



The Orthodox Church and Hellenic migration to early Johannesburg and present-day ethics-in-practice

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Abstract

The article considers the place of religion in immigration and investigates and places in context the arrival of early migrants of Hellenic origin to Johannesburg. It also investigates how the Orthodox Church impacted their lives and to a great extent shaped their identity as a group and promoted their exemplary ethical conduct. This is a modest contribution to our understanding on Hellenic migration to South Africa which addressing some of the gaps found in the literature relating to specifically, how the established Hellenic immigrant community in South Africa has retained close ties with the Greek Orthodox Church from the initial migration of Hellenes to Johannesburg, and how the Church has throughout the period in question supported migrants with its orthodox dogmas limited resources.

Keywords: Migration, Hellenes, Johannesburg

Introduction

There have been two major waves of mass emigration from Greece after the formation of the modern Hellenic state in the early 1830s. The initial wave lasted from the late 19th to the early 20th century, and the second wave took place after World War II. The first wave of emigration was encouraged by the major economic crisis of 1893 that was a direct result of a fall in the price of currants which were the major export products of Greece. During the period 1890-1914, roughly a sixth of the population of Greece emigrated, mostly to the United States and Egypt (Tziouvas, 2009). Emigration was encouraged by the Greek authorities, who viewed remittances as aiding the balance of payments of the Hellenic economy.

The lasting effect on Greece's national consciousness was the expansion of the notion of "Hellenism" and "Hellenic diaspora" to the "New World" (Kasimis & Kassimi:2004). While Hellenes emigrated to Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, it has been Egypt and South Africa that have been the main benefactors of Hellenic migration to Africa (Karanasou:1999). Many Greeks of the diaspora were viewed as either modernizers or as an obstacle to progress in places where they settled (Kaloudis, 2006).



Hellenes in South Africa

Greek immigrants were drawn to South Africa by the promise of copious opportunities. The first recorded migrants of Hellenic descent to South Africa can be traced to the early 1860s, where there were some 12 Hellenes living in Cape Town. It is unclear what happened to these Hellenes, but what is highly probable is that some of them ended up in Kimberley employed on diamond mines and others made their way to Johannesburg to work on the gold mines. In the late nineteenth century, a wave of immigration brought Orthodox Hellenes to the city of Johannesburg which was established in 1886. By 1895, these migrants numbered some seven hundred, and found themselves amongst members of other faiths including Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

Johannesburg had a growing reputation as a city of opportunity and attracted more and more migrants despite the restrictive anti-migratory measures imposed by President Paul Kruger and the government of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR). The government was unprepared to receive the large numbers of immigrants, and hesitated to introduce the necessary legal changes for the regularization and integration of the population of *Uitlander*' or newcomers. The *Uitlanders* were regarded with deep distrust by the Boers of the Transvaal government and especially by their president, Paul Kruger. The president introduced stringent electoral laws restricting voting rights to the Boers which enraged the migrants in the state, thus eliminating all Europeans who were not Boers, and imposed laws aimed at controlling the movement of all blacks in the ZAR. The mounting tension between the mining magnates who were of British extraction and the *Uitlanders* on one side, and the ZAR government on the other, boiled over into the 1899-1902 South African War.

Despite restrictions, by 1898, the Hellenic migrants in Johannesburg numbered approximately 300, increasing to 1000 by 1900. They were aided to an extent by Associations and Brotherhoods whose purpose it was to assist new migrants to settle into a new way of life on the dusty goldfields of the Witwatersrand. All migrants were regarded as 'Uitlanders' or newcomers, and were not afforded much respect and dignity and many felt alienated as was also the case in places across the globe (Leland, 2013). A small middle class of Hellenes developed and managed to survive through a very difficult period of constant flux on the Witwatersrand. Many battled as did Hellenes elsewhere to maintain a transnational culture and Identity (Koundoura, 2012).

The South African War (1899-1902)

Change is always a difficult thing to come to adapt to or come to terms with, and life in Johannesburg was certainly a major change for many Hellenic migrants even though they were a very small part of the population of 100 000. The outbreak of the South African War (1899-1902), was a major stressor in the fabric of the small Hellenic community. This was exacerbated by the deep seated racial and ethnic divisions in South African society. To most of the Hellenes, whose culture promoted tolerance and acceptance of the other, racism was anathema and they battled to come to grips with the intolerance and racial prejudice that abounded in their immediate environments. Politically however, and for self-preservation, certain Hellenes sided with the Boers while others sided with the British on ideological grounds, and this, often caused rifts in the Hellenic communities that threatened to destroy them. Unlike in America where the motto on the Statue of Liberty was "*Give me your tired, your poor*" and where migrants were welcomed with open arms, Johannesburg was not entirely a friendly place.



Despite the demand for large volumes of cheap labour, migrants were referred to as “Uitlanders” (foreigners) and treated with disdain and contempt and this was particularly the case with Hellenic migrants, many of whom could not speak either English or Dutch. This harsh attitude on the part of the ruling group of Boers unleashed a barrage of insecurities and fears and the only thing that the migrants could fall to for spiritual comfort was Orthodoxy. Greece thus retained a central place in the collective memory of their religious experience. Many Hellenes became highly disillusioned as any idea of making an easy living soon evaporated into thin air. Many had to settle for meager wages and were of necessity obliged to live in the poorer suburbs and take care of their families as best they could, often working from 5am to 12pm, seven days a week as travelling hawkers or small shopkeepers (Callinicos:1987).

Post South African War

On the conclusion of the South African War in 1902, by the Peace of Vereeniging, more Hellenes opted to come to the Transvaal in search of the promise of making a fortune in Gold mining. About 120 Greeks on the Witwatersrand were miners and in 1902 they decided to create their own Greek Miners’ Association. This action was prompted by the hostility shown towards them by the Transvaal Miners Association who feared that the Greeks were undercutting their wages (Callinicos:1987). In truth, the Greek miners were very hard working and considered to be highly efficient compared to other miners.

The Hellenic community of Johannesburg, like the Germans, French, Hollanders, Australians and Jews, soon established organizations for mutual support. Johannesburg became the “mother” of all Hellenic communities in South Africa as her Hellenic population grew. This was an amazing feat considering the restrictive immigration policies that existed. Apart from Hellenes who were experienced miners from the Belgian Congo, working as drillers, blasters and stoppers, most of the Hellenic migrants did not have any specialized skills or money and consequently many men became active in trading while the handful of women worked as shop-assistants. It did not require large amounts of money to open a store or café called a ‘tea-room’. Some Hellenes who were better off financially than their counterparts, opened bars, restaurants and small hotels and relished the idea of business in the service industries. It was not long before tea-rooms could be found virtually on every street corner. It must be stressed that not all Hellenic migrants were tea-room owners. Many of the later migrants, more particularly from about 1950 to 1976 were general dealers, fruiterers, bakers, tailors, plumbers, electricians, engineers, technicians, furniture manufacturers, painters, bottle-store owners and craftsmen amongst other vocations (Callinicos:1987), and were certainly more highly educated and technically skilled than the original groups who migrated to these shores.

In 1908, the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg and surroundings, comprising some 200 members was established. The members of the Community originated mainly from Greece but also included individuals that were born in Cyprus, Egypt and elsewhere. The Community’s constitution made provision for the construction and maintenance of Greek Orthodox Churches, orphanages and old age homes which were to be utilized by Hellenes living in Johannesburg and the wider Witwatersrand area. The Community was also tasked with a construction of schools within which Greek could be taught to especially the children in the community. This would not only counter the acculturation of Hellenic youth but also allowed them to learn the language of their ancestors and the proud traditions of their culture. On 18 January 1911, land was purchased for the construction of the first Greek Orthodox Church in Johannesburg, which was completed on 14 February 1914. This church, Saints Constantine and Helen, is still the main Cathedral of the Greek Orthodox Church in Johannesburg.



Hellenic migrants used adaptive strategies to cope with their new and hostile surroundings. Migrants' networks, especially the Greek Orthodox Church, family, friends, and the Hellenic Community, were crucial in aiding migrants to cope with the many pressures they faced in an environment which was not always conducive to them establishing themselves as South Africans in the true sense of the word. The actions of the migrants were guided by a set of religious, social and normative rules. These were however dynamic and often altered to suit the needs of the migrants. Gradually, migrants' traditional values were adapted to the new South African environment. New ideas were taken from the local South African culture and modified to the Hellenic norm, but throughout the process, the Greek Orthodox Church remained a pivotal institution which allowed them to retain links with the Hellenic culture and religion of the motherland. From as early as March 1914, an anonymous fund was set up by Hellenic pioneers for the building a school to promote the Hellenic ethos. In the 1930's Greek language lessons were provided to children of Hellenic origin by migrant teachers, a process which became formalized in the 1960's and which was eventually sponsored by the Greek Government to an extent. Churches also had Sunday Schools in which children's characters could be molded and in which a religious conscience could be preserved. A Hellenic Scout and Girl Guide movement was established in 1953, under the Chairmanship of the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Johannesburg and Pretoria and this also affords youth of Hellenic extraction the opportunity to mingle with fellow Hellenes.

The Greek Orthodox Churches of the Archbishopric of Johannesburg and Pretoria were highly central to the sub-culture of Hellenic immigrants and generally Church buildings were established in the heart of a suburb. The Church's role in maintaining spirituality in Hellenic society cannot be underestimated and Churches tended to allow Hellenic migrants to retain emotional contact with the country of their origin. Clerics were very active in boosting the Community and not only in a spiritual sense. A certain Archimandrite Nikodemos Sarikas was tasked with raising funds to construct a church in Johannesburg. The first priest of the Community was appointed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa and supported by the Holy Synod of Greece in 1911, this was Archimandrite Athanasios Alexiou. He served a Community of roughly 700 members. By 1913, the Church was under construction and this Church, The Holy Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saints Constantine and Helen, still operates in central Johannesburg to this day.

Through the early decades of the 20th century, there was a constant influx of migrants of Hellenic origin to South Africa. The mass violence in Europe during the First World War (1914-1918), and the forced migrations from Asia Minor contributed directly to the displacement of thousands of people of Hellenic origin. By comparison with Hellenic migration to South Africa, which was relatively miniscule by 1920, (approximately 3000 Hellenes), Hellenic migration to the United States was noticeably on the increase and the statistics show that there were about 400 000 Hellenic immigrants in the United States. Many more Hellenes were displaced after 1922, more particularly, as a consequence of the Smyrna catastrophe, when the ancient city was destroyed by a spectacular fire and the entire Armenian and Hellenic populations were either massacred by the Turkish army or forced to flee to Greece and beyond (Hirschon: 2003). The sequence of events that led to the butchering of Hellenes stems from the defeat of Turkey by the Allies in the war. In her book "*Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of a City*", Marjorie Housepian Dobkin quotes the then US. Consul General at Smyrna, George Horton:

"The victims of the massacre-Greeks and Armenians-were estimated at 150,000. What was left of Smyrna was only its Turkish suburb. This very old and extremely beautiful Greek city had been founded in 3000 B.C. and



restored by Alexander the Great. It used to be one of the most important economic centers of the Mediterranean. It used to be full of life and activity. It used to be prosperous. And now from one moment to the next it was turned into a dead city. To a huge pile of ruins which emitted smoke. Those of its inhabitants who escaped the massacre fled, ousted and miserable, to Greece.” (Dobkin:2004).

The massacre prompted numerous Hellenes to flee to the relative safety of Australia, Canada and South Africa. Consequently, more and more urban parishes were created and this was particularly the case in South Africa after the First World War.

The Greek and Armenian genocides

The genocide of Greeks between 1914 and 1922 by ‘fanatical’ Muslim Turks is known as the Pontic genocide, was a systematic genocide of the Christian Ottoman Greek population from its historic homeland in Anatolia during World War I and the years following the Great war and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire (Jones, 2010:154-163). The Ottoman Empire and its government and the Turkish nationalistic movement initiated cruel actions against the Greek population including exterminations, obligatory deportations including death marches, summary expulsions from Asia Minor, random executions, and the destruction of Christian Orthodox churches and other cultural and historical, and monuments (Law, 2014:54). Many refugees fled to Greece thus increasing the Greek population in Greece to at least a quarter more than before the genocide began (Howland, 1926). So horrific was the slaughter, that by the end of the 1919–22 Graeco-Turkish War, the majority of Greeks who resided in Asia Minor had either fled or had been exterminated. The overall number of Orthodox Christians who escaped to Greece was undoubtedly in the region of 1.2 million (Gibney and Hansen, 2005). The surviving remaining Greeks were relocated to Greece under the terms of the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey, which formalized the flight of Greeks and forbade their return to Turkey.

In 1915 there was also the genocide of Armenians by ‘fanatical’ Muslim Turks which created huge upheaval in Asia Minor. The Armenian Genocide was centrally orchestrated and administered by the Turkish government against the whole Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. It was conducted during W.W.I between the years 1915 and 1918. This resulted in the methodical massacre thousands of Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire.

Sentiments in Johannesburg

The Greek Community of Johannesburg found itself torn between the love of the homeland and political affiliation in Greece and this was problematic in that a schism developed in the Community. At this time of division amongst Hellenes, a transitional executive committee (1914-1917) was established, under the Chairmanship of a certain Mr. Nicolaides who was the editor of the Greek newspaper *Nea Hellas* (Nicolaides:1923). This was a trying time in the Greek Community and Clergy were called upon to try to mend the rift. Mr. Nicolaides, Mr. Nathan (Greek Consul General) and a Mr. Kapsopoulos reorganized the community with the help of the clergy and the divisions came to an end temporarily but by 1920 they resurfaced as ideological and political differences manifested themselves after the attempted assassination of Venizelos in Paris.

The chief characteristics of the first immigrants to Johannesburg were their high ethical character and their industriousness. They passed these decent characteristics onto their children. These



immigrants were also highly supportive of education, and saw to it that their children received a good education, the best they could afford to give them. Because of all of these influences, contemporary immigrants children and their grandchildren have become leaders in commerce, industry, medicine, education, and even government. They have accomplished what their parents, grandparents and great grandparents have desired for them.

Unifying Factors

The Turkish attacks in Asia Minor which led to a mass exodus of Greeks from the region tended to be a unifying event for the Hellenes in South Africa. As the Greek Army was repulsed and crushed by the Turks, and economic despair enveloped Greece, the South African Hellenes spurred on by the Orthodox clergy, developed a sense of solidarity. The main focus of the Hellenes in South Africa, the question of the survival of the local Hellenic communities, became the paramount concern. Many Hellenes pondered the question on whether or not they should return to their homeland or stay in South Africa. In 1928, the first Archbishop of Johannesburg, Isidore Georgiades was enthroned by the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, Meletios Metaxakis, in order to assist and guide the community to solve its real problems on the ground. He had served as a parish priest in Pretoria from 1924 and was well versed in the problems besetting the Hellenic communities. After this, many opted to remain in South Africa and soon new Hellenic immigrants were invited from Greece. The advent of World War Two and the destruction of most of Europe, made the Hellenic community in Johannesburg in particular, much more resilient. Many Hellenes simply realized that they were here to stay but nonetheless willingly supported the collection of funds for the Greek Army in its battle against Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Despite support for Greece during the war years, the local Hellenic Community was able to collect sufficient funds to make it stronger than it had been hitherto.

It was a common phenomenon that Hellenes emanating from particular regions of Greece tended to remain in close contact with each other, whether settling in South Africa or elsewhere, thereby fostering a sense of solidarity and social cohesiveness. It was not therefore uncommon that Hellenes from a similar background would organize themselves into parishes where there were Hellenes from the same region in Greece or elsewhere. The evidence of such demographic trends is still visible today in that there are for example an Egyptian-Greek Society, Ithakesian Society, Cephalonian Society, Limnian Society, Cretan Society, Cypriot Brotherhood etc. The ethnic cohesiveness oftentimes led to the formation of ethnic parishes where the social and cultural needs of parishioners could be met. Such parishes often tried to source clergy from their particular region in Greece to serve their spiritual needs. This trend was however, not as pronounced in South Africa as it was in the United States and Australia where there were far larger Hellenic community parishes.

The traditional image one has of the Hellenic immigrant family and the community at large, is one in which there are patriarchal structures with defined roles for men and women. Beyond the home, these roles are played out on a greater scale with the Greek Orthodox Church as the main patriarchal institution and also the center of all Greek immigrant communities. Hellenic women migrants mostly occupy supportive and nurturing roles. Where the men are involved in for argument's sake in running the Hellenic Communities, women are involved in lesser roles, such as fundraising for the poor and support local Church and social programmes. These trends were intensified in the early period of Hellenic migration to South Africa as women needed to have a man fend for them in hostile environment. Hellenic women were expected to expend all their energies on family and home, and men were responsible for providing food and shelter for their



families. In the South African Hellenic family of today, these roles have altered substantially as young Hellenic women enter professions and other previously all-male occupations in significant numbers (Tastsoglou & Maratou- Alipranti:2003).

There is no doubt that transnational migration reinforced the patriarchal structures within the Hellenic immigrant family and the Hellenic Community in general, but as more mixed marriages are solemnized, this trend has diminished so that women since the 1980s, women have been able to move out of the scope of their traditional roles.

Post - World War Two

In the post-World War II period, Greece was among the main contributors to migration to the industrialized nations of Northern Europe. More than a million Hellenes migrated in this second wave, which occurred between 1950 and 1974, representing roughly a sixth of the population of Greece (Fakiolals & King:1996). Most Hellenes tended to emigrate to Western Europe, the US, Canada, Australia and 19000 came to South Africa and this gave rise to many new communities, churches and schools (Mantzaris:1999). Economic and political reasons motivated the movement of Hellenes. The 1946-1949 Greek Civil War played a role in persuading people to leave their motherland for greener pastures (Kasimis & Kassimi:2004).

In 1948, South African Hellenes decided to create a Federation of Hellenic Communities but this was problematic as there was inexplicably apathy in terms of community membership. Plans were developed to increase the level of Greek immigration to South Africa and especially to Johannesburg, where it was estimated that 70 000 Greeks resided. The Church also faced huge challenges at this time as it strove to create places of worship for the 350 or so economically active Hellenes in the Transvaal and their families.

After the World War II, the composition of the Orthodox parishes began to undergo a change as many children of immigrants were not entirely accustomed to the language or culture of Greece. Many of the youth saw themselves as South African. It was at this juncture that more Greek schools were brought into operation so that the youth could become acquainted with their roots. In the Witwatersrand area, a number of parishes came into being in places such as Brakpan, Boksburg, Springs, Benoni, Alberton, Germiston, Vereeniging, Krugersdorp, Klerksdorp, Rustenburg and Witbank. By this time there were also Parishes beyond the border of the Transvaal in Bloemfontein, East London, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, Cape Town and Welkom. There was also a migration of Greeks from Egypt which began just started prior to the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 which continued to about 1970.

When Gamal Abdel Nasser assumed power, and Pan-Arab nationalism increased, followed by the subsequent nationalization of countless industries between 1961 and 1963, thousands of Greeks opted to leave Egypt. Many of them emigrated to South Africa, Australia, the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria and Greece. Thus, Greek schools, countless churches, local communities and Hellenic institutions closed. There is no doubt that the Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967 and again in 1973, also contributed to the displacement of the substantial Greek community in the Suez Canal cities, especially Port Said and Cairo, but also Alexandria.

Many of these Greeks found their way to South Africa and especially Johannesburg and Pretoria. It should also be noted that the extremely hostile invasion of Cyprus in 1974 by Turkey, which



ultimately divided the island, also prompted a wave of refugees to immigrate to South Africa as they fled for their lives since fanatical Muslim Turks once again sought their destruction.

An Ethical Compass

Ethics refers to making the right moral choices in life, and dealing with what is good and bad and with strong moral duty and obligation. Ethics cannot conceivably be considered to be a separate discipline in the tradition of the Orthodox Church (Guroian, 1981). Orthodox clerics in South Africa have tended to view ethics from the standpoint that ethical issues are addressed throughout the life of the Church. It is evident in Holy Scripture, worship, patristic teachings, and canon law (Harakas, 2004), that ethical practice is expected and this line of reasoning has been promoted by the Orthodox priests in South Africa, since the arrival of the first one to Cape Town.

Ethics is and has continuously been viewed as a soteriological tool, i.e., ethics is always understood from the perspective that salvation is the ultimate goal of all Orthodox adherents. The Orthodox believer finds Grace among the persons of the Holy Trinity which provide the objectives and aims of life. Priests thus promote the notion that all human beings, both as individuals and also as members of a community, e.g., family, church, society, have an important and special role.

Where Orthodox anthropology defines man in terms of relationships with God, with other people, and also creation, Orthodox ethics takes place in the milieu of relationships within the broader community (Harakas, 2004). It was and is within the community that the clerics drive the moral values that Orthodoxy desires of us.

Greek Orthodox priests have always worked to deal with all of the spiritual needs of their parishioners in Johannesburg. Some played a more involved role in educating their parishioners on the various elements of their religion. The priests work on a weekly basis to hold mass for the people of their parish, and this is a recurring and very important responsibility. For many this was a taxing duty since they were employed elsewhere, as teachers, academics, company owners etc. Nonetheless in Johannesburg, some have worked in a direct educational role from time to time. They were and remain well versed in the teachings of the church, and most are looked to for comfort in difficult times and for support and reinforcement in good times. They thus have served and continue to serve in many different roles as.

The definitive ethical norm in Orthodoxy is agape (love). Love as an ethical norm finds satisfactory rationale only within the framework of the Christian faith and the experience of the Holy Trinity as promoted by priests within the parishes of the Hellenic communities. Thus, the expression of love in the daily lives of the Orthodox believers forms the moral life and the ethics of the Orthodox faithful. Harakas, (2004) stresses that doing good, being ethical and developing a constant character, are important aspects of the faith. To this end then, an ethical life is at the same time a fight against evil, sin, and humanity's fallen state, and a dynamic exertion towards doing ethically good things. People must co-exist in harmony in a democratic system where the law protects all equally irrespective of race, creed or any other aspect.

Orthodox Christianity has always been committed to the truth claim of the Christian Faith and the Biblical truth that all human beings are created by God in His image. God is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Orthodox Christians are also committed to the truth claim of the Christian Faith not as ideology but as an expression of ethical practice and holiness. In this context, the Hellenic Orthodox believers in Johannesburg, and in other areas of South Africa,



have always been committed to the tolerance of other religious expressions. Today, they embrace cultural diversity, and also linguistic and religious heterogeneity as they did in the early 1900s.

There is a general respect for others, and a tolerance and understanding for people of other faiths. There is also a spirit of forgiveness, given that early Hellenes were generally treated with disdain and contempt by fellow whites. In terms of human rights promotion, they have been exceptional citizens- the example of George Bizos bears testimony to this fact. The Orthodox clerics promote the philosophy that there must be commitment to the Christian truth claim and they affirm a multicultural democratic environment for all people to live in peace and harmony. Orthodox clerics, in line with Orthodox dogma, stress that a life of unification with Christ in Spirit, prayer and the Eucharist allows believers to trust their ethical decisions. The role model lives and teachings, of Orthodox clerics in South Africa, have been valuable ethical guidelines for today's younger Orthodox believers. This is not to suggest that all Orthodox are perfect beings, but rather that there is a strong desire to do the best possible in any given situation, depending on context and each individuals character.

In the Orthodox Church, life has always been viewed as a continuous process of becoming closer to God. There is, thus also a dynamic process of growth in the ethical facets of life. Priests stress that real solutions are possible when ethicality is considered and which invariably reflect the Orthodox understanding of creation and its relationship to the Creator (Harakas, 2004). Orthodox believers have been guided to pray, study, attend lectures on Orthodox themes, having a father confessor, striving to develop a good knowledge of Scripture and Holy Tradition, theology, love, worship, obedience, sacraments, mission outreach, philanthropy, and social concern- all acting in unison to arrive at a desired ethical state. Orthodox Hellenes in Johannesburg have to an extent, been critical of oppressive communal structures of supremacy that did not allow people to be diverse or recognize their differences within their community life. Racism, unfair prejudicial treatment of both sexes, genocide, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, child abuse, rape, theft and destruction of private property, deceptions and deceit, environmental degradation and other such unethical behaviours have always been taught to be disruptors of the human dignity of others. All human life is a gift of God and should thus be respected.

Anti-Apartheid clerics

The church has always had clerics who were vehemently opposed to intolerance and notions of superiority. Fr. Dn. Stephen serves two congregations in Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa. As an Anglican in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, (as was Fr Evangelos from 1997-1999) he worked as a missiologist training self-supporting priests and deacons, as well as developing theological education by extension. As a result of his missionary exertions across racial lines under South Africa's apartheid government, Fr Dn Stephen was exiled, listed as Enemy of the State #1658, and banned from 1972 – 1976 (Hargrave, 2013). This demonstrates the stance of Orthodox clerics in general towards oppression. He states:

“...I saw that the apartheid ideology was directly opposed to many fundamental truths of the Christian faith. As a Protestant might express it, it was salvation by race, not salvation by grace... The ANC was (and still is) allied to the Communist Party, but since they came to power we have had a democratic constitution that guarantees freedom of religion, and that part of the constitution was drawn up by a communist lawyer who invited the widest participation of religious groups in drawing it up. You see, in South Africa, most persecution of Christians came from the Anti-communists... During the



time of apartheid, all Orthodox clergy came from overseas, and were only given visas if they (and the bishop) signed an undertaking that they would confine their ministry to their own ethnic community. That was in accordance with the basic principle of apartheid with its notion of “own affairs”...There are various ethnic parishes, Greek, Russian, Serbian, Romanian and Bulgarian, but all fall under one bishop. Many of the ethnic parishes concentrate on one ethnic community, using the language of that community, but, depending mostly on how mission-minded the parish priest is, some have outreach into local communities as well. Some of the parishes are “community” churches, run by an ethnic committee, which employs the priest, and those are less interested in what happens outside, and tend not to like it when the priest engages in what they regard as extra-curricular activities. Others, like the Serbian parish, are church-controlled, not community controlled... and it is the priest who encourages the laity to take part in mission, rather than the laity discouraging the priest. The church-controlled parishes are generally more open and mission-minded than the community parishes. And then there are mission congregations, established with local people and using local languages. Most of them were started after 1997...” Source: <http://myocn.net/orthodoxy-south-africa-apartheid/>

While converting to Orthodox Christianity in the mid-1980s, Fr Dn Stephen and his family participated in founding the Society of St Nicholas of Japan with the aim of promoting the Orthodox Christian faith among people of all ethnic groups. Fr Dn Stephen remains active in missionary work, participates in a number of internet discussions on Orthodoxy and missiology, and continues to supervise post-graduate students in missiology at the University of South Africa (Hargrave, 2013). He is editor -in-chief of the Pharos Journal of Theology which is top-notch theology journal and a credit to our faith.

The Work of the Greek Orthodox Church in general

The Church sees itself as continuing the three-dimensional salvatory work of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In terms of this work the Church exercises a prophetic role through the clergy and laity as it furthers Christ’s role as a teacher. Secondly, the Church is involved in the sacramental life of the community and once again the clergy and laity take part in the high-priestly role of Jesus. Thirdly, and most importantly in the current debate, the Church exercised and continues to exercise, the governing role of Jesus Christ, as it oversees the individual lives of Orthodox Christians. The Church regulates conditions for marriage, the periods of fasting, the relationship with the state and other organizations and most importantly the spiritual discipline that sinners need to be able to return to a full communion, and to atone with Jesus Christ. This type of Church structure with its three-pronged approach is what managed to keep the Hellenic migrant Community in South Africa on track in the course of South African history. The Church’s inter-relationships with all Hellenic Communities and all the other stakeholders in their migration equation has been paramount in promoting a happy life for migrants far from their motherland. The Church has always supported all Hellenes and other Christian believers. The clergy continue to be the servants of the Hellenic Community and provide an important pastoral role, which is clearly distinct from the role that laity play. In essence, the clergy whether they are bishops, presbyters or deacons, as servants of Christ, are stewards of the Mysteries of God. In fulfilling their sacramental and pastoral responsibilities the clergy have to take strict cognizance of their



basic roles which are administrative, legislative and juridical. In these functions' they have done a noteworthy job from the outset of Orthodox Church life in South Africa.

The Hellenic migrant community in South Africa has always been under the spiritual care of the clergy but has also been responsible for assisting in the work of the Church and has readily cooperated with the clergy in exercising and fulfilling their pastoral and administrative tasks. The laity have also always cooperated with the Church by actively participating in the sacramental life of the Church and to a large extent have sponsored the construction of most of the Churches in the Johannesburg and Pretoria Archdiocese.

The Church's role in South African Hellenic community development in the 1960s – 1980s period

The 1967-1974 period of military junta rule in Greece that saw the ousting of King Constantine and the rule of the Generals under George Papadopoulos, also bolstered the number of Hellenes in South Africa. Official statistics show that in the period 1955-1973 West Germany absorbed 603 300 Greek migrants, Australia 170 700, the USA 124 000, and Canada 80 200, while about 4000 came to South Africa between 1971 and 1976. The number of Hellenes migrating from Greece slowed to a trickle especially after the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Most emanated from rural areas. The Parishes in the inner cities tended to attract such new immigrants many of whom opened tearooms, while those in the outlying areas served non-traditional Orthodox Christians in the sense that many had non-Orthodox spouses and most tended to marry outside their ethnic group. While such a practice was treated with contempt in the early 1900's from about 1960 onwards it was an increasing phenomenon. This fact of life eventually led to the development of the use of the English language, at least partly, in liturgical services. Despite the power of the Greek Orthodox faith over everyday life, Hellenic men were not devout churchgoers. Aside from the special Easter celebrations, services were attended mainly by old women and young children.

The Clergy of the Orthodox Church were increasingly called upon to sensitize themselves to the pastoral needs of a community that was far less homogenous and which was also far more educated and wealthy than the early Greek Communities. It was the Orthodox Church, more than any other institution, which made strong efforts to assist Hellenic immigrants to South Africa. The Greek Orthodox Archbishops after His Eminence Isidore, including, Nikodemos, Paul and John, faced very severe problems from the outset of their administrations, but they persevered in ministering to the myriad of spiritual needs of the Hellenic communities they served through the difficult Apartheid years, up until the enthronement of one co-author of this article, Archbishop, Seraphim Kykkotis and his successor Archbishop Damaskinos.

As South African immigration laws became more relaxed, it was inevitable that more Hellenes would come to the country. The church lobbied the already vibrant communities to assist immigrants and advise them on a wide-range of social problems. It was the Archbishops and local parish priests that protected their interests and shielded them from a Protestant environment that was often hostile. The environment became markedly anti-Hellene when the Prime Minister of South Africa and 'architect' of Apartheid, Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd was stabbed to death in the House of Assembly on 6 September 1966, by Dimitri Tsafendas, a parliamentary clerk who had been born in Crete and was thus of Greek descent. Hellenes living and working in predominantly Afrikaans speaking areas where the National Party enjoyed a majority, were immediately treated with contempt. There were even cases where a number of Greek owned shops were attacked and their proprietors were terrorized. It was in especially the Church which served as the focal point of the community and where Hellenes could find comfort in a turbulent world. The Hellenic



Community churches held regular social events and the Orthodox Church held religious feasts which served to further unite Hellenes. Despite hostility towards Hellenes as a result of the Verwoerd assassination, the Minister of Mines in 1967, Dr. K de Wet, praised the efforts of the Hellenic Community in Johannesburg, and lauded them for their invaluable contributions towards the upliftment of all the citizens of South Africa.

Through 1974, the leaders of the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg, with the full support of the then Orthodox Archbishop, Paul Lyngris, and under the leadership, guidance and vision of one of South Africa's greatest legal minds and a champion of global human rights, Advocate George Bizos, established SAHETI (South African Hellenic Educational and Technical Institute) (Scoufes:1985). SAHETI is currently one of the leading private schools in the country and it embraces learners from all ethnic groups. The main purpose of the school is to infuse the ethos of Hellenism, Greek language, culture and history in its students, many of whom are not of Greek descent but nonetheless espouse Hellenistic values. The patrons of SAHETI are the Archbishop of Johannesburg and Pretoria and the Ambassador of Greece in South Africa. The school is well known for its classical and folk Greek dancing and its celebration of Greek National Days. There is also a Greek Orthodox church on site in which the youth are taught important aspects of Orthodox spirituality by a caring cleric, Fr. Petros, who serves on the staff complement of the school. SAHETI offers numerous scholarships, bursaries and assists parents with financial difficulties and in terms of its founding constitution, does not charge the children of Orthodox clerics for educational services provided. Apart from this, SAHETI is also involved in outreach programmes focusing especially on the disadvantaged in South African society. There are as described, numerous students at SAHETI who are not of Greek descent or even Christian, attesting to the quality of the educational offerings and the special ethos which pervades the corridors of learning. The all- embracing philosophy and scholastic character, superb academic results and the sterling work of the devoted and highly efficient teachers is noteworthy. Past Headmasters and especially the Headmistress, Mrs. S. Krystallidis played a significant role in getting SAHETI where it is today. The current quality driven and progressive-minded headmaster, Mr. W. Taylor, and his dedicated staff complement do the Hellenic community proud in their meritorious endeavours.

By 1975, a number of special Greek language and culture schools which operated in the late afternoons in many of the neighbourhoods of Johannesburg were also established. On the instigation of the Archpriest father Cyril of Johannesburg a number of bursaries were also granted by business to some students of Hellenic origin to enable them to study at the University of the Witwatersrand. By 1988, it was apparent that the maintenance of the Greek schools was problematic as the number of scholars increased. The church guided community leaders in their drive to keep the schools functioning and the Greek government was encouraged to send educators from Greece to satisfy the growing demand. There is no doubt that from its inception, the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg supported by the clergy, maintained cultural awareness amongst its members. There were also areas where the church could have been more effective.

Despite its accomplishments in creating an *esprit d'corps* in the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg, there were a number of areas where more could have been done. For example, no serious attention was given to the creation of religious education programmes which would have enabled younger Hellenes to express their faith. It was only from about the late 1980s that clergy began to adopt a truly greater interest in adult religious education and certain priests such as father Minas Constantinou, began to conduct parts of the Liturgy in English, thereby creating a more meaningful spiritual experience for parishioners who could not understand the Greek language well. There will undoubtedly need to be greater changes in the future, as new



parishioners are called upon to also become more actively involved in missionary activities.

For many of the Hellenic migrants and indeed for their Clergy, religion and ethnicity were bed-fellows and the belief existed, but the Church was responsible for the preservation of Hellenic culture and customs. It was a difficult task to expect many Orthodox Clergy and parishioners in the early communities to recognize the importance of teaching about the faith in English as a priority, in any case, most clergy could not converse in the English language.

From the 1990s to the present

The Hellenic Community of the Johannesburg is the largest and most prosperous of all the Hellenic Communities in South Africa, due mainly to its larger membership and the role it has played in the Hellenic community in general. The democratic revolution in South Africa, had a negative impact on the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg, as many Hellenes left South Africa to return to Greece or Cyprus. Many others immigrated to the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia or New Zealand. Crime is cited as the main reason for the departure of Hellenes. A direct result of such emigration has been a diminishing of the size of the population of especially the Cathedral Church of Saints Constantine & Helen, which is situated in the centre of Johannesburg, which is a prime crime area. A priest of the community was shot and almost died and this was a major reason for many parishioners distancing themselves from the area. This is a sad development given the fact it is a beautiful Church and the first constructed by the Hellenic Community in Johannesburg. In 1999 there were 70000 Hellenes living in South Africa, with about 55000 of them residing in the Johannesburg Metropolitan area.

Today there are only 34000 Hellenes left in the country. Generally speaking, many of the second, third or fourth generation South African with some Hellenic ancestry, are proud to be involved in the Community and attend church when opportunity arises. Sadly, many own supermarkets and restaurants and find it difficult to leave their business on a Sunday morning in order to attend church. On the other hand, membership of the community is gradually becoming more diverse due to mixed marriages and the indigenization of the church, supported by the use of English alongside the Greek vernacular in liturgical services. Unlike their predecessors, the Hellenes of today are not merely seen as tearoom owners- they are highly successful businessmen and women, doctors, lawyers' engineers, teachers, academics and architects amongst other professions and play a highly significant role in the new 21st Century South Africa.

The role of the Orthodox Church in maintaining the Hellenic ethnic and cultural identity of migrants to Johannesburg during the last 94 years in South Africa, cannot be underestimated. Most Hellenes, numerous of whom are non-practicing Christians, greatly revere and highly respect the Orthodox faith. They tend to visit an Orthodox Church on major feast days, such as during the Paschal week or Christmas. Most Hellenes are to all intents and purposes emotionally attached to Greek Orthodox Christianity and will refer to it as their 'national' religion.

While Greek South Africans and other Diaspora groups have been in the country for over 140 years now, there is sadly still no Greek magazine or other media product that promotes the female voice or promotes multicultural respect. The Greek newspaper which exists amounts to little more than publicities about for example, which organization or society met and had dinner, which Greek singer is coming to our shores, where a "vasilopita" was cut, or who made a grant to the old age home.

There are also certain Hellenes, a minority it must be stressed, who believe that the use of English threatens the perpetuation of Hellenic culture and language in South Africa, but nothing could be



further from the truth, as Hellenic ideals, culture and language appear to be flourishing. One of the main reasons of the latter is the work done by SAHETI, a Greek language radio station and a local Greek newspaper, *Hellenic News*, which also publishes a section of its monthly publication in the English language. Contrary to the Hellenic spirit, there is no Greek publication where the real issues that plague the Hellenic cultural group, either socially, politically or economically, especially from a woman's perspective, are talked about candidly. Surely there is a great need to preserve and perpetuate our identity, by sharing our turbulent past and promising and challenging present while providing a voice for the community.

Such endeavors and initiatives serve to strengthen the Hellenic Community rather than to weaken it as one is led to believe by certain extremists. It is important to see the Orthodox Parishes less as ethnic communities and more as a manifestation of the Church of Christ.

Greek women in South Africa actively support the mounting Greek Orthodox educational system as teachers, secretaries, and fundraisers in noteworthy Hellenic societies. However, it is the church hierarchy, which articulates the needs of the Greek community and which creates the ideological space for these women to fulfill these important needs through the roles that they play. In doing so, the hierarchy ultimately unofficially directs their attention, resources and efforts to needs. In so doing the church defines their position within the broader community.

Orthodox Church activities

There are currently thirty parish churches and chapels residing under the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Johannesburg and Pretoria which serve about 30 000 parishioners. Thirty-four clerics serve the Orthodox Communities, seventeen of which are of direct Greek origin, two Serbians, one Rumanian, a Russian and ten of South African descent, five of whom have Greek or Cypriot ancestry. The parishes perform on average 250 baptisms, 100 weddings, 160 funerals and about 30 divorces a year. The Church is also involved in Missionary activity. The current Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, His Holiness Theodore II, who has jurisdiction over the entire African region, has aligned himself with the Metropolitan Archbishop of Johannesburg and Pretoria, His Eminence Damaskinos to perform three basic functions:

Firstly, to support the Hellenic migrant communities in every possible way albeit with limited resources.

Secondly, to support our fellow Orthodox brothers and sisters who are Russian, Serbian, Rumanian, Ukrainian, Georgians, Bulgarians, and Arab or other, so that the ecclesiastic control of the Alexandrian Patriarchate and the spread of Orthodoxy in Africa can be realized and maintained.

Thirdly, to promote missionary activity and the creation of philanthropic institutions so as to alleviate the plight of the African masses who are suffering as a consequence of the apartheid policy which plagued South Africa for decades in the course of its history.

Notable and noteworthy achievements of the Church thus far

There are various areas in which the church is currently very active. These are outlined briefly below.



In order to be able to serve its missionary work, the church has created an Ecclesiastic School of Alexandria 'Petros Z' in Johannesburg which has been functioning for the last three years. The school aims to promote the training of new indigenous clerics so assist the church in its role in South Africa in particular. There is also a chapel on the grounds of the Ecclesiastic School. The church has also created the Athanasion Foundation to serve the aged of especially Hellenic origin. This is in addition to the Old Age Home at Saint Nektarios church which serves a similar function and is a product of HOLA (Hellenic Orthodox Ladies Association). The Greek Orthodox ladies of HOLA are very active in the community and these ladies involve themselves in raising funds to support elderly and indigent Hellenes both economically and psychologically. The priest of St. Nektarios sees to the spiritual needs of the elderly in the Old Age Home.

The church has purchased a large tract of land near Hartbeespoort Dam upon which there is a monastery and a Chapel which is currently occupied by nuns from Greece. The spirit, practice and purpose of monasticism is integral to enhancing our spiritual life and to provide a centre of Orthodox practice removed from our daily trials and tribulations, as well as to entrench our religious and ethnic identity. The monastery shall provide a home for its monks and clergy and to those in our community who are in dire need of a spiritual sanctuary (Archbishopric of Johannesburg and Pretoria, 2017).

Annual services at the Greek Orthodox chapel of Saint Barbara at this site attract many congregants. Originally a private chapel, it is today regarded as an *exoklesi* (country chapel). It is located on the farm Scheerpoort, the chapel graces the southern foot of the Magaliesberg mountains. It is situated near the Hartbeespoort Dam. St. Barbara was built in 1952 by Evangelos Nomikos who was a ship owner, who was also the benefactor of the Greek old-age home in Johannesburg (Source: www.agiabarbara.co.za). This is a place of solitude for, more particularly, the youth and seminars are held there on a regular basis. An HIV/AIDS information centre named the 'Grace Centre' has been created which also supports children who have been orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS.

There are weekly Biblical Studies and catechetical classes in most parishes and regular seminars in which the youth of Hellenic extraction as well as others, have opportunities to discuss themes which affect them directly and indirectly. These groups also make regular visits to hospitals. There are also numerous clerics and parishioners of all ages involved in family support groups. The Hellenic Communities and the Philoptochos society of the Church also actively support these initiatives. The Church also arranges regular blood drives for the donation of blood, a much-needed item in South African society. The church also collects and hands out foodstuffs and clothing to the poor and orphans in our society.

There are regular Sunday School classes in most parishes and two radio programmes a week support the initiatives of the church, one of which is a regular weekly Church service aired to the public on a local Greek language radio station. The Church is also involved in the publication of an academic peer-reviewed theological journal the "Pharos Journal of Theology" which resides under the control of Africajournals. This was previously the highly respected and well managed "*Ekklesiastikos Pharos*" which had to adapt to meet evolving Higher Education publication requirements. The *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* was originally published in Alexandria (Egypt) directly by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate as a theological review at the beginning of the 20th Century. Consequently, it is one of the oldest scholarly periodicals in Africa. The Journal is a progressive, peer reviewed theology journal of scholarship reflecting *inter alia*, the history and philosophy of religious thought in all traditions and periods. A fifteen- member team comprising of clerics and



volunteers is also involved in missionary work. Consequently, there are now four Missionary parishes including Eldorado Park, Soshanguve, Tembisa (and Mamelodi) and Zeerust. The number of these is expected to grow in the near future.

It is clear that Orthodox Hellenic youth are not as limited as their predecessors in understanding and expressing their faith. Most no longer see the Church as an ethnic community and now appear to be developing a genuine appreciation for the doctrinal and ethical teachings of the Orthodox Church. Most now attend services and actually understand the sermons they hear preached on a Sunday. A large number of theological publications have been written by clergy in the English language to support the drive for understanding the faith more. There has also been a guide to the liturgical service sanctioned by the Archbishopric that is bilingual and another is envisaged in the near future. English is increasingly used in particular parishes where the clerics are of Greek descent. It is a pastoral and missionary imperative that English be used on a greater scale. The parishes are slowly rediscovering themselves as centres for Christian worship and a life that is founded on the teachings of Christ as it is reflected in the life of the Orthodox Church.

Despite these very noble accomplishments, and past and current Metropolitan Archbishops and clergy with zeal and drive to strive for greater heights, more needs to be done. The Church is limited however due to the declining numbers of Hellenes. In the 1970s the Hellenic population was estimated at roughly 120 000. Today there are no more than 34 000 and the numbers appear to be dwindling due to immigration as a direct result of the unacceptable levels of crime which bedevil our society.

Contemporary Hellenic ethnicity in South Africa

What do we mean by ethnicity? Essentially, an ethnic group or ethnicity is a category of people who identify with each other based on a common language, and a range of ancestral, social, cultural, or national experiences. Ethnicity is chiefly an hereditary status (ethnicity, n.d.).

South Africa is today a melting pot of diverse ethnicities. For millions of South Africans, issues of racial and ethnic identification are often complicated, a legacy of the country's Apartheid and discriminatory past.

Many Hellenes who migrated to South Africa reluctantly assimilated into the dominant culture, which at that time was predominantly white protestant controlled and embedded in racism. While they disapproved of what was inherently exclusionary, intolerant and biased, many towed the nationalist white line due to a feeling of obligation. Many however, did not, and abhorred racism in any shape or form.

Most however maintained strong ethnic ties with Greece and/or Cyprus. Due to the fact that most members who belong to the Greek Orthodox Church have a Hellenistic background, they have a tendency to value and celebrate its historic accomplishments when they meet for church feast days. Most of the Hellenes living in South Africa today, have a distinctly South Africanized worldview. However, there are a few who maintain a Hellenic worldview.

Most Greek Orthodox Greek-South Africans today, especially the post- baby boomer Generation Y, consider themselves to be mostly South African with some Hellenism mixed in. when mixed marriages occur between Greeks and non-Greeks, it is not uncommon for the non-Greek spouse



to adopt a love for Greek cuisine, cultural traditions, music, art, language and religion. In particular, the "philoxenia," or the friendly, welcoming attitude that is typical of Greek- South Africans toward others, the emphasis on family, and the cohesive quality of Greek-American communities, tend to be pull factors towards adopting a Hellenistic approach to life.

It is perhaps time to call for a recreation of modern Hellenism, away from the seemingly ethno-nationalist segregation which characterizes some South African Hellenic communities towards a contemporary, all-encompassing and multi-cultural conception of what it actually means to be an Hellene.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a brief overview of how the Greek Orthodox Church has supported Hellenic migrants who reside in the Johannesburg metropolitan area, dogmatically, materially and by its ethical guidance. Although Hellenic migrants were a diverse group, they faced a common set of challenges after they arrived in Johannesburg. Participation in Hellenic Associations and in Greek Orthodox Church life, facilitated the social integration of migrants and encouraged them to seek citizenship in South Africa. Upheaval in Europe and an entrepreneurial spirit as well as the right circumstances brought people from Greece to Johannesburg where they became part of the 'city of gold' and the subsequent generations of their families that remain now comprise a part of the make-up of the community of the modern city of Johannesburg. It is clear from the evidence that the role of the Greek Orthodox Church has been immense in supporting Hellenes who migrated to South Africa and it also flourished as a repository of Hellenic aspirations and cultural forms.

The Orthodox Church, being a complex, institution became the focus of intense feelings of identification of Hellenes in a South Africa not keen to allow greater migration. Hellenic migrants did not leave their religious beliefs behind, but rather remembered and attempted to reconstitute them, creating Hellenic Associations and erecting Churches and schools, thereby building the chains of memory which are essential to a strong religious tradition. Certainly, future research would benefit from a more thorough investigation of the linkages among Greek Orthodox Church membership and greater participation in the uplifting of South African society. Orthodox Churches and mutual aid organizations provide a cohesiveness to the dynamic, often complaining, Greek community, which has survived two world wars, Apartheid, economic slump, and social discrimination and endures to grow today.

The early Hellenes in Johannesburg maintained to an extent, their collective national consciousness as Greek-speaking Orthodox citizens of South Africa and came progressively to regard themselves primarily as fellow citizens of South Africa. While many remained Orthodox Christians, their religious belief constituted not their complete identity but rather one dimension of their national consciousness. In the segregated order of South Africa, the Orthodox church merely served a critical function which remains meeting the spiritual needs of the Orthodox in an ethically sound manner in terms of Orthodox dogma. The same occurred in the United States (Garvey, 2014).

The clergy in South Africa have always supported with compassion and sensitivity all Hellenic migrants and have preserved the ethics and the cultural values that the migrants left behind in their places of origin. The Hellenic migrants have always had the responsibility of sharing in the common life of the Church. Clearly Hellenic migrants in South Africa have had the privilege of being the guardians of the Greek Orthodox faith together with the clergy.



Throughout the last 100 years, the Hellenic immigrant community in South Africa has retained close ties with the 'motherland'. The ties with the 'motherland' being so intense that many third and fourth generation Hellenes are choosing to return to the land of their forefathers permanently, or for a good part of the year, more than are choosing to live in South Africa.

What is most intriguing, is that many of these South Africans of Hellenic origin, were born in South Africa, educated in South Africa, socialized in South Africa and are now foregoing life in South Africa for life back in Greece, Cyprus or other desirable destinations which are perceived to be safer. The main cause of such a mindset of emigration is the very high levels of crime which pervade South African society today and a perceived hostile 'anti-white' agenda. Perhaps all that glistens is not gold after all. In such situations, home is where the heart is'. And so many contemporary Hellenes are inspired, where financially possible, to keep moving back and forth between homes in South Africa and Greece or Cyprus, and they thereby produce diasporic spaces in which they encourage transnational ties and greater tolerance and understanding between peoples.

There is no doubt that despite a relatively small population, the Greek-South African diaspora can still have a substantial role to play as an agent of positive change and it can be an exceptional bridge between South Africa and Greece and Cyprus, enriching them all simultaneously.

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