

PRIMARY SOURCES AND PROBLEMATICS: SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN GREECE (1832-1946)

Kostas Tampakis, NARSES project, National and Hellenic Research Foundation

Introduction

Project NARSES' research focus includes the dialogue between the natural sciences and religion, as it was conducted in 19th and mid-20th century Greece. As such, it aims to create an online, searchable database of all relevant material published in Greek space at that period. Primary sources are to be catalogued, indexed and archived, and thus made accessible to all stakeholders. As a symbolic inaugural date for this part of the project, the year 1832 was chosen, since it is widely considered the founding date of the modern Greek State. The end date was set to 1946, which coincides with the end of the Second World War and with torrential social, economic and political changes in Greece. It goes without saying that this periodization, as any historical periodization, makes some concessions regarding the evolution of its subject matter. That is, the dialogues and debates concerning the Natural Sciences and the Divine in Greek space do not always follow these temporal borders in their evolution. Nevertheless, we believe the selected timeframe to be the most suitable for our study.

In creating the archive around which NARSES revolves, a decision was made to be as inclusive as possible in the selection of primary sources. This is not as innocuous a guideline as it may appear. The novelty of the project has become apparent in every step of its implementation, and this has been no exception. 19th century Greece is mostly an uncharted historical space, with peculiarities not found in canonical western spaces like France or the German lands. However, it is historiographical studies on those spaces exactly that has formed the concepts and categories of analysis through which the relations between science and religion are usually framed. Thus, to recognize a primary source as relevant would mean, according to canonical studies, to look for standard historical themes such as the existence of Natural Theology, condemnations of Darwinian evolution by religious circles or the influence of long standing ecclesiastical traditions within powerful universities. But such encounters did not appear in Greece, or emerged in contexts quite different from those abroad. In addition, Greek scholars were prolific writers who operated under different disciplinary assumptions than their colleagues abroad. Botanists and chemists could also be celebrated poets and politicians, and educated intellectuals of

all stripes could expect to have the right to comment in various subjects, science and religion included. Thus, we could not bracket our research only around specialists in natural sciences and theologians. The debates and dialogues took place within a much larger public sphere, with a variety of interested actors.

Thus, to be inclusive with regards to primary sources in NARSES came to mean that primary sources from a variety of authors and archives should be looked at, and that the findings should then be harnessed to redefine the categories used on selecting the primary sources themselves. It also means, however, that relevant information should not be drowned in a sea of barely relevant articles and books, masking their importance.

Typologies of primary sources

Our research so far in the period has identified 459 relevant primary sources. Our initial expectations were for a number significantly lower, around 350. However, our initial findings forced us to reconsider our selection criteria more than once, and thus helped us enrich the NARSES archive with historical themes not initially considered. Our current estimation is that, by the end of the project, the number of primary sources archived will be around 500 to 550.

The primary sources already identified are divided roughly in two categories. The first covers the range of ecclesiastical and religious publications, while the second deals with publications from scientific circles. It must be emphasized that these categories are not ontological claims. They are merely hermeneutic devices, designed to help us organize our material. That is, we do not claim that these are the only two relevant categories of discourse in Greece at the time. We simply found that it makes for a more manageable archiving process. A third category of unaligned scholars could exist, but we found out that it was better to identify the sympathies of each scholar and then put him under the corresponding category.

Each category also encompasses a variety of primary sources. These are journal and newspaper articles (which at the time were hardly distinct genres of publication), books and monographs, and finally addresses and presentations that were later published separately. In rare cases, we also have proceedings and records of University councils and clubs. The archives used to identify and digitize relevant primary sources include the entirety of large libraries and collections of Greece. More specifically, they include the libraries of all Greek Universities, the National

Library, the Library of the Greek Parliament and the library of the Gennadeios Library of the American School of Athens.

So far, we have identified 381 ecclesiastical and religious primary sources relevant to the scope of NARSES. These represent 83% of our findings, a result of the fact that the initial phase of NARSES research focused on these kinds of publications. Of these, we have already digitized 201 publications, which represent the 52.7% of the identified ecclesiastical total and a 43.8% of all findings. We feel confident that these represent the large majority of relevant sources, and we do not expect for their number to increase significantly. The scientific publications consist of 78 identified primary sources, which form the remaining 17% of all findings. The discrepancy between the two categories is a result of both our initial research focus and of the different method used for the identification of scientific primary sources. Moreover, the Greek scientific community was quite small for the duration of our study and produced a far smaller number of relevant primary sources than their ecclesiastical and theological counterparts. However, of these 78 primary sources, 73 have already been digitized, a 93.6% of all scientific sources and a 15.9% of all findings. The category of scientific publications is the one that NARSES will focus on in this later stage of the program, and the one we expect to identify the greatest number of new primary sources.

Finally, the distribution of our findings between different types of publications shows that the grand majority of them are journal and newspaper articles. Of the 381 ecclesiastical primary sources, only 18 are books and lectures, a percentage of only 5.1%. Things are not much different regarding scientific publications, where again 8 out of 78 are books and presentations, a percentage of 10.2%. This is definitely a much larger percentage than that found in the ecclesiastical primary sources, but one that is not qualitatively different.

In conclusion, as regarding the collection of primary sources in 19th and mid20th century Greece, NARSES now enters its second and final stage. Most of the sources have been identified and digitized. We expect that by summer, the collection and digitization will have been complete, and the appearance of the primary sources in the database will have initiated for good.