctiveness (*«...δεν καταργήσαμε εκεί πέρα τα ήδη υπάρχοντα. Όπως και η εκκλησία μας όταν πάει στην Αφρική, για παράδειγμα, να διδάξει τον χριστιανισμό και το ευαγγέλιο του Χριστού μας δεν πάει να καταστρέψει τα ήθη και τα έθιμά τους, τα σέβεται. Πάει να διδάξει και τους αγαπάει όπως είναι, φυσικά. Με σεβασμό. Δυστυχώς δεν υπάρχει αυτός ο σεβασμός σήμερα με αυτούς»*).

Interviewee A is really unambiguous with regard to his wish for migrants and refugees’ cultural, religious and ideological integration to take place (*«Αυτό δεν ξέρω αν το πιστεύω, αλλά σίγουρα το εύχομαι»*). He goes on to romanticize and idealize Greek culture and Christian faith, which are described as being the absolute best, the crème de la crème of their kinds (*«Ο ελληνικός πολιτισμός από τη μία και η χριστιανική πίστη από την άλλη είναι ό,τι καλύτερο υπάρχει στον κόσμο»*). For this reason, it is essential, if not a moral duty of ours as their fortunate holders, to pass them on to others (*«Πρέπει, αν μπορέσουμε, να τους μεταγγίσουμε και τον ελληνικό πολιτισμό και την ορθόδοξη πίστη»*). Once again, the pattern of migrants and refugees’ belittlement and a subsequent over-accentuation and almost reverence of anything Greek and Christian is found.

Interviewee J claims that a religious assimilation on the part of migrants and refugees is not likely to take place (*«Θρησκευτικά λίγο δύσκολα το βλέπω... Οπότε χονδρικά το αποκλείω να αφομοιωθούν θρησκευτικά...»*), alluding to a mutual will on both natives and migrants/refugees to stick to their own religion and beliefs. Only on a cultural level does the interviewee believe that there could be an embrace of part of the new country by arriving populations, while at the same time maintaining part of their distinct traits and individuality, which the interviewee considers definite and even inescapable with such interactions across time.

Interviewee E is in his turn more than candid in unequivocally expressing his belief that this desired integration of these individuals is not feasible and is in actuality something hard to achieve (*«Δύσκολο, όχι δεν θα γίνει αυτό»*). Another thing that he notes is the fact that only the few crypto-Christians that there are in these people's countries are in essence well-disposed, congenial and "compatible" with Greeks, while the remaining vast majority of them that are Muslims are narrow-minded, obdurate and adamant and hence, even if attempted, no bridge of communication could ever be established with Greek nationals and them (*«...και στις δικές τους χώρες έχουνε τους κρυπτοχριστιανούς που κρύβονται αλλά είναι πολύ λίγοι... Οι υπόλοιποι έχουν μια συγκεκριμένη νοοτροπία, είναι στενόμυαλοι, ισχυρογνώμονες»*). It goes without saying that this view is extremely absolute and obsolete, it refuses to even establish and initiate channels of communication with these Muslim arriving populations, treating them as an undifferentiated sum and, therefore, treating them in a most biased and xenophobic way.

An interesting point is raised by **interviewee B**, according to which this immediate need and wish for migrants and refugees to respect the beliefs and overall lives of Greek nationals, merely constitutes a projection of the lack of respect towards the latter's prosperity on the part of the Greek state as well as an utter failure to cater to their needs (*«Γιατί γενικά ο Έλληνας νιώθει ότι δε σέβεται τη ζωή του, δεν υπάρχει σεβασμός στη ζωή του πρώτα από την ελληνική πολιτεία, όχι από τον ξένο, ο ξένος είπαμε είναι ο αποδιοπομπαίος τράγος. Για μένα εκεί εστιάζεται το πρόβλημα περισσότερο»*). Therefore, as it can easily be understood, migrant and refugee populations once again become the scapegoats and recipients of all this anguish, as they are more easily castigated and condemned.

5.17./5.18. Opinion about what migrants and refugees would wish to see happening with migrants and refugees as well as what they think will happen in actuality with these persons⁵²

The following comprise the essence of what the majority of the interviewees believe will in actuality happen with migrants and refugees. Adopting a realistic stance to the challenging issue under discussion, a miracle is not likely to take place and the present exigency is not to be resolved anytime soon. As a result, these people will continue to suffer and endure all this pain and hardships in view of the interests of the few ones that are controlling, “nourishing” and profiting from this widespread dissent and tumult. According to **interviewee J**, a coexistence between Greek nationals and migrants and refugees emerges as obligatory and not as a result of free will and positive disposition (*«Θα συνυπάρξουμε, δεν μπορούμε να κάνουμε και διαφορετικά»*), while other clerics believe that some of them are going to further move to other countries either out of their own volition or because they can no longer endure life in Greece, while the ones that get to stay in the country will in due course adapt and acclimatize. A common perception among the interviewees is also that people will stop remaining numb and stop normalizing the pain, institutionalization and systematic deprivation of these people’s fundamental human rights. What is also really interesting is the view of **interviewee B**, who resembles the current situation with an active volcano that is soon to erupt and spread mass evil (*«Πιστεύω ότι θα γίνει ένα μπάχαλο. Δηλαδή κάποια στιγμή πιστεύω το ηφαιστειο θα σκάσει. Μετά την έκρηξη του ηφαιστείου θα γίνει κακό μεγάλο»*), which will also come as a result of the ongoing war in Ukraine and its dreadful and immediate repercussions in every country in this globalized era that we live in.

The common ground of all interviewees with regard to what they wish to see happening with migrants and refugees is attempted to be portrayed in the following: a most beautiful and peaceful coexistence between the native and the arriving populations is desired with as few problems as possible. Most definitely, sporadic tension, predicaments and problems cannot possibly be completely eradicated, yet what arises as of cardinal importance is to avoid an unbridgeable divide. Other interviewees long for whatever lies in the best

⁵² **17th and 18th Interview Questions:** Τι θα θέλατε να συμβεί με τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες; / Τι πιστεύετε ότι πραγματικά θα συμβεί; (GR)

What would you like to see happen with migrants and refugees? / What do you think will truly happen? (EN)

interest of these people, whether that be returning to their homelands with decent and peaceful conditions- which undoubtedly remains a continual wishful thinking of migrant and refugee individuals- or staying in Europe- in Greece or any other European country, where they will be able to enjoy respect, love, liberties and rights.

Interviewee I mentions that what he would wish is for Greeks to take advantage of and in some way or another exploit migrants and refugees (*«...να τους ‘εκμεταλλευτούμε’ προς όφελός μας»*). This exploitation could be viewed as carrying both positive and negative meaning: positive in the sense that we allow these people to be completely at liberty and contribute to this new land all their unique and different traits, in this way enriching and further benefitting Greek nationals; also a negative hue in the sense that Greek nationals could take advantage of them perhaps by financially exploiting them- that is by paying them less for the same piece of work- or condemning them to let go of anything that distinguishes them from the native social whole.

Interviewee G is doubtful even of the very “refugee quality” of these people (*«Εάν είναι πραγματικοί πρόσφυγες...»*), while he also acknowledges the fact that the conditions and state of armed conflict are up to this day in effect in most of these people’s homelands and for this reason although a scenario of going back to their country of origin emerges as a wishful thinking in their minds (*«...πιστεύω ότι κάποια στιγμή θα θέλουν να γυρίσουν στον τόπο τους...»*), it remains a discouraging, exceedingly risk-taking, perilous and for this reason unlikely one. The interviewee also notes that the current issue is not to be solved, unless the powers that be decide to do something for its resolution (*«Αν δεν πάρουν απόφαση οι μεγάλες δυνάμεις θα λέγαμε, οι ηγέτες της Ευρώπης και των χωρών αυτών, δυστυχώς δεν θα λυθεί το πρόβλημα»*).

Interviewee F, half in earnest half in jest, says that migrants and refugees’ decision to stay or leave the country does not really bother or affect him, as he has problems and issues of his own (*«Εμένα προσωπικά ούτε με απασχολεί αυτό. Δηλαδή έχω άλλα προβλήματα να αγχώνομαι [γελάει]»*). This could be seen as an indirectly indifferent stance, according to which migrants and refugees’ reality does not influence that of natives, hence connoting that although both categories of people may be parts of the same society, their contacts and interactions are minimum and barely noticeable, highlighting a most formidable void between them.

Throughout the interview, **interviewee F** hints at the fact that migrants and refugees are not the only victims in this whole crisis (*«Σίγουρα είναι αυτοί θύματα και εμείς κοντά σε αυτούς δεύτερα θύματα»*). The hosting community is also suffering and experiencing this turbulent state of affairs and thus a permanent resolution, settlement and closure of this exigency is seen to lift a huge weight off the natives' shoulders as well. What can be concluded from the latter is the fact that it is an egocentric and self-serving approach to the migration and refugee crisis, in which these peoples' struggles are neither prioritized nor respected, while their very traumatic experiences always seem to come second.

Interviewee C claims that a harmonious coexistence between Greek natives and migrants and refugees depends on the latter's numbers (*«Αν ο αριθμός των μεταναστών δεν αυξηθεί υπερβολικά τότε θα μπορούσαμε να ζήσουμε αρμονικά όλοι μαζί»*). That is, only if they remain unchanged and as they presently are- and hence fewer than the native population- will it be feasible to speak of a peaceful coexistence, which in turn gives prominence to an alleged wish for Greek numerical supremacy and lateral fear of a loss of the Greek identity.

Interviewee B seems to have quite a distorted perception of reality, as he wishes for these people to return to their homelands (*«Θα ήθελα να επιστρέψουν στις χώρες τους με συνθήκες ζωής όπως αυτές που έχουμε εμείς, με πολύ καλές συνθήκες ζωής»*), which shows that he neglects the fact that this is practically impossible, as the majority of them are still in warfare and thus a return to them is in most cases infeasible, let alone a pursuit of a life with dignity. What is more, the interviewee also seems to have lost contact with reality in Greece, in which the overwhelming majority of the population suffers from the country's political deficiencies, deprivation, unemployment and overall misery, while the interviewee speaks of allegedly qualitative living conditions in the country.

Interviewee D speaks of assimilation and acculturation on migrants and refugees' part, which, as it can be inferred, arises as a prerequisite if the latter wish to stay in the country (*«Όσοι θέλουν να μείνουν στη χώρα μας να κάτσουν και να αφομοιωθούν»*). By saying so, the interviewee places the native heritage and way of life at a superior place, one in which it should remain protected, unaltered and be passed down as a most valuable and dear legacy onto the inferior migrant and refugee equivalent. The interviewee also believes that just like in the already elapsed time (2011-2021) no serious or effective management of the situation has taken place, the problem will remain unresolved in the years to come, and thus

these peoples' pain further extended for the upcoming decade as well (*«Εγώ πιστεύω ότι ίσως μια δεκαετία ακόμα να πάει έτσι, να μην λυθεί το πρόβλημα»*).

6. Conclusions

The end results are indeed quite confusing and inconclusive, as the emerging GOC stance to migrants and refugees is divided. As in the entirety of Greek society, among the GOC clergy there are also two extremities; to the one end there are liberal opinions and to the other end there are conservatist and even radical right ones. While in most questions half of the interviewees speak of and think in humanitarian, compassionate and benevolent terms, the remaining half of them express a deeply obscurantist, racist and intolerant attitude towards these people and every little thing that their arrival brings along in Greece.

The latter refuse to discuss- let alone envision and really allow to take place- a two-sided symbiosis, where both groups keep their individual traits and adopt one another's where applicable. Instead, what arises as the only available option-necessary evil is these populations' acculturation and assimilation to the Greek ones, hence demonstrating zero tolerance and willingness to change and approach the arriving populations and their heritage for fear of "bastardizing" and debasing the purity and presumed excellence of the Greek ones.

Migrants and refugees' successful integration or not solely depends on these people and not the natives, which exactly demonstrates how unilateral, small-minded and eventually infeasible a perception that is. In fact, it highlights the Greek obstinacy and refusal to facilitate these people's integration for fear of losing some of their own unique, unprecedented and idiosyncratic traits, while at the same time advertising their meretricious generosity, compassion and Christendom. Undoubtedly, this constitutes a disclaimer of liability on the interviewees- and by extension natives'- part, as they place the entirety of the responsibility on these people and publish a disclaimer themselves for the subsequent fruitful or unsuccessful outcome of their integration.

To the scenario of a most needed coexistence between the two-Greeks and migrants/refugees- most interviewees reply that only the latter are supposed to alter and adapt their overall heritage and identity so that it resembles or rather approaches that of the native community. Needless to say that this is another depiction of how unilateral and one-dimensional the multifaceted and intricate issue of a harmonious "marriage" and coexistence between different groups of people is approached by GOC clerics, while at the same time

their obstinacy to remain still and not make the slightest effort in order to facilitate a bridge between the two groups reveals their refusal for a mutual cultural appropriation.

The very identity and refugee quality of these people is questioned by most interviewees, who remain skeptical and, hence, temperate and numb with regard to their understanding and stance to these people. They appear to be suspicious and not fully convinced that a good majority of them comprise people whose rights have been- and indeed still are- severely breached and are in genuine need of immediate and international help. This perfectly demonstrates that they have been overcome with fear and mistrust owing to the fact that among these populations there have indeed been reported numerous cases in which individuals- or entire vessels and for an extended period of time- falsely presented themselves to come from specific war-torn countries in an attempt to claim refugee status and thus enjoy international protection, reap all the subsequent benefits as well as make a fresh life start on European ground altogether. What is deduced from the above is that Greek national, European and international failure to address and effectively manage this mass arrival has created an up to a point reasonable numbness that is however converted to biased and arbitrary overgeneralizations, apathy and ultimately insensibility on the part of the GOC clergy and by extension perchance even the Greek general public as well.

A number of interviewees were also noted to be cautious and hesitant to express their opinion on the topic, which could be attributed to individual inhibition and diffidence, nonetheless one is left wondering whether the fear of standing out from what the official body of GOC stands for is actually present and the one that directs their thinking and public standing. Could this comprise an attempt on the part of GOC clerics that participated in this research to fit in and mitigate the void between the individual and the official GOC approach to the issue and hence the likelihood of standing out like a sore thumb? It is indeed a possibility bearing in mind that even when an opinion is bright and hopeful like a beacon amidst the utter darkness, a clear and manifest philanthropic stance towards these people without any asterisks whatsoever can only be insinuated and not blatantly discussed, let alone preached, as it comes in complete contrast with what the overwhelming majority of the body of the GOC in actuality holds.

The very language and way in which interviewees answer the posed questions is also worth mentioning and indicative of the extent to which their answers are spontaneous, unstudied and hence natural and truly genuine. A pattern that can be pointed out throughout

the interviews is that with hard and very clear-cut questions, interviewees seem to demonstrate a difficulty- also with their entire body language- in expressing their thoughts and opinions in a straightforward, clear and effortless way, thus reinforcing the aforementioned claim and almost resembling the relationship a young child has with his strict father, for fear of whom it is exceptionally wary of everything that comes out of its mouth, if not portraying an obedient behavior out of fear for the consequences that may be brought about.

Although theoretically all interviewees comply with, highly respect and endorse Christ's teachings and philanthropy, in practice and as the interviews unfold-and perchance the interviewees become more and more comfortable with the environment, the interviewer and the interview per se and by extension their answers become more unforced and spontaneous- they demonstrate a different stance from the one they had previously presented; one that is in most cases far from Christian theology and beneficence and instead proves to be a much more hostile, conservatist, xenophobic, if not misanthropist, world ideology, thus leading to interviewees falling into discrepancies and successive contradictions.

Among all interviewees what appears to be their greatest source of disquietude and discomfort is migrants and refugees' different creed. This, before anything else, comprises for them the biggest threat and dissimilarity with the native population and is for this reason viewed quite skeptically and often with considerable apprehension on their part. Nonetheless, what needs also to be mentioned is the fact that all ten (10) of the interviewed clerics are highly hesitant and unwilling to familiarize with the idea that in this era of globalization and constant movements their religion- and for instance not so much and with such uniform and all-generalized agreement their culture or language- is to undergo changes and enrichments, which are nonetheless rather seen as shortcomings and considerable repercussions and defects.

Another common ground among all interviewees is the idea that to the current humanitarian distress, the Greek government as well as the numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have not greatly and efficiently addressed it, while quite prevalent is also the idea that the criticalness of the situation only became worse and had in effect the opposite results as to the ones initially expected, hence highlighting the frustration, dissatisfaction and loss of trust of the interviewees in the work and efficiency of the very

institutions and assigned individuals that examine, overlook and are in charge of the situation.

What is more, a common perception among all interviewees is also the fact that the current exigency will not be effectively managed, let alone solved, in the years to come. That is to say that the same disregard and negligence will continue to be practically portrayed with no tangible and viable solution being found and implemented in an attempt to cater to these people's immediate needs as well as embrace and not infringe their utmost fundamental human rights.

Throughout the interviews there have been subtle or even explicit allusions and references to the fact that the overwhelming majority among the GOC clergy-which has naturally abstained from and refused to give interviews for the purposes of the present thesis-holds a firmly anti-immigrant and ethnocentric attitude. Considering that these extreme attitudes and points of view have only been vaguely alluded and insinuated by the involved interviewees, it leaves one wondering as to what would have been the extent of the extremities voiced by such proponents of the GOC clergy as well as the complete obscurity, malevolence and misanthropy of their primitive tenets. Needless to say that were these beliefs and positions voiced, the entire construct and the very conclusions of the present thesis would notably differ. Concurrently, however, it leaves one pondering as to the extent of truth that the current findings contain as well as leaves much space for doubt as to whether they are genuinely typical of what the majority of the GOC clergy discusses behind closed doors and ultimately what it maintains and in what ways it has assisted modern migrants and refugees in Greece during the period 2011-2021.

Albeit on a theoretical level the overwhelming majority of the interviewees is in favor of these people as well as recognize and embrace all their subsequent and inalienable rights as fellow human beings- hence abiding to the quintessence of Orthodox Christianity and its truly humane dogmas that apply and include everyone without questioning their differences and idiosyncrasies- yet on a practical level the reality that arose through the present thesis is indeed quite different.

There is an all-pervading feeling of superiority, heroization-lending a helping hand to the arriving populations, as well as a pervasive ancestor-worship among the clerics who hence portray and treat migrants and refugees as inferior individuals who are in need of the natives' aid, succor and even saving. What emerges from this is an uneven and unbalanced

perception and relation among Greek nationals and migrants/refugees, with Greek nationals portraying themselves in a most pompous and disdainful manner as generous, benign and big-hearted.

Still, the speakers do not wish to completely ostracize the arriving populations- as this would comprise an anti-Christian handling of the current humanitarian exigency- yet at the same time they appear hesitant and indifferent in facilitating their inclusion in Greek society. They seem to avoid and avert any contact or interaction with them whatsoever under the fear of being affected and “spoiled” by them and with the sole intention of retaining if possible everything “Greek” and “Christian-Orthodox” intact. Concurrently, the fear of defiling the country’s purity as well as a most unwelcome transition to a “regime” of multiculturalism is also prevalent among interviewees throughout the interviews.

In actuality, what seems to be at stake is a well-hidden secret among the GOC, which masterly protects its public image and the strong, state-like power status it holds- economic-political- and social-wise Hence, it would be fair to speak of a false and inaccurate GOC public standing, which acts more as a profitable business that would not risk losing its believers-”clients” rather than a bright beacon that not only preaches but practically teaches and displays humanity and equality among all humans.

Throughout the interviews, interviewees keep contradicting themselves, which underlines their frustration and bewilderment with regard to the issue under discussion. Chances are they have not yet formed a complete and strong opinion about migrants and refugees or as the interview unfolds, they become more and more comfortable with the setting, the interviewer as well as the essence and content of the questions and they become more and more honest and hence prove to employ a progressively salient anti-immigrant and anti-refugee discourse.

A tendency to undermine and belittle the arriving populations and all their cultural wealth and background (religion, language, culture, customs, heritage, country of origin, national history) is also observed. Consciously or unconsciously, interviewees feel the need to depreciate and look down on these peoples, hence considering them all one homogeneous and inferior group of people, in comparison to which they arise as first-rate, superior, worthier and in any case better and fitter.

Their exceedingly superfluous numbers in Greece is also recognized as the most prominent reason for the turnaround that is observed in the way Greek people perceive migrant and refugee populations. Yet, apart from the wish of Greek numerical supremacy what can also be noted is an ever-losing patience on the part of the interviewees, who seem to lose their embrace and empathy for these people due to their rising numbers, which- in case they get bigger- could potentially threaten the country's Greek consistency and alleged purity. A most frequent negative portrayal and display of these populations by the Greek mass media also leads people to uncritically shape their opinion and adopt false and biased points of view. Putting the aforementioned into the wider context of austerity, hardships and frustration that is observed within the country, one rather quickly becomes aware of the fact that migrants and refugees are the scapegoats, upon which natives bestow all their accumulated vexation.

As a conclusion and summarizing all the above analysis of the research data, it is argued that although on a theoretical level interviewees present themselves to be embracing the idea of pluralism and heterogeneity, what can be inferred- or rather expressly stated- is the fact that they only do that up to the point and as long as their own beliefs, customs, language, church, flock and overall ethnic and religious identity and purity as Greek Christian Orthodox is not challenged and interfered with and hence with a considerable number of unrealistic asterisks and exceptions that are fueled by their intimidation. Finally, what is more, the majority of the interviewees place themselves- and by extension Greek nationals in general- in a most arbitrary hierarchy, in which they position themselves to be higher due to alleged worthier cultural and overall heritage and subsequently belittle these people.

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Appendix 1

Interviews

Interview 1 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 12.2.2022)

Interview 2 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 13.2.2022)

Interview 3 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 19.2.2022)

Interview 4 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 19.2.2022)

Interview 5 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 20.2.2022)

Interview 6 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 26.2.2022)

Interview 7 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 26.2.2022)

Interview 8 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 10.3.2022)

Interview 9 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 12.3.2022)

Interview 10 with cleric (the interview was conducted on 14.4.2022)

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

Ελληνική Έκδοση

Ερωτήσεις Συνεντεύξεων

Δημογραφικά Στοιχεία

Ερ1: Ποια είναι η ηλικία σας;

Ερ2: Ποια είναι η οικογενειακή σας κατάσταση;

Ερ3: Ποιο είναι το εκπαιδευτικό σας επίπεδο;

Ερ4: Ποια είναι η θέση σας/ο βαθμός σας ανάμεσα στον Κλήρο;

Ερ5: Έχετε άλλες αρμοδιότητες πέρα από αυτήν του λειτουργού; (π.χ. κατηχητής, πνευματικός)

Ερ6: Πόσα χρόνια ανήκετε στο σώμα της Εκκλησίας;/ Πόσα χρόνια είστε κληρικός;

1^{ος} Ερευνητικός Άξονας: Πώς αντιλαμβάνονται οι συνεντευξιαζόμενοι το μεγάλο αριθμό των μεταναστών και προσφύγων που βρίσκονται στην Ελλάδα;

Ερ7: Γνωρίζουμε από τα πατερικά κείμενα ότι ο Χριστός και ολόκληρος ο λαός του Ισραήλ υπήρξαν πρόσφυγες και μάλιστα καταδιωκόμενοι και κνηγημένοι όπως και οι σημερινοί, ως επί το πλείστον, πρόσφυγες. Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για αυτό;/ Συμφωνείτε με αυτήν τη σύγκριση;

Ερ8: Βρίσκετε ομοιότητα ανάμεσα σε αυτό που συμβαίνει σήμερα και τότε;

Ερ9: Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα;

Ερ10: Αφενός το γεγονός ότι ο Χριστός μάς δίδαξε το «αγαπάτε αλλήλους» και αφετέρου το γεγονός ότι οι σημερινοί μετανάστες/πρόσφυγες αναγκάστηκαν να έρθουν εδώ και είναι, ως επί το πλείστον, αλλόθρησκοι, σάς έχει επηρεάσει στο να τους δείτε ως αδερφούς;

Ερ11: Κατά τη γνώμη σας, έχει κάποιο αντίκτυπο στην ελληνική κοινωνία η παρουσία των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα; Εάν ναι, είναι θετικός ή αρνητικός;

Ερ12: Κατά τη γνώμη σας, μπορεί να επηρεαστεί αρνητικά το ποίμνιο της Εκκλησίας από τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες; Εάν ναι, πώς;

Ερ13: Κάποιοι άνθρωποι νιώθουν ότι απειλούνται οικονομικά, σωματικά, θρησκευτικά λόγω της παρουσίας των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα. Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας γι' αυτό;

Ερ14: Οι μετανάστες και οι πρόσφυγες περιγράφονται συχνά ως κακοποιά στοιχεία/ κακοί άνθρωποι. Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας γι' αυτό;

Ερ15: Τα πρώτα χρόνια της μεταναστευτικής/προσφυγικής κρίσης ένας αριθμός Ελλήνων πολιτών εξέφραζε και επιδείκνυε θετική στάση προς τους μετανάστες/πρόσφυγες, η οποία με την πάροδο του χρόνου και την κορύφωση της κρίσης έγινε αρνητική. Γιατί πιστεύετε ότι συνέβη αυτό;

Ερ16: Έχει αλλάξει η δική σας γνώμη για τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες κατά τη διάρκεια της μεταναστευτικής/προσφυγικής κρίσης; Εάν ναι, γιατί;

Ερ17: Θεωρείτε ότι είναι περισσότερα τα κοινά ή τα διαφορετικά γνωρίσματα (γλώσσα/ θρησκεία / ήθη και έθιμα, παραδόσεις, πρακτικές) μεταξύ Ελλήνων και μεταναστών/προσφύγων;

Ερ18: Κατά τη γνώμη σας τα διαφορετικά γνωρίσματα μεταξύ Ελλήνων και μεταναστών/προσφύγων αποτελούν επιπλέον βάρος ή όφελος για το σύνολο της ελληνικής κοινωνίας;

Ερ19: Πιστεύετε ότι τα διαφορετικά χαρακτηριστικά/γνωρίσματά τους θα έπρεπε ή θα μπορούσαν κάπως να γεφυρωθούν;

2^{ος} Ερευνητικός Άξονας: Κατανόηση και γνώση των ερωτώμενων σχετικά με αυτήν τη σύγχρονη μεταναστευτική/προσφυγική κρίση

Ερ20: Αντιλαμβάνεστε τη μαζική άφιξη των μεταναστών και των προσφύγων ως κάτι που προκλήθηκε από την ανάγκη αυτών των ανθρώπων ή ως μέρος ενός απώτερου σχεδίου ηγετών και των συμφερόντων τους σε εθνικό και διεθνές επίπεδο;

Ερ21: Αντιλαμβάνεστε τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες ως τα θύματα ή τους θύτες της μεταναστευτικής και προσφυγικής κρίσης;

3^{ος} Ερευνητικός Άξονας: Η άποψη των συνεντευξιαζόμενων για το τι μέλλει γενέσθαι αυτής της μεταναστευτικής/προσφυγικής κρίσης

Ερ22: Ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για το ενδεχόμενο μιας γλωσσικά, πολιτισμικά, εθνικά και θρησκευτικά ανομοιογενούς Ελλάδας στο μέλλον;

Ερ23: Πιστεύετε ότι οι μετανάστες και οι πρόσφυγες θα μπορέσουν κάποια στιγμή να ενταχθούν πλήρως στο σύνολο της ελληνικής κοινωνίας;

Ερ24: Θεωρείτε ότι για να μπορέσουν να ενταχθούν θα πρέπει πρώτα να αφομοιωθούν πολιτιστικά/θρησκευτικά/ιδεολογικά;

Ερ25: Τι θα θέλατε να συμβεί με τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες;

Ερ26: Τι πιστεύετε ότι πραγματικά θα συμβεί με τους μετανάστες και τους πρόσφυγες;

English Version

Questions

Demographics

Q1: What is your age?

Q2: What is your family status?

Q3: What is your education level?

Q4: What is your position/rank among the clergy?

Q5: Do you have other jurisdiction/ responsibilities apart from that of minister (e.g. catechist) ?

Q6: How many years do you belong to the Body of the Church?/ How many years are you a clergyman?

Research Axis 1: How do the interviewees perceive the numbers of migrants and refugees that are in Greece?

Q7: We know from patristic writings that Christ and the entire people of Israel were refugees and more importantly pursued after and on the run just like modern, for the most part, refugees. What is your opinion about this? Do you agree with this comparison?

Q8: Do you see any similarity between what is happening nowadays and back then?

Q9: What is your opinion about migrants and refugees in Greece?

Q10: On the one hand, has the fact that Christ taught us to “love one another” and on the other hand that modern migrants/refugees were forced to come here and are, for the most part, heathens, influenced you in seeing them as brothers?

Q11: In your opinion, does the presence of migrants and refugees in Greece have an impact on Greek society? If so, is it a positive or a negative one?

Q12: In your opinion can the Church's congregation be negatively influenced by migrants and refugees? If so, in what sense?

Q13: Some people feel threatened from an economic, physical and religious point of view due to the presence of migrants and refugees in Greece. What is your opinion about this?

Q14: Migrants and refugees are often portrayed as criminals/bad people. What is your opinion about this?

Q15: During the first years of the migration/refugee crisis a number of Greek citizens expressed and practically manifested a positive stance towards migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, as time went by and with the climax of the crisis this stance eventually changed and became negative. Why do you think this happened?

Q16: Has your opinion about migrants and refugees changed over the course of the migration/refugee crisis? If so, why?

Q17: Do you consider the common or different features (language/religion/ customs and practices/traditions) between Greeks and migrants/refugees to be more?

Q18: In your opinion, are the aforementioned different features between Greeks and migrants/refugees an extra burden or an asset for the totality of Greek society?

Q19: Do you believe that these different features of theirs should or could somehow be bridged?

Research Axis 2: Interviewees' understanding and knowledge of this modern migration/refugee crisis

Q20: Do you understand the massive advent of migrants and refugees as something that was driven by these people's need or part of an ulterior plan of leaders and their attempts to satisfy their interests on a national and supranational level?

Q21: Do you identify migrants and refugees as the victims or the perpetrators of the migration and refugee crisis?

Research Axis 3: Interviewees' views of what lies ahead of this migration and refugee crisis

Q22: What is your opinion about the possibility of a linguistically, culturally, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous Greece in the future?

Q23: Do you believe that at some point migrants and refugees will manage to fully integrate into the totality of Greek society?

Q24: Do you believe that in order for them to manage to integrate they will first have to acculturate and assimilate on a cultural/ religious/ ideological level?

Q25: What would you wish happened with migrants and refugees?

Q26: What do you think will really happen with migrants and refugees?