



## ELIAS MENIATES AND THE PREPARATION OF THE GREEK REVOLUTION

Anastasios G. Maràs\*

University Ecclesiastical Academy of Athens,  
Hellenic Open University - Patras, Greece

### Abstract:

Elias Meniates is strong proof of the will of the Greeks of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to be liberated from the Turkish yoke. Indeed, although the topics of his speeches are mainly moral, they nevertheless had as their broader goal the self-consciousness of the Orthodox and the understanding of their difference. In this perspective, the great ecclesiastical orator raises other issues, such as the freedom and the resurrection of the Greek nation.

The connection of religious faith with freedom was one of the elements on which he emphasized directly or indirectly in his sermons. In particular, he argued that, as infidelity and sin led to enslavement, so faith combined with the right way of life would lead to freedom. For Meniates, the mediation of Virgin Mary plays a decisive role in the liberation of the Greeks. The Venetian-Turkish war of 1684-1699 enabled the Greeks to revolt against the Turks. This fact made Meniates see the Venetians as liberators of the Greeks and not as new conquerors. In his eulogies to the Venetian high-ranking officials, which he uttered in Italian, he distinguishes the Greeks from the Venetians, although he considers that they are both in the same camp.

Bishop Elias Meniates lived and wrote about the freedom of the Greeks before the Enlightenment, without being influenced by its ideas like many of his successors. On the contrary, based on the previous tradition, he contributed decisively to the preservation of the Greekness of the slaves and to their preparation for the liberation struggle. Later, he was described as a national apostle, a fact that proves the recognition of his contribution to the spiritual guidance of the Greeks during the years of the Ottoman rule.

### Article info:

Received: October 15, 2022  
Corrected: December 9, 2022  
Accepted: February 3, 2023

### Keywords:

FREEDOM,  
PELOPONNESE,  
REVOLUTION,  
SCUFFO (FRANCESCO),  
SIN,  
VENICE,  
VIRGIN MARY.



## INTRODUCTION

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 signified the end of the Eastern Roman Empire and the starting point of efforts for a rearrangement of Greek plans, subsequently aiming at its reinstatement and the liberation of the Greek nation. From that time onwards the Greek nation would either participate in wars against the Turks or organize revolutions, climaxing with the 1821 Revolution and the acknowledgement of Greek independence in 1833. During the centuries of submission the organization of struggles against the Turks would require strenuous and continuous efforts that would gradually transform the subjugated Romioi into Modern Greeks.<sup>1</sup> Such a preparation was primarily of an ideological nature and, to a lesser extent, material, with important men of letters trying to instill their enslaved compatriots with the belief of the necessity of a struggle for liberation. Most of them were directly or indirectly associated with the Ecumenical Patriarchate,<sup>2</sup> and, as of the 18th century, were joined by the representatives of the Modern Greek Enlightenment. In any case, the emphasis needs to be placed less on the organizers of the revolution as such and more on the books and other activities that eventually contributed to the success of the 1821 Revolution.

One of the above mentioned ideological instigators of the Greek Revolution was Elias Meniates, born in Lixouri or St. George's Castle in Cephalonia,<sup>3</sup> in 1669. His parents were Frangiskos Meniates, chief priest and a nobleman of Cephalonia, and Morezia Peristianou.<sup>4</sup> At the age of ten he boarded the Flanginian School, whose direction he assumed at the age of nineteen. His good education, physical qualities and preaching soon made him widely known. As a result of his wide acknowledgement, he undertook ecclesiastical and other missions for both the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Venice.<sup>5</sup> In 1710 he was elected bishop of Kernitsa and Kalavryta, but in 1714 he died of exhaustion.

The following are some of Meniates' main works: 1. *Διδαχαί και λόγοι*. 2. *Πέτρα σκανδάλου, ἤτοι διασάφησις τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ τῆς αἰτίας τοῦ σχίσματος τῶν δύο Ἐκκλησιῶν, Ἀνατολῆς καὶ Δύσεως, μετὰ τῶν πέντε διαφωνουσῶν διαφορῶν*. 3. Some sermons in Italian. His *Διδαχαί και λόγοι* was published twenty five times in Greek, Rumanian, Bulgarian and Turkish in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, while his *Πέτρα σκανδάλου* was translated into Serbian.<sup>6</sup> The publication history of Meniates' works is proof of his popularity, as well as his geographically wide prestige.

1 Glukatzi-Ahrweiler 2016, 59.

2 Hadjifotis 1985, 15.

3 Most researchers accept Lixouri as Elias Meniates' place of birth. See, for example: Borovilos 2013, 8; Christou, 2003, 298; Patrinelis 1965, 32. Tasoula Markomihelaki has expressed the view that Elias Meniates was born in «πόλιν Κεφαλληνίας», that is, in St. George's Castle, the island's capital as late as 1757: see Markomihelaki 2020, 17-18.

4 Tasoula Markomihelaki's recent and most extensive text covers sufficiently all data relating to Elias Meniates' life and works: see Markomihelaki 2020, 11-148.

5 Coulombis 1969, 432 ff.

6 On the repeated publications of his *Διδαχαί και λόγοι*, see Patrinelis 1965, 36. On translations of his works from Greek to Serbian, see Ramazanova 2018, 134-178. On translations of his works from Greek to Bulgarian, see Mladenova 2014, 519-551.



As a result of Meniates' increased popularity, both during the Ottoman occupation and in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, quite a few general works on him have appeared, as well as certain specialized studies,<sup>7</sup> some of which focus on the rhetoric of his *Διδαχαί και λόγοι*.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, certain theses have recently been written in the context of post gradual studies (either at the Master's or Doctoral level) focusing on the works and theological thought of this great ecclesiastical orator.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, we believe that the work of this great theologian of the period of the Ottoman occupation still remains largely unknown. In this context, we shall attempt to answer the following questions: what were Meniates' beliefs on freedom, and what was his contribution to the preparation of subjugated Greeks for their struggles against the Turks.

## Διδαχαί και λόγοι

Elias Meniates' most popular work, his *Διδαχαί και λόγοι*,<sup>10</sup> includes his most famous reference to the resurrection of the Greek nation, appearing in his second panegyric sermon and delivered at the age of nineteen, on 25 March 1688, at the Flanginian School in Venice, in his capacity as a clergyman and its director.<sup>11</sup> The liveliness and fervor of the relevant passage makes one wonder about his decision to deliver it on the day of the celebration of the Annunciation. Could it be just a coincidence that 133 years later the official declaration of the Greek Revolution took place on that same day? We deem it not, on the hypothesis that in the passage under discussion Meniates has followed the tendency of subjugated Greeks to associate the angel's announcement of the joyous message to Virgin Mary with the joyous expectancy of their liberation from the Turks. The semantic association of the religious event with that expectancy and the analogy between the future ontological liberation and the national, as well as religious liberation of the Greek nation were sources of inspiration for both Elias Meniates and the revolutionaries of 1821. In fact, in both cases the role of the Virgin Mary was considered decisive, as indeed it was.

7 For example, see the following: Markomihelaki 2020, 13-148; Gritsopoulos Oct.-Dec. 1969, 559-576; Laourdas 1969, 50-57.

8 Such as, for example, the following: Kasinis 1999; Gousidis 1969, 336-344. Papadopoulos Apr.-June 1965, 305-318.

9 Such as, for example, the following: Malliaris 2019; Selevou 2014; Karamberis 2014; Gerogianni 1997.

10 This work is usually referred to as *Διδαχαί και λόγοι*. However, its full title in its original edition, to which references in this article are made, is the following: «ΔΙΔΑΧΑΙ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ἉΓΙΑΝ καὶ Μεγάλην Τεσσαρακοστήν, καὶ εἰς ἄλλας ἐπισήμους Ἑορτάς, ΜΕΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΝΩΝ ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙΚΩΝ ΛΟΓΩΝ Συντεθεῖσαι μὲν καὶ ἐκφωνηθεῖσαι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποτὲ Θεοφιλεστάτου Κερνίκης καὶ Καλαβρύτων ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ Ἐπισκόπου κυρίου ΗΛΙΟΥ ΜΗΝΙΑΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΚΕΦΑΛΗΝΙΕΩΣ Ἐκ πολλῶν δὲ τῷ αὐτοῦ δυσκαταλήπτων αὐτοσχεδίων συλλεχθεῖσαι καὶ ἐκτυπωθεῖσαι πλείστη ἐπιμελεία σπουδῆ καὶ δαπάνῃ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΜΗΝΙΑΤΗ Πρωτοπατᾶ Κεφαλληνίας, καὶ πατρὸς τοῦ ρηθέντος ἀερχειρέως, καὶ τοῖς ἐκλαμπροτάτοις ἄρχουσι τῆς ἐν Κεφαλληνίᾳ ΠΕΡΙΒΛΕΠΤΟΥ ΣΥΓΚΛΗΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑΣ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐφιερθεῖσαι» (Venice: Antonio Bortoli, 1716) (henceforth to be mentioned as *Ἡλίας Μηνιάτης, Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*).

11 «Αὕτη ἐκηρύχθη εἰς Βενετίαν. αἰτητῆ. Μαρτίῳ 25, ὄντος αὐτοῦ τροφίμου ἐν τῷ Φλαγγινίανῳ Φροντιστηρίῳ», *Ἡλίας Μηνιάτης, Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 415. On the Flanginian School in Venice, see Zaharopoulos 1983, 63-64.



Meniates senses the Virgin Mary's decisive role and, therefore, at the end of his aforementioned sermon asks for her protection and assistance for the preservation of the God loving army, as well as the persecution and extermination of the ungodly tyrant, that is, the Ottomans.<sup>12</sup> The army referred to by Meniates is none other than that of Venice, which had been fighting the Turks under the supreme command of Francesco Morosini in the course of the Ottoman-Venetian War of 1684-1699.<sup>13</sup> Venetian successes at the time had caused a stir among the Greek people, extending their revolutionary activities as far as Epirus and the coast of Macedonia. In this contest, Meniates identified with the revolutionaries, viewing the Venetians as strong allies in the efforts of Greeks to liberate themselves from the Turks. This was due to the fact that he perceived Venetian policies in the East, aiming at eliminating Muslim power, as a necessary and sufficient condition for the materialization of the dream of the resurrection of the Greek nation.<sup>14</sup> With this perspective in mind, at the end of his sermon he pleads with the Virgin Mary to provide the Doge of Venice with the power to completely wipe out the crescent of the murderous and bloodthirsty barbarians, so that the light of the life giving mystical Sun, that is Christ, may shine all over the world.<sup>15</sup>

However, earlier on Meniates expresses his indignation for the miserable state of the noble Greek nation, resulting from the insufferable servitude under the barbaric Turks, in the form of questions-pleadings to the Virgin Mary.<sup>16</sup> The relevant passage is an almost verbatim quotation from the *Techne rhetorike* of the Cretan scholar (a Uniate Roman Catholic) Frankiskos Skoufos (1644-1697).<sup>17</sup> In this correlation it is interesting to notice Meniates' indignation on the occupation of the Holy Lands by the Muslim Turks. This interest of his echoes a request of Greeks in the West, dating to the time of Cardinal Bessarion, for the organization of a Crusade that would liberate the lands of the Eastern Roman Empire as well as the Holy Lands from the Turks.<sup>18</sup>

In his effort to secure the Virgin Mary's intervention, Meniates begs her to remember that the Greek nation was the first to convert to Christianity, producing martyrs for this faith.<sup>19</sup> The falseness of the first part of his claim seems to fade vis-à-vis the truth of the second.

12 «Καὶ ἄλλο δὲν ἐπιθυμῶ ἀπὸ ἐσέ παρα τὴν ἄμαχόν σου προστασίαν πρὸς βοήθειαν καὶ συντήρησιν τοῦ φιλοχρίστου στρατοῦ, πρὸς διωγμὸν καὶ ἐξολόθρευσιν τοῦ ἀντιθέου τυράννου», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαὶ καὶ Λόγοι*, 414.

13 On the Ottoman-Venetian War of 1684-1699, see Vakalopoulos 1991, 81-82.

14 Couloumbis 1969, 433.

15 «Δῶσε τόσην δύναμιν τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου ἡμῶν Δουκὸς τῶν Ἐνετῶν ἐναντίον τῶν ἀνθρωποκτόνων καὶ αἰμοβόρων βαρβάρων, ὥστε ὅπου νὰ σβησθῆ τελείως τὸ φῶς τοῦ φεγγαρίου, νὰ λάμψη περισσότερο τοῦ μυστικοῦ Ἡλίου ἢ ζωοποιὸς ἀκτίνα. νὰ ἐξαπλωθῆ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ὅλον ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Σταυροῦ, καὶ νὰ δοξασθῆ ἀπὸ ὅλους τὸ ἅγιόν σου ὄνομα», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαὶ καὶ Λόγοι*, 415.

16 «Ἔως πότε, πανακήρατε Κόρη, τὸ τρισάθλιον Γένος τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἔχει νὰ εὐρίσκειται εἰς τὰ δεσμὰ μιᾶς ἀνυποφορήτου δουλείας; Ἔως πότε νὰ τοῦ πατῆ τὸν εὐγενικὸν λαὸν ὁ βάρβαρος Θρᾶξ; Ἔως πότε ἔχουσι νὰ βασιλεύονται ἀπὸ ἡμῶν φεγγάρι οἱ χῶρες ἐκεῖνες εἰς τὰς ὁποίας ἀνέτειλεν εἰς ἀνθρωπίνην μορφήν ἀπὸ τὴν ἡγιασμένην σου γαστέρα ὁ μυστικὸς τῆς Δικαιοσύνης Ἡλιος;», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαὶ καὶ Λόγοι*, 414.

17 Skoufos 1681, 371-372.

18 On Cardinal Bessarion and his efforts to organize a Crusade against the Turks, see Baloglou 2016, 68 ff. See also Maràs 2016, 210-211.

19 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαὶ καὶ Λόγοι*, 414.



In fact, in order to substantiate his claims, Meniates produces selectively the names of seven martyrs and Fathers.<sup>20</sup> What is that the aforementioned ask for? The mercy of the Virgin Mary and the salvation of the Greek nation, that prays with tears for its prayers to be listened.<sup>21</sup> Here it is necessary to emphasize that Meniates has again paraphrased a passage from Frankiskos Skoufos' *Techne rhetorike* (1644-1697).<sup>22</sup> In any case, this extensive reference of Meniates reveals his beliefs on the uninterrupted unity of Hellenism, from Antiquity to his time. These beliefs were due to Frankiskos Skoufos' influence on his thought.<sup>23</sup> However, despite imitating Skoufos, Meniates perfected the latter's expression and ideas. Furthermore, such influences may be excused on the basis of Meniates' youth and inexperience.<sup>24</sup> In any case, this belief was formed gradually in the minds of subjugated Greeks, in the course of a process that intensified following the distribution of the ideas of the Enlightenment, with the Romioi gradually transforming into modern Greeks.<sup>25</sup>

The rest of Meniates' preaching and sermons do not include any direct references to freedom, only indirect. Indeed, as far as some of them are concerned, they could only be seen purposefully as forming part in his teachings on freedom. In this context Meniates points indirectly to the causes of slavery and misfortunes that torment Christians, mentioning that it is the people's sins that cause the wrath of God, who consequently punishes them with spiritual and physical woes.<sup>26</sup> Obviously, these woes include servitude. To that conclusion one is led by Meniates' reference to the causes of the fall of the Empire to the Turks and the servitude of the Royal nation. More specifically, he mentions that schisms in the Church caused by clergymen, as well as divisions between nobles and kings brought divine wrath.<sup>27</sup> As far as the causes of the fall of the Empire are concerned, Meniates seems to be in agreement with Gennadius Scholarios.<sup>28</sup> The lifting of divine punishment is accomplished through the meditation of the Virgin Mary and the change of people's way of life.<sup>29</sup>

20 «Φωνάζει ὁ Ἀνδρέας ἀπὸ τὴν Κρήτην, φωνάζει ὁ Σπυρίδων ἀπὸ τὴν Κύπρον, φωνάζει ὁ Ἰγνάτιος ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν, φωνάζει ὁ Διονύσιος ἀπὸ τὰς Ἀθήνας, φωνάζει ὁ Πολύκαρπος ἀπὸ τὴν Σμύρνην, φωνάζει ἡ Αἰκατερίνη ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, φωνάζει ὁ Χρυσόστομος ἀπὸ τὴν Βασιλεύουσαν πόλιν», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 415.

21 «Καὶ δείχνοντάς σου τὴν σκληροτάτην τυραννίδα τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν, ἐλπίζουσι ἀπὸ τὴν ἄκραν σου εὐσπλαχνίαν τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ Γένους τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν. Ἀποδέξου λοιπόν, Παναγία Παρθένε, τὰ δάκρυά μας, τὰ ὁποῖα σημαδεύουσι τὸ μυστήριον ὁποῦ εἰς ἐσὲ ἐτελειώθη.», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 415.

22 The respective passages are almost identical in Skoufos and Meniates, with only two differences: 1. Skoufos asks Christ to liberate Greece, while Meniates asks the Virgin Mary. 2. Meniates changes the sequence of saints and Fathers. See Skoufos 1681, 374-375. On Skoufos see Sathas 1868, 371-373.

23 Vakalopoulos 1991, 93. See also Podskalsky 2005, 401.

24 Papadopoulos April-June 1965, 309-310 and 317-318.

25 Glukatzi-Ahrweiler 2016, 59.

26 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 369.

27 «Ἐπεσεν καὶ κεῖται εἰς τὴν γῆν σκλαβωμένων τὸ γένος τὸ βασιλικόν. Ποῖος τὸ ἔρριψε; Ποῖος τὸ ἐνίκησεν; Ὅχι παλαιόθεν τὰ ἄρματα τῶν Περσῶν, ὄχι κατόπι ἡ δύναμις τῶν Βουλγάρων, ὄχι τώρα ἔγκαира τὰ στρατεύματα τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν. Τὸ ἐκατέβαλεν ὀργῇ θεϊκῇ, ὁποῦ τοῦ ἀσήκωσε τὴν εἰρήνην ὁποῦ τοῦ ἐπαραχώρησε, καὶ οἱ ἱερωμένοι μὲ τὰς αἰρέσεις ἔσχιζον εἰς χίλια σκάνδαλα τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. οἱ ἄρχοντες μὲ τὰς διχόνοιες ἐχώριζον τὰ στρατεύματα. καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς μὲ τὴν ἀσυμφωνίαν ἐδίωκον ἕνας τὸν ἄλλον», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 387.

28 Christou 2003, 78.

29 «Ἡ μεσιτεία τῆς Μητρὸς Μαρίας περισσότερο θέλει κρατεῖ αὐτὴν τὴν θεϊαν ὀργήν, χωρὶς νὰ τὴν ἀφήσῃ νὰ πέσει ἐπάνω εἰς τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς Χριστιανοὺς», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 370.





If people want to be liberated, they need to choose the way of the Lord, leaving themselves at the mercy of the Almighty God through prayer, hope and faith.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, since Meniates' latter passage refers to spiritual circumstances, it could be seen either as irrelevant to freedom or, perhaps, a disguised reference to the freedom of the subjugated. Meniates is more specific in another passage of his, in which he asks the subjugated not to feel sorry, since the Virgin Mary will give them their freedom.<sup>31</sup> The way of achieving this freedom is revealed by Meniates by pleading with the Virgin Mary to lead the troops of the Doge of Venice to victories and triumphs over the Turks.<sup>32</sup> Thus, once again, Meniates associates freedom with the mediation of the Virgin Mary, the proper way of life for Christians and the help of the Venetians.

### Elias Meniates' Italian sermons

Besides Elias Meniates' views on freedom, as expressed in the most popular of his works, that is, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, other such views of his, expressed in his Italian sermons, are also of interest.<sup>33</sup> In those, Meniates' political thought seems to be dominated by a certain Manichaeism, juxtaposing good Christians (Greeks and Venetians) and bad Turks. The latter's tyranny and barbarism are unquestionable, acquiring greater importance since it is applied in Greece, one of the world's most noble places.<sup>34</sup>

30 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 171-172.

31 «... σκλαβωμένοι, άμαρτωλοί, μη λυπάσθε! Έσείς έχετε μητέρα την Μητέρα του Θεου. Μητέρα όπου σάς κυβερνά εις την όρφανίαν σας, όπου σάς σκέπει εις την ξενιτείαν σας, όπου σάς τρέφει εις την πτωχείαν σας, όπου σάς διδει εις τα πάθη ιατρείαν, εις τας θλίψεις την παρηγορίαν, εις τες σκλαβιές την έλευθερίαν, εις τας άμαρτίας την συγχώρησιν», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 365. «Έσύ, όπου είσαι ή Βασίλισσα του ουρανού, έσύ τώρα, εις τους παρόντας πολέμους, ένδυνάμωσον τον βραχίονα του εύσεβεστάτου ήμων Δουκός των Ένετών κατά των ύπεναντίων. Έσύ, όπου δικαίως τó όνομα της Όδηγήτριας έχεις, έσύ όδήγησε και κατευόδωσε τα εύσεβή του στρατεύματα, χαρίζοντάς του πάντα νίκας και θριάμβους κατά των Άγαρηνών, εις δόξαν του Υιού και Θεού μας», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 434.

32 «Έσύ, όπου είσαι ή Βασίλισσα του ουρανού, έσύ τώρα, εις τους παρόντας πολέμους, ένδυνάμωσον τον βραχίονα του εύσεβεστάτου ήμων Δουκός των Ένετών κατά των ύπεναντίων. Έσύ, όπου δικαίως τó όνομα της Όδηγήτριας έχεις, έσύ όδήγησε και κατευόδωσε τα εύσεβή του στρατεύματα, χαρίζοντάς του πάντα νίκας και θριάμβους κατά των Άγαρηνών, εις δόξαν του Υιού και Θεού μας», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι*, 434.

33 These were originally published in a separate edition: Elia Mignati, *Due prediche sacre e quattro orazioni, ritrovate sole delle molte già fatte anche in lingua italiana, dal fu monsignor Elia Mignati da Cefalonia vescovo greco di Cernizza ...* (Venezia: Antonio Bortoli, 1717). Subsequently they were published jointly with his *Διδαχαί*, with a parallel Greek translation, under the title: Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την Μεγάλην Τεσσαρακοστήν και εις Κυριακάς του ένιαυτου και έορτάς μετά και τινών πανηγυρικών λόγων. Νεωστί δε πλουτισθεΐσαι με την προσθήκην της τε μεταφράσεως των κειμένων των σωζωμενών ιταλικών λόγων, όμιλιών αυτού, και με την της αυτού βιογραφίας συντεθείσαι μεν και έκφωνηθείσαι υπό Έλίου Μηνιάτη υπό του Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη* (Introduction and editing by Anthimos Mazarakis, Venice: Phoenix Publ., 1859, 273-352; henceforth: Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*).

34 «Alla parte (ella si sentirebbe a dire) alla parte una molto più polita del mondo, oppressa per più secoli sotto la più grave tirannia del più barbaro re», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 350.



According to Meniates, Venice' constitution reflects the divine one of Heavens, being a paradigm of virtuous, God given power.<sup>35</sup> In this, he follows the line of thought of Church Fathers, according to which a ruler is a carrier of God given authority, obliged to imitate Him in the exercise of his power.<sup>36</sup> In this perspective, according to Meniates, God grants Greeks freedom via the Venetians.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, in the same context, God has provided Antonio Molin, Dalmatia's Venetian Proveditore, with the arms to protect Christianity against the great enemies of Christ, that is, the Turks.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere Meniates presents the Venetian nobles as inspired by God, being His instruments for the glory of His faith, protected by the Republic of Venice.<sup>39</sup> The common enemy and the kindness of Venetian rulers towards Greeks prompts the latter to pray for the guidance of Venetians by Divine Providence, so that the Turks may continue to be terrorized.<sup>40</sup> It was the Divine Providence, after all, that granted Greeks their liberty, restitution and happiness in the context of Venetian domination.<sup>41</sup>

Venice's constitution is such that allows citizens their freedom, being founded on laws and logic.<sup>42</sup> In this context it shouldn't seem strange that Meniates presents the Venetians as liberators or defenders of Greek territories, with the Turks as the enemy. Indeed, he preaches that the Regno di Morea was liberated rather than conquered, through the bloody sacrifice of a multitude of patricians and other children of Venice; a city that offered its arms and wealth in the service of the glory of faith and freedom of the Greeks.<sup>43</sup>

35 «Dell'altissima sapienza di Dio, che regge l'alto e baso mondo, quasi con due mani, con forza e soavità, il più vivo ritratto in terra è la serenissima Repubblica di Venezia. Non d'Atene, maetra il mondo, non da Roma, padrona del mondo, dal cielo direttamente ella prese l'idea di quel governo, che pare proposto a' principi della terra ad essere o ammirato come miracolo, o imitato come esempio», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 347.

36 Maràs 2008, 55.

37 «Quando la Provvidenza divina ha risvegliato il valore e pose la armi in mano della Republica, perchè venisse a sciogliere le nostre catene», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 330.

38 «Appena ella impugnò le armi, che le diede in mano la religione contro il gran nomico di Cristo», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 310-311.

39 «Iddio, che è altrettanto interessato per la gloria della Repubblica, quanto ella è interessata per la gloria della sua Fede, bisogna credere che infonda a' Nobili veneti un' anima, lavoro particolar delle sue mani», and, «Di quando in quando, compariscono fra essi certe anime grandi, di un' indole troppo superiore all'ordinaria, mandate espressamente da Dio per essere l'ornamento della loro patria e del loro secolo», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 331.

40 «Non ci rest ache pregare, coi voti tutti concordi di questa fedelissima Comunità, la Providenza divina a non mai allontanare da voi la sua mono onnipotente, perchè questa muova la vostra spada, sicchè sia sempre così terribile a' nemici», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 345-346.

41 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 349.

42 «In Venezia, ove sotto la figura del principe regna l'autorità delle leggi, ove chi primo comanda ubbidisce, ove chi ubbidisce è libero, bisogna confessare esservi propriamente il principato della libertà, ed in governo di rebubblica la monarchia della ragione», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 347-348; «ma è massima di Venezia, che il buon principe sia veramente l' uomo del popolo, e che la più regia liberalità è quella che egli fa di stesso», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 350-351.

43 «Non vi è dubbio che questo regno sia stato, più che conquistato, redento dalla Repubblica, che per redimento dalle mani del più gran nemico del nome christiano e del più crudele tiranno dell'infelice Grecia, ha impegnato tutto il valor delle sue armi, ha profuso le somme de'suoi tesori, ed ha sparso il sangue più illustre d'un gran numero de'suoi patrizi, e quello d'ininiti altri valorosi campioni, che sacrificò alle glorie della Fede ed alla nostra libertà», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 349.



In the same passage he considers that in this way the Peloponnese was saved by the Turks, Greece's greatest enemy and tyrant. The sacrifice of Venetians for the freedom of Greeks is presented a little further down the text in a particularly explicit way: he mentions that the inhabitants of the Peloponnese are considered children of the Venetian Republic, since they have been dripped by the latter's blood that has been shed for their freedom.<sup>44</sup> This is why the inhabitants of the Regno di Morea identify with the policy of Venice, wishing to have a Venetian Proveditor Generale dell' armi.<sup>45</sup>

With these beliefs, Meniates mentions the heroic death of Filippo Molin, Governor of Rethymno, who fell heroically defending the city from the Ottomans.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere he presents Greece as largely owing its freedom to Antonio Molin, Venice's Proveditore Straordinario in Morea and its liberator.<sup>47</sup> Meniates' laudatory references to Molin continue, as the latter inspired the people and defeated the barbaric army in the Peloponnese, repelling it beyond Southern Greece and Epirus.<sup>48</sup> The people Molin inspired are none other than the Greeks, while the barbaric army is that of the Turks. This is the main cause of Meniates' enthusiasm and laudation of Antonio Molin. In this context it is easy to understand the latter's characterization as an ideal Christian knight, in whom the virtues of nobility are identified with those of Christianity.<sup>49</sup> Meniates states the same about Francesco Grimani, adding that the truth of faith is the axiom of a ruler.<sup>50</sup>

Grimani is one of a few other Venetian nobles mentioned by Meniates. He defeated the Turks in various fronts, prompted by his patriotism and love for the freedom of Greeks.<sup>51</sup> The fall of Monemvasia to Grimani forced the Turks to abandon the Peloponnese, allowing the establishment of freedom, faith and the rule of the Venetian Republic.<sup>52</sup>

Meniates continues his presentation of Venice as liberator of Greeks and a protective power with references to the Commander in Chief and Proveditore General da Mar, Alvise III Mocenigo.<sup>53</sup> Meniates mentions that the sinking of a Turkish galley and the routing of Turkish forces prompted our troops to declare Alvise III a liberator and protector of Christianity.<sup>54</sup>

44 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 349.

45 «Quest'è eccellentissimo Signore, il Proveditor Generale dell'armi in Regno, come lo bramano i voti di di questo popolo; e questo appunto siete voi. Allà vostra pietà, alla vostra giustizia, alla vostra clemenza, al zelo, all'affabilità ben tale vi riconoscono concordemente questi vostri fedelissimi sudditi, e ve lo attesta internamente la vostra medesima coscienza», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 351.

46 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 308.

47 «Ma la Provvidenza divina destinò che voi foste noto anche alla Grecia, perchè ella dovesse alla vostra destra una gran parte della sua libertà», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 311.

48 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 312-313, 314.

49 «Venite ad apprendere da Antonio Molino, che in un cavaliere cristiano i veri caratteri della nobiltà sono i veri caratteri del Cristianesimo», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 314.

50 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 336.

51 «Al primo suono che intuonò la guerra contro l'Ottomano in Levante, Francesco Grimani, acceso al doppio ardore e del servizio della patria e dell'amore della nostra libertà», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 330.

52 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 331.

53 Probably the above mentioned person is Alvise II, who died in 1709, because Alvise III died in 1778.

54 «Affondata una delle sue galere, forzata a piegare a fuga vergognosa tutta l'armata nemica, coperta e difesa la nostra, obbligata questa ad acclamarvi suo liberatore, e quella a riconoscervi uno dei numi tutelari della Cristianità», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 343.





The presence of the danger from the Turks, a common enemy, justifies some obnoxious government initiatives, such as the annual conscription of rowers for Venetian galleys.<sup>55</sup> This was a case of a joint military commitment of Greeks and Venetians to a common cause. Nevertheless, this joint struggle would not extinguish the difference of the motherland of the two allies. Meniates chose his words carefully in praising Venetian nobles, but at the same time he would not hesitate to speak of “la serenissima sua patria”, “loro patria”, or even of his “glorious ancestors”, making clear that the Greek motherland was different to the Venetian.<sup>56</sup>

## Epilogue

In the introduction of this study we questioned Meniates’ ideas on freedom and his contribution to the preparation of subjugated Greeks for their struggles against the Turks. Following an extensive analysis, we have come to conclude that his contribution was decisive, keeping the desire of Greeks for freedom alive at a particularly difficult time. Its impact was not limited to the 17<sup>th</sup> century; it was felt in subsequent ones, in both Greece and the wider region of the Balkan Peninsula. This was due to successive reprints of his works in Greek and their translation into the languages of other peoples, likewise subjugated by the Turks. In this manner Meniates contributed to the preparation of Greeks and the organization of their struggle against the Turks.

More specifically, in the sermons he delivered in Greek, he refers, both directly and indirectly, to the necessity of freedom and the struggle against the Turks. He believes that Church schisms produced by prelates and divisions among Roman emperors were the causes of divine wrath that brought the Greek nation under the slavery of the Turks. Its resurrection will occur by praying, hoping and believing in the Almighty God. He therefore requests the assistance of the Virgin Mary for the liberation of Greeks, asking her to remember that the Greek nation was the first to receive Christianity and produce martyrs for the faith. Moreover, in the manner of a prophet, Meniates is the first to associate the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March with the need to set the Greek nation free. However, prior to this statement he expresses his indignation for the miserable state of the noble Greek nation, resulting from its insufferable servitude under the barbaric Turks.

In Meniates’ Italian sermons the constitution of Venice appears as a copy of the constitution of Heaven. Thus, the foundation of liberty on laws and reason is a fundamental feature of the Venetian Republic. It is through this God given power of Venetians that God allows Greeks to be free. In this perspective, Venetian nobles are inspired by God and constitute His instruments, for the glory of His faith. Therefore, the barbaric and tyrannical Turks were beaten in the 1684-1699 War with the help of God, following bloody sacrifices of both Venetians and Greeks. According to Meniates, common struggles and common enemy prompt Greeks to view Venetians as liberators, not conquerors.

55 «Che fervosa pontualità nel far ogni anno le nuove leve di gente da remo per urgenze d’armata volendo che, ove alla distruzione del nemico», Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 319.

56 Ηλίας Μηνιάτης, *Διδαχαί εις την ... υπό Ανθίμου Μαζαράκη*, 331-332 and 343.



Under these circumstances, Greeks enlist in the Venetian Army and acknowledge Venetian domination. However, one has to remember that Meniates' Italian sermons were delivered in the presence of Venetian officials, a fact that might have prompted Meniates to present relations between Venetian and Greeks as ideal, as also to overemphasize the role of Venetians in the struggle against the Turks. In any case, despite common interests, Meniates clearly distinguishes between Greeks and Venetians, considering the presence of the latter in the Peloponnese as a necessary and sufficient condition for the materialization of the dream of an independent Greece.

With his sermons and homilies Meniates managed to strengthen the Orthodox faith and self awareness of the Greeks. The simplicity of the language he used in his sermons contributed to the upgrading of Church rhetoric while also making them more easily understood by the plain people. Meniates' references to freedom were made before the appearance and diffusion of the ideas of Enlightenment, a fact that demonstrates the incessant desire of Greeks for liberty. Moreover, despite influences from an earlier tradition, Meniates' views were pioneering at an international level. In conclusion, and while keeping all the above in mind, one cannot help but agreeing with Athanasios Papadopoulos' view of Meniates as a firm preacher of Orthodox faith, an original ecclesiastical orator, a worthy exponent of the Gospel and interpreter of the desires of the subjugated Greek nation.<sup>57</sup> It is for these reasons, after all, that he is included among the "national apostles" of the Greek nation.<sup>58</sup>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baloglou C. P. (2016): «Βησσαρίωνος έργα και ημέραι». In Giarenis, Ilias Ath., et al. *Βησσαρίων εκ Τραπεζούντος του Πόντου: Λόγιος του Βυζαντινού και του Δυτικού αναγεννησιακού 15<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα*. A special volume of *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 25 (2016-2017). Thessaloniki: Ant. Stamoulis Publ.,: 9-148.
- Borovilos G. E. (2013): *Ηλίας Μηνιάτης (1669-1714)*. In: *Μεγάλη Ορθόδοξη Χριστιανική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία*. vol. 8. Athens: *Stratigikes ekdoseis Publ.*, 8.
- Christou P. G. (2003): *Εκκλησιαστική Γραμματολογία: Πατέρες και θεολόγοι του Χριστιανισμού*. vol. 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thessaloniki: Kyromanos Publ.: 298-299.
- Couloumbis E. Th. (1969): *Le grand prélat et prédicateur Elias Meniates comme diplomate*. *Θεολογία* 40, 430-436.
- Gerogianni M. E. (1997): *Ηλίας Μηνιάτης: Βίος και έργο*. MA Thesis in the Dept. of Pastoral of and Social Theology, University of Thessaloniki.
- Glukatzi-Ahrweiler E. (2016): *Πόσο ελληνικό είναι το Βυζάντιο; Πόσο Βυζαντινοί είναι οι Νεοέλληνες;* Gutenberg Publ., Athens.
- Gousidis A. Chr. (1969): *Ο Ηλίας Μηνιάτης ως ιεροκήρυξ*. *Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς* 52, 336-344.
- Gritsopoulos T. (Oct.-Dec. 1969): *Ηλίας Μηνιάτης*. *Παρνασσός* 11/4, 559-576.

57 Athanasios Papadopoulos, «Επιδράσεις της 'Τέχνης Ρητορικής' του Φρ. Σκούφου επί των Διδαχών του Ηλία Μηνιάτη», *Παρνασσός* 7, issue no. 2 (April-June 1965): 318.

58 Panagiotis Christou places him alongside St. Kosmas Aitolos in the group of "national apostles"; see Pan. G. Christou, *Εκκλησιαστική Γραμματολογία: Πατέρες και θεολόγοι του Χριστιανισμού*, vol. II, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thessaloniki: Kyromanos Publ., 2003), 298.



- Hadjifotis I. M. (1985): "Ελληνικός Διαφωτισμός" και Μεταβυζαντινή παράδοση. In: Printzipas George Th. *Λογάδες του Γένους*. In the series Ελληνική Παιδεία και Παράδοση, no. 4. Athens: Akritas Publ., 11-17.
- Karamberis D. A. (2012): *Πέτρα Σκανδάλου: Η ιστορία του Σχίσματος και οι διαφορές με τη Ρώμη κατά τον Ηλία Μηνιάτη*. MA Thesis in the Dept. of Pastoral of and Social Theology, University of Thessaloniki.
- Kasinis C. G. (1999): *Η ρητορική των Διδαχών του Ηλία Μηνιάτη*. vol. Α'. *Η αντίθεση*. Σύλλογος προς διάδοσιν ωφελίμων βιβλίων Publ., Athens.
- Laourdas V. (1969): *Παρατηρήσεις στις 'Διδαχές' του Ηλία Μηνιάτη*. In: *Τρίτο Πανιώνιον Συνέδριον: Πρακτικά*. Athens: s.n., 50-57.
- Malliaris A. M. (2019): *Ο Ηλίας Μηνιάτης και οι θέσεις του έναντι της Ρωμαιοκαθολικής Εκκλησίας*. PhD. Thesis in the Dept. of Pastoral of Social Theology and Religious Studies, University of Athens.
- Maràs A. G. (2016): *Η Καθολική Επιστολή του Καρδινάλιου Βησσαρίωνα*. In Giarenis, Ilias Ath., et al. *Βησσαρίων εκ Τραπεζούντος του Πόντου: Λόγιος του Βυζαντινού και του Δυτικού αναγεννησιακού 15<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα*. A special volume of *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 25 (2016-2017). Thessaloniki: Ant. Stamoulis Publ., 209-235.
- Maràs Anastasios G. (2008): *Η πολιτική σκέψη του αγίου Γρηγορίου του Θεολόγου*. In Πατερική Θεολογία και χριστιανικός πολιτισμός: Έλληνες και Λατίνοι Πατέρες-Εκκλησιαστική ιστορία-Ορθοδοξία, Περιβάλλον και Εκπαίδευση. Thessaloniki: Ant. Stamoulis Publ., 50-56.
- Markomihelaki T. M. (2020): *Εισαγωγή*. In Meniates, Elias. *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι (1716)*. Introduction, text edition, post script and glossary Markomihelaki, Tasoula M. Athens: Artos Zois Publ., 11-148.
- Meniates E. (1716): *ΔΙΔΑΧΑΙ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ἉΓΙΑΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΝ ΤΕΣΣΑΡΑΚΟΣΤΗΝ, ΚΑΙ ΕΙΣ ἄλλας ἐπίσημους Ἑορτάς, ΜΕΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΝΩΝ ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙΚΩΝ ΛΟΓΩΝ* Συντεθεῖσαι μὲν καὶ ἐκφωνηθεῖσαι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποτὲ Θεοφιλεστάτου Κερνίκης καὶ Καλαβρύτων ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ Ἐπισκόπου κυρίου ΗΛΙΟΥ ΜΗΝΙΑΤΗ ΤΟΥ ΚΕΦΑΛΛΗΝΙΕΩΣ Ἐκ πολλῶν δὲ τῷ αὐτοῦ δυσκαταλήπτων αὐτοσχεδίων συλλεχθεῖσαι καὶ ἐκτυπωθεῖσαι πλεῖστη ἐπιμελείᾳ σπουδῆ καὶ δαπάνῃ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ ΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΜΗΝΙΑΤΗ Πρωτοπαπᾶ Κεφαλληνίας, καὶ πατρὸς τοῦ ρηθέντος ἀερχειρέως. καὶ τοῖς ἐκλαμπροτάτοις ἄρχουσι τῆς ἐν Κεφαλληνίᾳ ΠΕΡΙΒΛΕΠΤΟΥ ΣΥΓΚΛΗΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑΣ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐφιερωθεῖσαι.: Antonio Bortoli Publ., Venice.
- Meniates E. (1859): *Διδαχαί εἰς τὴν Μεγάλην Τεσσαρακοστήν καὶ εἰς Κυριακὰς τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ καὶ ἑορτάς μετὰ καὶ τινῶν πανηγυρικῶν λόγων*. Νεωστὶ δὲ πλουτισθεῖσαι μὲ τὴν προσθήκην τῆς τε μεταφράσεως τῶν κειμένων τῶν σωζωμένων ἰταλικῶν λόγων, ὁμιλιῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ μὲ τὴν τῆς αὐτοῦ βιογραφίας συντεθεῖσαι μὲν καὶ ἐκφωνηθεῖσαι ὑπὸ Ἡλίου Μηνιάτη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀνθίμου Μαζαράκη. Introduction and edition Anthimos Mazarakes. Foinix Publ., Venice.
- Meniates E. (2020): *Διδαχαί και Λόγοι (1716)*. Introduction, text edition, post script and glossary Markomihelaki, Tasoula M. Artos Zois Publ., Athens.
- Mignati E. (1717): *Due prediche sacre e quattro orazioni, ritrovate sole delle molte già fatte anche in lingua italiana, dal fu monsignor Elia Mignati da Cefalonia vescovo greco di Cernizza ...* Antonio Bortoli Publ., Venice.
- Mladenova O. M. (2014): *Early Modern Bulgarian translations of Sermons by Ἐλίᾱs Mēniates*. Zeitschrift für Slawistik 59/4, 519-551.
- Papadopoulos A. (Apr.-June. 1965): *Επιδράσεις της Τέχνης Ρητορικής' του Φρ. Σκούφου επί των Διδαχών του Ηλία Μηνιάτη*. Παρνασσός 7/2, 305-318.
- Patrinelis C. G. (1965): *Ηλίας. Ο Μηνιάτης*. Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια. vol. 6. Athens: Athanasios Martinos Publ., 32-37.



- Podskalsky G. (2005): *Η ελληνική Θεολογία επί Τουρκοκρατίας 1453-1821: Η Ορθοδοξία στη σφαίρα επιρροής των Δυτικών Δογμάτων μετά τη Μεταρρύθμιση*. Greek translation by G.D. Mettalinis. MIET Publ., Athens.
- Ramazanova D. N. (2018): *Historicodogmatic Treatise by Elias Meniates and its 18<sup>th</sup> century Serbian translations from Greek*. *Slověne* 7/2, 134-178.
- Sathas C. N. (1868): *Νεοελληνική Φιλολογία: Βιογραφίαι των εν τοις γράμμασι διαλαμψάντων Ελλήνων, από της καταλύσεως της Βυζαντινής αυτοκρατορίας μέχρι της ελληνικής επανάστασης (1453-1821)*. Sons of Andreas Koromilas Publ., Athens.
- Selevou M. A. (2014): *Η χρήση της Παύλειας διδασκαλίας κατά την Τουρκοκρατία: Οι περιπτώσεις των Αδαμάντιου Κοραή, Ευγένιου Βούλγαρη και Ηλία Μηνιάτη*. MA Thesis in the Dept. of Pastoral of and Social Theology, University of Thessaloniki.
- Skoufos F. (1681): *Τέχνη Ρητορικής Φραγκίσκου Ιερέως του Σκούφο Κρητός του εκ Κυδωνίας, Φιλοσοφίας και Ιεράς Θεολογίας Διδασκάλου, τη Μητρί και Παρθένω Γουυπετώσ αφιερωθείσα*. Michael Angelos Varvonios Publ., Venice.
- Vakalopoulos C. A. (1991): *Νεοελληνική ιστορία (1204-1940)*. Kyriakides Bros Publ., Thessaloniki.
- Zaharopoulos N. Gr. (1983): *Η Παιδεία στην Τουρκοκρατία*. Panagiotis Pournaras Publ., Thessaloniki.



# Ο ΗΛΙΑΣ ΜΗΝΙΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΠΡΟΕΤΟΙΜΑΣΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΗΣ

**Αναστάσιος Μαράς, Ph.D**

Ανώτατη Εκκλησιαστική Ακαδημία Αθηνών  
Καθηγητής Σύμβουλος Ε.Α.Π.

## Συμπεράσματα:

Ο Ηλίας Μηνιάτης αποτελεί ζωντανή απόδειξη της θελήσεως των Ελλήνων του 17<sup>ου</sup> και των αρχών του 18<sup>ου</sup> αιώνα να απελευθερωθούν από τον τουρκικό ζυγό. Πράγματι, αν και τα θέματα των ομιλιών του είναι κυρίως ηθικολογικά, παρόλα αυτά είχαν ως ευρύτερο στόχο τους την αυτοσυνειδησία των Ορθοδόξων και την κατανόηση της διαφορετικότητάς τους. Στην προοπτική αυτή ο μεγάλος εκκλησιαστικός ρήτορας θίγει και άλλα θέματα, όπως είναι η ελευθερία και η ανάσταση του ελληνικού Γένους.

Η σύνδεση της θρησκευτικής πίστης με την ελευθερία ήταν ένα από τα στοιχεία που τόνιζε έμμεσα ή άμεσα στα κηρύγματά του. Συγκεκριμένα, πρέσβευε ότι, όπως η απιστία και οι αμαρτίες ήταν αυτές που οδήγησαν στην υποδούλωση, έτσι και η πίστη σε συνδυασμό με τον ορθό τρόπο ζωής θα οδηγούσαν στην ελευθερία. Καθοριστικό ρόλο στην απελευθέρωση των Ελλήνων κατέχει για τον Μηνιάτη η μεσιτεία της Παναγίας. Ο Βενετοτουρκικός πόλεμος του 1684-1699 έδωσε τη δυνατότητα στους Έλληνες να επαναστατήσουν κατά των Τούρκων. Το γεγονός αυτό έκανε τον Μηνιάτη να δει τους Βενετούς ως απελευθερωτές των Ελλήνων και όχι ως νέους κατακτητές. Στους εγκωμιαστικούς λόγους του προς τους Βενετούς ανώτατους αξιωματούχους, τους οποίους εκφώνησε στα Ιταλικά, διαχωρίζει τους Έλληνες από τους Βενετούς, αν και θεωρεί ότι αμφότεροι βρίσκονται στο ίδιο στρατόπεδο.

Ο επίσκοπος Ηλίας Μηνιάτης έζησε και έγραψε για την ελευθερία των Ελλήνων πριν από τον Διαφωτισμό, χωρίς να επηρεαστεί από τις ιδέες του όπως αρκετοί μεταγενέστεροί του. Αντίθετα, βασιζόμενος στην προγενέστερη παράδοση, συνέβαλε αποφασιστικά στη διατήρηση της ελληνικότητας των υποδούλων και στην προετοιμασία τους για τον απελευθερωτικό αγώνα. Αργότερα χαρακτηρίστηκε εθναπόστολος, γεγονός που αποδεικνύει την αναγνώριση της συμβολής του στην πνευματική καθοδήγηση των Ελλήνων κατά τα χρόνια της Τουρκοκρατίας.

## Λέξεις Κλειδιά:

ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑ,  
ΒΕΝΕΤΙΑ,  
ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ,  
ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΗ,  
ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ,  
ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΟΣ,  
ΣΚΟΥΦΟΣ (ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΣ).