Greece is a country where more than 90% of the population identify themselves as Greek Orthodox and officially belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. We therefore speak for a mono-cultural country, with a great homogeneity. The minority of other confessions or religions (like Protestants, Roman-Catholics or Muslims) comes as a result of different historical influences that happen through the centuries, such as the occupation of crusaders in the “Byzantine empire”, the occupation of Turks or the activity of Protestant missionaries. This situation, together with the fact that the historical memory plays an essential role among Greeks, affect the place and the role of the Church in Greece in a crucial way.

On the other hand, the place and authority of the Holy Scripture in the whole system of orthodox Theology, as well as its role in every day life of Orthodox Christians, has been grown up as a particularly controversial and thorny problem in modern Orthodox theological thought. More thorny and complicated however is the problem of the Holy Scripture’s translation, for, besides the theological parameters of the whole issue, it is also a matter that is implicated with the historical and cultural conditions under which the self-consciousness of Orthodoxy was formed. The problem was posed with extra sharpness after the instauration of the Modern Greek state, when the Greek Church, having been detached from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was used by the royal court at that
time to achieve its political goals. Since then, the Bible translation issue hired also political aspects, with “Evangeliaka” in November 1901 to be the most painful climax, from which is not yet fully acquitted not even to this day.

Regardless of developments in Greece, various organizations in Europe at that time do their best in preparing translations of the Holy Scripture and releasing them to the widest possible public. The idea of creating such an organization began in Germany, already since the 18th century; it was bequeathed in the beginning of 19th century in England and then spread to America, Holland and elsewhere in Europe and around the world. The establishment of the British Bible Society in 1804 coincides with an era where various people of the East, mainly orthodox, under the influence of Enlightenment, began to form a concept of national consciousness, seeking for their independence from the Ottoman Empire. A prerequisite for the “releasing” from the “tyranny” of the sultan was, according to the perceptions of the enlighteners, the spiritual “awakening” of those people, which would be achieved through education as well as through the reforming of obsolete social institutions which included the Church. Within this context the meeting of the newly established British Bible Society with the Orthodox world, seemed almost inevitable.

It was one of the foremost representatives of the Modern Greek Enlightenment, Adamantios Koraes, the man who contacted 1808 the British Bible Society asking for the preparation of a Bible translation in a language accessible to everyone. The British Bible Society responded immediately, republishing in 1810 the revised version of the New Testament translation prepared by the monk Maximos Kallioupolitis in 1636. Soon afterwards, in 1817, a branch of the Society was established in Corfu, which was then under British dominion. Very important however was the work
undertaken by another representative of the same movement, the archimandrite Neophytos Vamvas, who a few years after the establishment of the new Greek Kingdom, prepared one of the most prominent and long-lived full Bible translations in modern Greek, in behalf of the British Bible Society.

Closely related to efforts to create a modern Greek translation of the Bible is the first arrival of missionaries in Greek area, who came to the Ottoman Empire during 1810. Initially, they are favourably accepted and indeed ecumenical patriarchs such as Cyril VI. (1814) and Gregory V. (1819) display a positive attitude for their work and especially for their efforts to spread the Scriptures. Unfortunately, these evangelical missionaries had a completely erroneous understanding of the Eastern Churches. They considered the Orthodox Church as a long dead church, from which nothing was anymore left except her ritual, which reminded of idolatry more than Christian worship. Thus, they turned their missionary enterprise not towards Muslims or the infidel, but towards the orthodox Christians.

Result of this reality was that the expectations of the first translators of the Bible could not be justified. The image often displayed about “aggressive” western missionaries conspiring against Orthodoxy by using Vamvas translation as a Trojan horse, is not enough to explain this failure of cultivating partnership relations between the Bible Society and the Orthodox Church. A sober and more careful look at things will show that the problem is more complicated and its solution is not possible to be found in the model like, “evil and wicked westerners versus kind and innocent easterners”, but requires the understanding of the way even the most enlightened minds of that time understood the concepts of progress and spiritual awakening.
It is well known, that the term “πολιτισμός” (culture) is not derived from the Greek literature, but is a neologism introduced by Adamantios Koraes when he translated the French term “civilization”. But the way in which Adamantios Koraes and his environment understood the concept of culture was very different from its meaning today. According to the notions of that time, History is a continuum evolution of humanity towards “progress”, which according to enlighteners’ views is objectively measurable while culture is the end, the intended ideal of this long course. Koraes sees the beginning of the realization of this ideal in the observed progress of art and literature of his time. Such a view of History and culture however, necessarily leads to the comprehension of all senior times as inferior, since they comprise former stages in the course towards the ideal. Under this theory, the Greek people spent a period of “παλιμβαρβάρωσις” (meaning that they relived a barbaric period), by the interposition “Byzantinism” and “Turkism”, while culture found a refuge in the West where it continued its development, giving birth to science. Therefore, a condition for the spiritual awakening of the Hellenism is the “μετακένωσις” (literary “the pouring from one vessel to another”) of science “from the baskets of the foreigners to the baskets of the Greeks”.

Based on the above, it is easily understood that within such an ambience, where the concept of multiculturalism was completely unknown and there was no way of recognizing the value of other cultures as special spiritual unities or different lifestyles, it was impossible to speak of virtual partnership between the British Bible Society and the Orthodox Church, since one of the associated members considered itself as culturist and hence the other member was considered as being civilized.

With the establishment of the new Greek state, after the revolution of 1821, the whole issue is placed upon an entirely new
basis for Greek Orthodoxy. The establishment of the new Greek state was founded upon the principals of the Enlightenment, which stressed the importance of law for the formation of an ideal state, although without a similar emphasis on other principals such as those of justice, equality and freedom supplementing the exercise of the authority by the state. In this phase the Church, which due to her struggles during the war of independence enjoyed the confidence of the people, was used by the central government for the instruction of the people, so that people obeyed the law and the authorities. And the Church, which knew from her tradition that all power derives from God, adapted herself easily to this role. Thereby orthodox identity became the feature of Greek citizens. Whoever was not orthodox could not be a true Greek.

This situation is intensified by the arrival to Greece of the first King, Otto v. Wittelsbach from Bavaria. Otto, is enthroned as "by the grace of God king of Greece". The Church now becomes "The Church of Greece", separated from the Ecumenical Patriarchate and her Holy Synod becomes "the highest ecclesiastic authority of the state", under obligation to legalise the authority of the king. Theocratic interpretation of History becomes the basis for the understanding of social reality. This situation hardly changes under the next king, George I., when the form of the regime changes to become a democracy governed by a king. George draws his authority from the nation. However, the nation is now described by terms borrowed from the Old Testament as "the chosen people of God" and "holy nation". Greeks are the peoples of God, who spoke in their language and invested them with a special mission, to preserve Orthodoxy "undefiled" and to spread it to other

1 For the place of the Orthodox Church within the new Greek state see: Ioannis S. Petrou, Church and Politic in Greece (1750-1909), Thessaloniki 1992, pp. 141-190 (in Greek).
peoples so that they may also be saved. George I. is no longer the "king of Greece" but the "king of the Greeks", who are now to be understood as the holy nation of God. In this manner the Church is identified with the nation and with national aspirations.  

The first Old Testament translation from Hebrew to modern Greek was published in 1834. The wide spread of this translation by Protestants forced the Orthodox Church to take a defensive position having especially negative consequences for the spread of Scripture in Greece. Thus, now the divine inspiration of the Septuagint Translation is stressed and one of the tasks of the Holy Synod becomes the preservation of the New Testament text in the language in "which God spoke". The anxious efforts of Constantine Oikonomos trying to prove, through a voluminous work, the divine inspiration of Septuagint is a characteristic example. Despite its failure, this effort constitutes by its massive undertaking an indicatory monument of the climate which prevailed. The Church becomes the self-declared protector of national traditions, to which ancient Greek belongs, and due to the identification of the nation with the Church, as stated above, every action which turns against the Church is now considered as anti-nation. It is noteworthy that from 1911 onwards and up to now all the constitutions of Greece forbid the translation of the Scripture and proselytism. Protestants reacted to this situation by aggressive proselytization activities against the Orthodox Church, something which was anyhow part of their tradition and their understanding regarding mission. This resulted to the formation of such a climate of suspi-
cion so that whichever activity of Protestants is still regarded by the orthodox as an activity of proselytization.

At this point I would like to refer more extensively to the issue of the Canon of the Scripture, which in my opinion is closely connected with the history of Bible’s translation. More specifically, the problem of the canon of the Old Testament books that the Church finally accepted, is a good “paradigm” that probably help us to understand the way that some particularities work as determinative factors that form the attitude of peoples and affect their national self-consciousness. I will try to explain why this issue has been converted to an ideology that up today define the measure of openness or isolation of Greek Orthodox Church and her members towards other religions or cultures.

It is a well-known fact that during the period of her birth the Church did not face the problem of the Old Testament canon, since such a matter had not yet emerged, at least under the form and the intensity which later on took.

The wider use of the Septuagint by the New Testament authors and the obvious influence upon them of books which were not part of the Jewish canon testifies that for the first Christian Church the question of a rigidly fixed and closed Old Testament canon was not an issue. The same applies in the case of Christian authors of the first four centuries, almost all of whom make indiscriminate uses so much of the canonical Old Testament books as much as of those not included in the canon, both of which they regard as “Scripture”.

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During the first millennium of Christianity, the Old Testament canon never created, any internal problem in the Church, which received and interpreted christologically the whole of the spiritual treasure of pre-christianic Judaism. The issue of the canon of the Scripture was raised in the Church only within the context of her confrontation either with Judaism initially or subsequently with her dealings with heretics. The relevant resolutions were dictated by the conditions prevailing on each occasion and in every particular region, as well as by the problems which had to be solved. Thus, whilst the Church, internally, did not confront any problem related to the canon of the Scripture, in her external expression was obliged to limit, per case, the number of books, either in order to serve the purposes of her dialogue with Judaism or to avert the propagation of heretical teachings which were based on unknown works or on works of ambiguous and spurious origin.

The great schism between Eastern and Western Church and the tragic events for the East which followed (crusades, Turkish domination) did not leave any room for discussions concerning the canon of the Scriptures. Besides, a millennium of Christianity was enough for the consolidation of the related local traditions and to the absence of any object for any further discussions. The issue of the Old Testament canon was again raised in the West during the 16th century because of the Reformation and in the East a century later, but under completely different conditions from those of the past.

In the West, the zeal of the reformers for a return to the authentic sources of faith led the protestant churches to recognise the Hebrew Old Testament text as the only authoritative one and therefore to the adoption of the narrow Jewish canon.

The attitude of protestantism resulted to the definite solution of the problem of canon in the Roman Catholic Church. The
Council of Trent (1545-1563) by the decree Sacrosancta of 1546 essentially ratified the ancient roman tradition by officially recognizing the broad Old Testament canon (with the exception of the books 1 Esdras and 3 Maccabees). The books included to the Jewish canon were branded as "canonical" and the rest as "deuterocanonical", having equal authority with the first. The First Vatican Synod (1869-1870) ratified this decision thereby definitely concluding this issue for the Roman Catholic Church.

In the realm of the Orthodox Church the matter of the canon of the Old Testament books was raised again, not as an internal problem, but as a reflection to the related discussions which were going on in the West. By the end of the sixteenth century many orthodox go to the West in order to study theology. However, the theology which is developing there at that time is determined to a greater degree by the confrontations between Protestants and Catholics\(^6\) and many orthodox theologians are influenced from that climate. Thus, one may observe the phenomenon of orthodox theologians turning against roman Catholicism using arguments which reveal protestant influence, or vice versa, they turn against protestantism using doctrinal positions coloured by Catholicism. As representatives of this practice, the patriarchs of Alexandria Mitrophanes Kritopoulos, of Constantinople Cyril Loukaris and of Jerusalem Dositheos may be mentioned.

Around the end of sixteenth century the patriarch of Alexandria Meletios Pigas sends to Poland the eminent theologian and clergyman Cyril Loukaris from Crete, responding to the demand of orthodox folk there, in order to assist them in their struggle against the activities of Jesuits, which led to the formation of the

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first unite church (Synod of Vrest 1596). In this struggle Cyril Loukaris invited the support of protestant communities of Poland. Later on, Loukaris, as patriarch of Alexandria (1602-1622), sent Mitrophanes Kritopoulos (who succeeded him on the throne of Alexandria) to England, Germany and Switzerland, mainly in order to study protestant theology and church policy. The protestant influence on the theology of Mitrophanes Kritopoulos is evident in his "Confession of Faith," which he compiled in 1625 and by which he tries to enlighten protestants concerning the content of orthodox faith and mainly to ally with them against Roman Catholics. On the issue of the Old Testament canon, Mitrophanes put forward the view relying on the resolution of the Synod of Laodicea and on the related views of Gregorius the Theologian, Amphilochius of Ikonium and Ioannis Damaskinos, that the books which were not included in the narrow canon were never faced by the Church of Christ as canonical and authoritative and, therefore, the orthodox do not seek support for their doctrines in them. Nevertheless, he does not consider these books as refutable as they have notable and beneficial for the soul content.

Four years later, in 1629, Cyril Loukaris, as patriarch of Constantinople, published in Geneva his own confession of faith characterised by its intensity against Roman Catholics. In this confession the patriarch adopted clearly Calvinistic positions, a matter which caused alarm among the orthodox. Concerning the issue of the canon, Cyril rests his case on the resolution of the Synod of Laodicea and adopts the narrow canon.

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7 N. Matsoukas, *Ecumenical Movement...*, pp. 205-206
As a reaction to the approaches of Loukaris, a series of local synods against protestantism were held. One of these, the Synod of Constantinople of 1642, puts forward the position on the canon issue based on the resolutions of the synods of Laodicea and Carthage. Thus, although it views the books which are not included in the Jewish canon as "non canonical", adds that they should not be treated as refutable.

Besides the synodical resolutions, the premises of Loukaris resulted to the publication of new confessions of faith, such as of the bishop of Kiev Peter Mogila (1638/42) and the patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos (1672). Indeed, in the latter, the roman catholic influence is clearly present, as the patriarch defends the doctrine of transubstantiation, the teaching concerning the satisfaction of the divine justice and to some degree the indulgences, and moreover he forbids the reading of the Scriptures by non specialists. On the issue of the Old Testament canon Dositheos adopts the most extreme view in favour of the broader canon. He maintains that all the books have been recognised by the tradition of the Church as authoritative parts of the Scriptures and consequently the rejection of some is bound to adversely affect the others. Thus, he concludes that all the Old Testament books are recognised as canonical and as holy Scripture.

Although the above-mentioned point of view finally prevailed in the orthodox realm, opinions contrary to this did not cease to be heard, such as, for example, the tendency, albeit of limited scope, which appeared in the realm of Russian theology of eighteenth century, apparently as an influence of protestantism, for the underestimation of the authority of the books which are

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9 Synods of Konstantinople 1638, 1642, 1672, 1691, Iassi 1642 and Jerusalem 1672
10 N. Matsoukas, Ecumenical Movement..., pp. 208-209
not part of the Jewish canon. Be that as it may, the views which are formulated in that age, indeed even the synodical resolutions, are fed by the confrontation of Catholicism with protestantism and therefore cannot claim to be binding solutions of the problem for the Orthodox Church.

This issue of the Scripture canon for the Orthodox Church was raised lastly once again as a result of her involvement in the modern ecumenical movement. The Panorthodox Conference, which was held in Rhodos in 1961, in order to prepare the way for the so called "Great Synod" of Orthodoxy, included the canon issue among the agenda items of the forthcoming synod. However, the related discussion which ensued did not yield concrete results because the method chosen for the solution of the problem was mistaken. Thus, this item finally was crossed out from the list of the issues to be discussed during the Great Synod. The methodological error is focused on the fact that the proposed solutions tried to rely on the tradition of the first Christian millennium, without taking into consideration the fact that during more recent years the problem was placed under altogether different presuppositions, and mainly due to failing to take into account the situation which came into being during the last two centuries which is no longer reversible.

As it is apparent from the above historic overview of the second Christian millennium, the new presuppositions under which the Scripture cannon issue was again raised were determined by the confrontation of protestantism with catholicism, which changed radically the understanding of the first millennium about the relation of Scripture and church Tradition. In particular, the Council of Trend replying to the challenge of the Reformation, dogmatized two sources of Christian faith, Scripture and Tradition, anathematising whomever was opposed to this princi-
pal. This clear distinction between Bible and Tradition occurs for the first time in history and is to influence thereafter theology as a whole, even orthodox theology, and naturally hermeneutics as well, which was soon to develop into an independent science. Later, the protestant orthodoxy of the seventeenth century will absolutize the Holy Scripture to such a degree, so that same becomes an unshakeable and objective criterion of christian truth. The Lutheran teaching concerning the invisible word of God, which was based upon an existential experimental dimension, on which the Scripture was directly depended itself and which the Scripture was comprehended simply as one point of Revelation, subsides and Scripture becomes now the sole authority which is written and not only living and experimental\textsuperscript{11}.

Within this new context the Holy Scripture is no longer understood as a part of a broader tradition, within the framework of which a canon of its books would have been essentially meaningless, since the books which are excluded from the supposed canon have never stopped being a part of the same reliable and sacred tradition from which the books which constitute the Holy Scripture originate. On the contrary, when the ancient church writers call upon the testimony of tradition, they do not refer to some objectively reliable source, but to the living witness of the people of God, of which they feel that they constitute a continuity. The "according to the Scriptures" is understood as a collection of facts which are received and handed over. Nevertheless this collection of "according to the Scriptures" facts could not have any authority outside the realm of their reception and transmission, that is, the


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Church. The words of apostle Paul to the Corinthians are very telling in this case "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15,3). Nevertheless if Scripture is distinguished from the tradition of the Church - even if tradition for the Roman Catholic and Orthodox is considered as co-authoritative - it then becomes an autonomous and objective source of faith, and at this point Roman Catholic and Orthodox do not differ from Protestants. However, as a source Scripture has meaning only when it is specific and, consequently, the issue of canon becomes today an essential one. Of course, the Orthodox Church, at least, could claim that she perpetuates the ancient tradition, but in this case she should have to review the tradition of the last four centuries, whatever this may involve for modern theological production, studies programmes of theological schools, relations of Orthodoxy with other Churches etc.

Going back to the issue of the original text of the Bible, the reasons which led the Church to the adoption of the Septuagint text, were not theological but practical. As such reasons, we could inductively mention, on the one hand, the ignorance of Hebrew and on the other the suspicion towards the Jews for a possible falsification of the Hebrew text. Besides, at that time, the Greek language was for the east the lingua franca and the interest of most Christian writers was not scientific but pastoral, and therefore in their writings they were referring and commenting upon a text which was understood by all.

Nonetheless, the church writers were fully conscious that by quoting in their writings the Septuagint text, they were offering a translated text with all the weaknesses which this may involve,

12 Cf. N. Matsoukas, Holy Scripture..., p. 44
13 Cf. 1 Cor. 11,2,23. 2 Thess. 2,15. 3,6
something which they do not try to disguise. Indicative are, for our present argument, the views of Gregory of Nyssa, who in order to face the accusations which were ignorantly made by various circles regarding the irrationality of the Old Testament, he stresses that the difficulties in the understanding of the Old Testament text are due to weakness of sufficiently adequate rendering of the Hebrew syntax into Greek, and points out that the problem would have been solved, if all those who accused the Old Testament had sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language\textsuperscript{14}. John Chrysostom is also on the same wavelength, considering that the reason of the difficulties in the understanding of the Old Testament lies on the difficulty of the accurate transposition of the meanings of the original text into another language\textsuperscript{15}. However, much later also, during the 9th century, Photios reverting to the subject in question enumerates ten disadvantages which the translation presents compared to the original Old Testament text\textsuperscript{16}.

The above examples demonstrate that the Church not only did not refuse the original Hebrew Old Testament text, but that the church writers frequently refer to it trying to find the solution of hermeneutic problems and for the elucidation of the ambiguities of the Septuagint translation. The tables related to the transcription of the Hebrew alphabet into Greek which are preserved from the fourth to the tenth century lead to the same conclusion. It is also noteworthy that in these tables the recording of the alphabet is done by the use of the teaching method of that time, i.e. memo-

\textsuperscript{14} Εἰς τὸ Ἀσμα τῶν Ἀσμάτων 53, ΒΕΠΕΣ 66,130
\textsuperscript{15} Περὶ ἀσαφείας τῶν προφητειῶν, PG 56,178
\textsuperscript{16} Λόγοι ἀσαφείας τῆς Γραφῆς, Αμφιλόχια ΡΝΒ (ΒΜ ρνθ), 238-239·πρβλ. PNT 239-240.
rising, a fact which testifies for the interest shown by church officials for the teaching and learning Hebrew\textsuperscript{17}.

The above elements, besides the demonstrative character of their presentation, suffice to support adequately the view that the Church during her first millennium, did not tie herself to a specific textual tradition of the Old Testament, nor did she ever refuse the original Hebrew text, but only, for purely practical reasons she used the Septuagint text.

The question of Old Testament text was raised in the East after the seventeenth century, at the same time and under the same conditions with the raising of the canon issue. The reverberations of the confrontation between Roman Catholic and Protestants created for the East a climate of tension among the supporters of both texts, Hebrew and Septuagint. It is obvious that in a similar climate of confrontation the preference for the one or the other text form is based upon purely subjective criteria. The views of Adamandios Koraes for the introduction of Hebrew to the schools of the Nation, and his proposal to the British and Foreign Bible Society for the translation of the Old Testament into Greek from the original Hebrew text have already reported. But all speculation prior to the establishment of the new Greek state occurred, despite the intensity of confrontations, on a theoretical scientific level. Indeed, at that time the main perpetrator of the views of Koraes was Konstantinos Oikonomos, who later became a strong opposer of the Old Testament’s translation.

Perhaps the best proof of the political nature of the confrontation regarding the translation of Scripture may be seen in the so called "Evangeliaka" (pertaining to the Gospel) incident, in


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November 1901. The whole matter began, as it is well known, by the desire of queen Olga to boost the religious sentiment of the people by encouraging the translation of the New Testament in demotic Greek, a task which was undertaken in 1898 and completed within one year by her secretary Ioulia Soumaki under the supervision of her uncle, professor Pandazidis. The interesting element in this case is centred on the fact that the metropolitan of Athens Prokopius, although aware of the whole matter since its inception, did not raise any objection towards the queen. When, however, she asked for the approval of the Holy Synod for her translation, things changed radically. The newspapers of the time presented the whole matter as a devilish plan of the Slavs which aimed at creating strife among the people, religious feuds which would help the winning over of Macedonian Greeks by the Bulgarian Exarchate. After this fury, the Holy Synod replied in March 1899 negatively to the request of the queen for the approval of her translation and when she reverted asking the arbitration of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, a negative answer was given again.

Tempers became frayed and the situation got out of control when later on the newspaper "Acropolis" began to publish excerpts of another translation which was done by Alexandros Pallis in extreme demotic. Once again, the reaction did not involve any theological argumentation. In a resolution of students there is the phrase about "ridicule of the most precious national treasures" and theology professors published a memorandum demanding the cessation of the publication. The argumentation of other opposition newspapers such "Scrip","Kairoi" and "Embros" are of similar sentiments, and which by beginning October 1901 accuse the champions of demotic idiom as godless, traitors, instruments of the

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18 History of the Greek Nation (Ekdotiki Athinon), Vol. XIV, p. 175 (in Greek)
Slavs and mention bribery "Russian rubbles". During the demonstrations and the unrest which follows on 5, 6 and especially 8 November 1901, the arguments were again purely political, as the main demand, besides, of course, the excommunication of the translators, was the resignation of Theotokis government, whilst the overall slogans were "down with the Slav woman" and "long live the heir". The result of the unrest was 11 dead (3 students and 8 civilians) and nearly 80 wounded, whilst after the incidents the major slogan again was "down with the government of murderers". It is noteworthy that in the whole case the target was not the translation itself but the queen. This is evidenced by the fact that although the translation of queen Olga was withdrawn and although the cause of the incidents was Pallis' translation, the fire of the demonstrators was turned exclusively against the queen.

However, the encyclical of the Holy Synod by which the translations of the Gospel are deplored is especially interesting. In this case also, the absence of theological argumentation is impressive. The encyclical begins with the declaration that since the time of the Gospel's writing up to the middle of the 17th century no one imagined to translate it. Then, the statement refers to the translation of 1629, which it views as the work of a Dutch calvinist priest, and to its failure. The Holy Synod boasts on the fact that the Greek Church is the only a Church which has the privilege to possess the original text. It views the newer translations as being in a language "terribly vulgar, which shamefully and scandalously defaces the modest beauty of the divinely inspired original text". As the only theological reason, on account of which the translation may be forbidden, is being cited the danger of the perversion of

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19 History of the Greek Nation..., p.174-177
20 History of the Greek Nation..., p. 408
21 Nr. 3171/7.11.1901

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the meanings which were developed and formulated into dogmas by the ecumenical synods. For the understanding of the Gospel the study of the interpretations of the Fathers, and of those who draw from them, is recommended, on condition that the latter are under the watchful eye and the approval of the Church. Nevertheless, the practical but essential problem of how may one find works of the Fathers and understand them, does not appear to preoccupy the Holy Synod, nor an example is given in support of the how a Gospel translation may pervert the doctrines which were formulated by ecumenical synods. The encyclical goes on, and refers to the theme of the practice of the church, up to that time, for the non translation of Scripture even during the times of Turkish domination, when they were particular difficulties for the understanding of the original, due to linguistic barriers. The main argument of the Synod is focused upon the issue of language, "of our national language which advanced so far, and slowly but surely and happily is on the course of recapturing its acme and magnificence ..." there is no need for any translation. Thus, the encyclical ends up to disapproval and condemnation of every translation. This encyclical, although does not refer to the translation of the Old Testament, it has a great importance upon the matter which is examined here, since it verifies in the most illustrious way the notion of church's hierarchy of that time as being the defenders of the national traditions and the Greek language.

From the whole examination of the matter one may reach the conclusion that the options and practices of recent past cannot offer a model for the solution of the problem having to do with the position of the original Old Testament text in the Orthodox Church. But neither the practice of the ancient church may be used as a basis for the solution of the problem since, as it has been repeatedly underlined, the understanding concerning Scripture

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during the more recent years is radically different from that of the first Christian millennium. A simple overview of contemporary orthodox writings proves the validity of the above thesis. When reference is made to the ecumenical and free spirit of Orthodoxy, the translation’s work of Cyril and Methodius is praised and at the same time the West is condemned on account of its doctrines concerning sacred languages. On the contrary, when modern Scripture translations are mentioned, the role of the church in the preservation of Greek language, the importance of the Septuagint text and the role of missionaries is underlined.

Consequently, it is obvious that today there is a need for a completely new and sober handling of the problem with purely scientific criteria, but also with a sense of responsibility.

Therefore, to the degree that, as it has been proved above, nothing compels today the Orthodox Church to favour a text of a particular form, she must recognize as her own heritage both texts, the Hebrew and the Septuagint, encouraging their study and research.

However, the impact of the Bible’s translation in formation of the Greek’s national identity, brings to light a serious ascertainment: The Greek Orthodoxy deals with a dilemma almost as tragic as the one that Judaism faced during the 1st century A.D.; She will either make herself open to the world by working on the potentials that arise from her own faith, tradition and Scriptures, or turn in on herself through an agonizing effort for self-protection. Judaism’s critical choice towards the second option drove it to decay, but make it possible for Christianity to spread. Nobody of course can endanger a foresight for the future of the Greek Orthodoxy, if she follows such a course. However, the negative paradigm of Judaism is sufficiently preceptive.