Orthodox Christian Contributions to Freedom

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In the face of growing religious repression and communal violence that are combining to cleanse Christians from the contemporary Middle East, distinguished political scientist and scholar of Orthodoxy Elizabeth Prodromou analyzes the formative historical contributions of Orthodox Christians of the Eastern Roman Empire to ideas about human freedom, war and peace, and legal regimes for regulating religious pluralism. Paradoxically, today’s existential threats to Orthodox Christians—who were the majority communities in the territories that once comprised the Byzantine Empire—have prompted political scientists and others to rediscover the historical geography of Eastern Christianity. In this geographical and cultural space, Orthodox ideas and practices figured prominently and continue to exercise an important influence. The present moment provides an opportunity to retrieve innovative and distinctive Orthodox ideas about individual freedom, communal rights, and justice in war, which have been largely overlooked in conventional narratives of Christianity and freedom.