

## ***THE CHURCH OF CYPRUS DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY(\*)***

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### **The period from 1900 to 1960.**

On 12 July 1878 Cyprus was liberated from Ottoman domination and passed under British rule. The transfer of the administration of Cyprus to a Christian power was very well received in the island, bringing great joy both to the Church and to Cypriot lay circles. Everyone expected that the English would soon grant the people of Cyprus their freedom, so as to enable them thus to fulfill their long-held desire, the unification of Cyprus with their mother, mainland Greece. However, all such hope was in vain, because the state of affairs at that time did not favour such an outcome.

The new masters of the island not only failed to respond to the expectations of the Cypriot people, but as time passed imposed increasingly heavy taxes constantly and restricted personal liberty. From the first days of occupation of the island, they began to interfere even in internal affairs of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The fact that the Church was successful in preventing this situation from becoming fully established, was mainly due to the position adopted by Archbishop Sophronius III, who governed the Church of the Apostle Varnavas (Barnabas) with great wisdom for a full

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(\*) **Christine Chaillot**, *The Orthodox Church in Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, Bern - Switzerland 2011, p. 69-82 and 458-459.

thirty-five years (thirteen under Turkish rule and twenty-two under British, i.e. from 1865 to 1900). Sophronius III led a delegation to London in 1889 to request the British government to take appropriate action for the improvement of the island's political affairs.

After the death of Sophronius III, the archiepiscopal throne of Cyprus remained vacant for about ten years, owing to internal disputes and friction. In 1909 Archbishop Cyril II (1909-16), who had been previously served as metropolitan of Kyrenia (1889-93) and Kition (1893-1909) was elected to the archiepiscopal throne. Cyril II worked very actively for the restoration of the Church, the building of churches and the founding of schools, with the aim of re-establishing the national status of the Church. It was during the time of Cyril II (1914) that the first constitutional charter of the Church of Cyprus was drawn up.

Cyril II was succeeded by Cyril III, formerly metropolitan of Kyrenia (1895-1916), who also expressed a particular interest in education and the national issue of Cyprus (1916-37). He led delegations twice to London (in 1918-19 and 1919-20). During the time of Cyril III (1929) a new constitutional charter of the Church of Cyprus was composed, although, for political reasons, it was implemented. By establishing a literary competition, Cyril III contributed to the development of Cyprological studies relating to research on the history and culture of Cyprus.

In the meantime, in November 1914 the British government annexed Cyprus and in March 1925 the island was pronounced a colony. The Greek population of Cyprus (400,000 out of a total of 495,000) responded to these developments by intensifying their struggle for the liberation of the island.

In October 1931 a civilian revolt broke out with a rebellious slogan, but the island authorities repressed the liberation movement in a brutal fashion. They arrested Metropolitan Nikodemos of Ki-

tion (23 October) and Metropolitan Makarios of Kyrenia (26 October) and sent them into exile (3 November), having first branded them instigators of sedition. They also abolished all freedoms and even banned the ringing of church bells.

In 1933 Archbishop Cyril III died. The throne remained vacant for many years for the following two reasons: (1) From October 1931 the Church of Cyprus did not hold a synod, because of the arrest and deportation of the two metropolitans of Kition and Kyrenia and the demise of the archbishop later; and (2) around November 1937, the government of Cyprus decreed three acts concerning the election of an archbishop which violated both established custom and the constitutional charter, as a result of which the free and normal election of a new archbishop was rendered impossible.

One of the deported metropolitans, Nikodemos of Kition, died in Jerusalem in 1937 (13 September). The metropolitan of Kyrenia returned to Cyprus in 1946 (22 December). Since all three acts mentioned above were abolished by the government, an archiepiscopal election was carried out by a regular electoral synod, which was constituted with the participation of Metropolitan Ioacheim of Derkoi (of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople). Metropolitan Leontios of Paphos was elected to the archiepiscopal throne in 1947, having been a metropolitan since 1930 and, moreover, *locum tenens* of the archiepiscopal throne since 1933.

Leontios, who governed the Church of Cyprus single-handedly from 1933 to 1946, developed a valuable range of activities on both the ecclesiastical and national levels. With regard to the latter, however, he was confined twice by the British to the walls of his residence (21 April 1938-20 April 1939 and 18 May 1939-17 May 1940). He functioned only for thirty-six days as Archbishop of Cyprus.

After the death of Leontios, Makarios II, formerly metropolitan of Kyrenia (1917-47), was elected Archbishop of Cyprus, occupy-

ing the throne from 1947 to 1950. Makarios II's election was also carried out by a canonical electoral synod, which was formed by inviting two additional prelates from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, namely, Metropolitan Adamantios of Pergamos and Metropolitan Maximos of Sardeis. After the election and enthronization of the new Archbishop, the three vacant metropolitan thrones were also filled.

In 1949, during the archiepiscopate of Makarios II, the seminary «Apostolos Varnavas» was founded for educating the clergy of the Church of Cyprus. The whole of the Greek-Cypriot population at that time voted in favour of the unification of Cyprus with Greece. A committee led by Metropolitan Kyprianos of Kyrenia left Cyprus to deliver the documents concerning the referendum to the Greek Parliament, the British Government and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Before the committee could complete its mission, Makarios II died and Makarios III, metropolitan of Kition (1948-50), was elected Archbishop of Cyprus (1950-77). Makarios III developed a great ecclesiastical and national activity, since he made effective use of his many gifts, namely, his broad education, his acute mental agility and his firm determination.

From the time of his enthronization Makarios III gave particular attention to the spiritual renewal and financial sustenance of the clergy. He supported and promoted the status of the seminary and established an office of religious instruction. He showed a great interest in all the philanthropic institutions. He had the splendid archiepiscopal residence built. He successfully completed the valuation of the archdiocese's land holdings. He encouraged everything pertaining to education. He took particular care to ensure that the secondary schools were adequately funded and made every effort to see that these schools maintained their autonomy and their freedom from control by a foreign government. At the

same time, he worked actively towards achieving freedom for the great martyr island of Cyprus. To this end, he founded the Pan-cyprian National Youth Organization, arranged many meetings and rallies, and, moreover, put out feelers everywhere in an attempt to arrive at a solution of the national issue of Cyprus by peaceful means. He visited many countries, as well as the headquarters of the United Nations, in order to promote the rights of the Cypriot people in an international forum.

In April 1955 it became clear to the Cypriots that they could not win their freedom through diplomatic action. Accordingly, a new revolt, better organized than that of October 1931, broke out in Cyprus under the political leadership of Archbishop Makarios III and the military command of Lieutenant-Colonel (later Lieutenant-General) George Grivas-Digenis (1898-1974). In the course of the revolt, on 9 March 1956, Archbishop Makarios III, Metropolitan Kyprianos of Kyrenia, the archpriest of the church of Faneromeni in Nicosia and the secretary of the diocese of Kyrenia were sent into exile on the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean. A little later, Metropolitan Anthimos of Kition was confined to living within the boundaries of his diocese in Larnaka (29 August 1956-4 April 1957). There followed the imposition of house arrest on whole towns and villages, the imprisonment of thousands of Cypriots in concentration camps, the application of a night curfew to young persons, and the subjection of hundreds of citizens to abominable bodily and psychological torture on the mere suspicion that they might have been members of EOKA (the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters). Many guerrilla fighters and non-combatants were hanged, executed or murdered. However, none of these atrocities could subdue the fighting spirit and momentum of the Cypriots. On 28 March 1957, the four exiles were allowed to leave the Seychelles, but were not free to return to Cyprus. They decided to go to Athens, from where they continued to struggle for the liberation of the island. They returned to Cyprus from Athens

in March 1959, after the signing of the London - Zurich Convention that resulted in the dissolution of the colonial regime in Cyprus and the proclamation of the Republic of Cyprus in August 1960.

**From the proclamation of the Republic of Cyprus in August 1960 to 2000.**

With the proclamation of the Republic of Cyprus in August 1960 a new era began for the Church of Cyprus.

The most significant event in this period, coincidental with the creation of the new state, was the assumption of the presidency by the Archbishop. It was only natural that after their liberation the Cypriot people should vote to assign the presidency of the republic to Archbishop Makarios III, who as Ethnarch embodied the national tradition, along with the ardent desires and struggles of the Cypriots for freedom.

Thus the Church of Cyprus, supported by the unanimous spirit of its people, once again recovered its role of representing and maintaining the island's spiritual and national traditions. This development proved highly comforting and guaranteed above all that the Church of Cyprus would one day lead the Cypriot vessel into the harbour of the dreams and fervent desires of the Cypriot people.

Indeed, all the endeavours of the Archbishop as a President were directed to this end until December 1963, when the Turkish mutiny broke out, which obstructed the process and dashed all hopes of success.

But Cyprus, with her Archbishop leading the way, continued her endeavours by another route, the now familiar path of martyrdom and sacrifice, hoping that by following the road to Calvary, her national resurrection would eventually and definitively appear

on the horizon. Unfortunately, however, the ecclesiastical crisis created by the three metropolitans in 1972 and 1973, the military coup of 15 July 1974, and the Turkish invasion that followed, not only obstructed the island's course towards its goal, but brought Cyprus to the brink of destruction and ruin.

While Archbishop Makarios III was struggling, as we have seen, to counter the effects of the Turkish mutiny, the three metropolitans of the island, Gennadios of Paphos, Anthimos of Kition, and Kyprianos of Kyrenia, urged by the military junta that had governed the Greek people against its will since 1967, asked the Archbishop on 2 March 1972 to relinquish presidential office. As the chief reason for their suggestion, they put forward the incompatible aspect of this office with the archbishop's sacerdotal role. The Archbishop, aware of the fact that his resignation would lead to the eventual dissolution of the state and the division of Cyprus, responded to the wishes of the clergy and the people and refused to accept the demand of the three metropolitans. However, they proceeded with «deposing» the Archbishop, on 7 March 1973, disregarding the fact that three bishops cannot depose another bishop let alone their archbishop. This action of the three metropolitans was condemned unreservedly by the leaders of all the Orthodox Churches, who continued to maintain communion with Archbishop Makarios III.

The three metropolitans, instead of complying with the advice and instructions of the presiding officials of the Orthodox Churches, made an announcement on 13 April 1973, by which they rendered their resolution to «depose» the Archbishop definite and final. In a circular letter issued on 17 April 1973 they urged the people to be disobedient to the Archbishop.

After these events, the Archbishop was left with no other choice. He turned to the leaders of the four ancient Patriarchates and requested them to take measures to restore the normal state of

affairs in the Church of Cyprus. Their response to the Archbishop was positive. On 5 July 1973 an extraordinary synod was held with an adequate quorum thanks to the participation of Patriarch Nikolaos VI of Alexandria, Patriarch Elias IV of Antioch, and bishops from the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Having declared that the «deposition» of Archbishop Makarios III was uncanonical, illegal and utterly void, and should be considered as having never taken place, this synod invited the three metropolitans to accept its resolution and to reinstate their former normal relationship and communion with the Archbishop. Nonetheless, the three metropolitans sadly did not accept the synod's resolution and they did not comply with its instructions. Following this, the synod imposed the penalty of deposition on the three metropolitans on 14 July 1973, in view of all of the actions on their part that had resulted in the disturbance of ecclesiastical law and order in Cyprus.

After the deposition of the three metropolitans, a canonical electoral synod was held, with the participation of representatives from the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, which proceeded to elect the Metropolitan of Paphos Chrysostomos I, and the auxiliary Bishops Chrysanthos of Ledra and Varnavas of Salamis. The new electoral synod increased the number of dioceses from three to five, namely, Paphos, Kition, Kyrenia, Limassol and Morphou on 13 August 1973. Later the remaining thrones were filled by the election of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Kition, Metropolitan Gregorios of Kyrenia, Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Limassol and Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Morphou (formerly auxiliary Bishop of Ledra).

Having seen that the stance maintained by the three metropolitans had failed to shake the position of Archbishop Makarios III as President of the Republic of Cyprus, the military regime in Greece planned and on 15 July 1974 executed a military coup whose purpose was to eliminate Archbishop Makarios III and bring about



the division of Cyprus. During the coup the archiepiscopal residence, the presidential residence, the metochion of Kykkos Monastery in Nicosia, together with other government buildings, were burnt down and many citizens were killed or imprisoned. Fortunately, the Archbishop survived and the division of the island was averted. Nevertheless, Turkey took advantage of the treasonable coup and deployed troops against Cyprus. The invasion of the island by Turkey took place on 20-22 July and 14-16 August 1974. The Turkish invasion resulted in many people being killed, others being imprisoned and tortured, while others still are missing to this day. About 200,000 people became refugees, government and private buildings were destroyed, charitable institutions were wrecked, properties were looted, and a large proportion of the island was conquered. The Church, too, suffered deep wounds as a result of the Turkish invasion. Churches were desecrated or converted into mosques, icons depicting saints were destroyed or sold abroad, holy articles and relics were looted and valuable ecclesiastical property was lost. Many priests were driven out and others were murdered.

In the subsequent struggle for physical and national survival, for maintaining the substance of Cypriot Hellenism and for liberating the occupied territory, as well as for rehabilitating our compatriots stricken by invasion, the ever-militant Church of Cyprus once again led the way.

Having miraculously survived the coup, the Archbishop left the following day and went abroad, where he worked energetically for the relief of Cyprus from the tragic consequences of the coup and the Turkish invasion.

On 7 December 1974 Archbishop Makarios III, in response to persistent pressure from the Cypriot people, returned to Cyprus where he was welcomed enthusiastically. The Archbishop resumed his ecclesiastical and national responsibilities and, deter-

mined and unyielding, continued his struggle to expell the invader and restore freedom and human rights in Cyprus, which at that time was suffering so many hardships.

Nevertheless, the gravity of the struggle and the proportions of the calamity that hit Cyprus could not but affect the Archbishop's health. Successive heart attacks finally led to his death on 3 August 1977. The people wept for their leader with deep emotion. Almost the entire population of Cyprus filed by his body during his lying in state. Representatives of Orthodox and other Christian Churches, as well as delegations from many countries attended his funeral.

Makarios III was succeeded as President of the Republic of Cyprus by Spyros Kyprianou (1977-88) and then by George Vassiliou (1988-93). Next came the ten-year term served by Glafkos Clerides (1993-2003). With regard to the presidency of the Church of Cyprus, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Paphos was elected to the throne on 13 November 1977. The new Archbishop was formerly his predecessor's assistant and coadjutor, first as auxiliary bishop of Constantia (1968-73) and later as a metropolitan of Paphos (1973-7). He has always stood by Archbishop Makarios's side when the latter encountered difficulties in the course of his struggles. Archbishop Chrysostomos I (1977-2006) outlined his aims briefly and clearly in the course of his enthronement speech. The main lines may be summarized as follows: dedication to the safeguarding and teaching of the Orthodox faith; promotions of inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian relations; regrouping and augmenting the spiritual forces of the Church of Cyprus by training virtuous and well-educated clergy; providing healthy guidance to young people, and developing correct techniques for the administration and evaluation of what remained of Church property and assets; and the continuation of the struggle initiated by the Archbishop and Ethnarch Makarios III with a view to securing the freedom and survival of Hellenism in Cyprus.

In keeping with these aims, Archbishop Chrysostomos I inspired the people with courage on the religious as well as the national level, raising their morale and strengthening their commitment to the restoration of justice and freedom throughout Cyprus. In 1978, as a result of his intervention, the seminary began functioning again - it had been suspended after the events of 1974 - and the clergy's stipends were raised. Moreover, in 1979 a new constitutional charter of the Church of Cyprus was compiled, containing essential sections relating to the spiritual development of the community and to the economic administration of its assets, to enable the Church to be able to respond more effectively to its many-faceted mission.

With the advents of the new year 1978, the metropolitan throne of Paphos was filled by Chrysostomos, abbot of the monastery of Saint Neophytos. In 1994 a new metropolitan was elected for Kyrenia, to succeed Metropolitan Gregorios, who had died, namely, Paul, abbot of the monastery of Machairas. In 1996, Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Morphou also died, and Metropolitan Neophytos was elected to succeed him in 1998. In the same year, Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Limassol submitted his resignation and in the following year Chrysanthos was succeeded by the new abbot of the monastery of Machairas, Athanasios.

### **Organization of the Church.**

In terms of administrative jurisdiction, the Church of Cyprus has been divided since 1973 into six regions: the archiepiscopal region, and the metropolitan regions of Paphos, Kition, Kyrenia, Limassol and Morphou. The archbishop, along with the five metropolitans and Varnavas, auxiliary bishop of Salamis, and Vassilios, since 1996 auxiliary bishop of Trimythous, comprise the holy synod of the Church of Cyprus.

Following the Turkish invasion and conquest of the northern

part of Cyprus, the majority of the congregation of the archiepiscopal region, the entire congregation of the metropolitan region of Kyrenia and a proportion of the metropolitan region of Morphou were made refugees and became dispersed in the remaining unoccupied area of the island. The metropolitans of Kyrenia and Morphou were temporarily based in Aglandjia - Nicosia and the town of Evrychou respectively.

The monasteries of Cyprus still continue to inspire devotion in the Christian people who inhabit the island and to be holy sites of prayer and pilgrimage. Nine monasteries for men are in operation today (Kykkos, Machairas, St. Neophytos, Chrysorroiyatissa, Trooditissa, Stavrovouni, the monastery of the Holy Cross of Minthi, St. George of Mavrovounion and the Holy Forerunner of Mesa Potamos) and sixteen monasteries for women (St. George Alamanos, St. Heraklidios, St. Minas, the Metamorphosis at Kaimakli, St. Panteleimon of Achera, St. Kendeas, the Archangel Michael at Analyontas, the Virgin Mary Zoodochos Pigi of Glosa, the Virgin Mary of Sfallangi, St. Nicholas patron of cats, the Virgin Mary of Campia, St. Thekla at the village of Mosfiloti, the Virgin Mary of Amasgos, the Virgin Mary of Amirous, the monastery of Sts. Marina and Raphael at Xylotymbou and the Virgin Mary of Trikoukkia).

The Church of Cyprus has a particular concern for the spiritual and material welfare of its clergy. Under its auspices and at its expense the seminary called «Apostolos Varnavas» is currently in operation whose graduates - and they alone - become members of the clergy. Prior to the events of 1974, the construction of a university-level school of theology intended exclusively for the clergy was begun. Equally, under the auspices of the archdiocese and of the metropolitan regions, there are schools of ecclesiastical Byzantine music currently in operation at which attendance is free of charge. In 1963 Archbishop Makarios III founded the Clergy Payroll Enhancement Fund which was endowed by the archdiocese

and the government. In 1970 he secured the subsidy of the payment of salaries to the clergy for rural areas by the state, having first donated the archdiocese's agricultural portfolio to the fund.

Various charitable institutions also function under the supervision of the Church of Cyprus. These include social welfare, charitable fraternities, old people's homes, orphanages, youth hostels, hostels for young girls and elderly people, student meals, infant and children's kindergardens and nurseries, children's camp-sites in the countryside and more.

The Church of Cyprus also plays a leading role in founding schools and libraries. The most important and most attractive secondary schools in the capital, in the other towns and in rural areas, were built in whole or in part by the Church. Also, the largest library in Cyprus, the library at the church of the Virgin Mary Faneromeni, was founded and is currently maintained by the Church. The archdiocese is currently endeavouring to assemble a collection of all old editions and all books that refer to Cyprus.

The Church, moreover, renders vital assistance to poor students, supporting some of them with their studies at university level. A scholarships fund was established by Archbishop Makarios III for studies in memory of Loukis Akritas, minister of education and religions in Greece, who was of Cypriot origin, and another in commemoration of the scholarships institution, under the name of «Constantinos Spyridakis».

From early 1972 to mid-1974, a special centre for the conservation of manuscripts and icons was operative at the monastery of St. Spyridon of Trimithous, under the auspices of the archdiocese. The purpose of that centre was the preservation and safeguarding of the archaeological and art treasures of the Church and their presentation to the Cypriot public and eventually to the outside world. A similar centre is currently functioning today at the archdiocese and at the monastery of the Virgin Mary Chrysorroyatissa.

In 1977 the Church in co-operation with the State established the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, which includes a nursing centre and a spiritual and cultural centre. The first centre consists of four sections: the obstetric, the gynaecological, the paediatric and the anti-anemic. The second centre currently maintains a Byzantine museum, a picture gallery and a library. It publishes the multi-volume series, *History of Cyprus*, the *Complete Narratives of Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus*, and various other scholarly works.

The Church also shows its concern for the spiritual needs of its flock by delivering regular sermons, orally and in writing, by broadcasting religious programmes on radio and television, by publishing the monthly journal «*Apostolos Varnavas*» and other documents, by running Sunday schools of all types in almost all the communities of the island, and by organizing Christian student groups and religious associations.

Besides its spiritual and vocational work in the national sphere, the Church of Cyprus fulfills all its inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian obligations. It maintains good relations with all of its sister-Orthodox Churches and it contributes as much as possible to the effort being made today, under the leadership and the guidance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to draw closer to other Christian Churches and overcome the ancient disputes that still divide them.

Following an agreement with the Patriarchate of Alexandria, our Church has also recently begun to participate in the missionary work being carried out in East Africa. In March 1971 Archbishop Makarios III travelled to Kenya, where he baptized about 5,000 native Kenyans and laid the foundation stone for the construction of a seminary close to the capital, Nairobi. The building of the seminary was completed at the expense of the Archdiocese of Cyprus and began functioning in 1982 with the material assistance of the Church of Cyprus. It is equipped with classrooms, an

auditorium, a library, offices for administrative staff and the tutors, a boarding-house for students of religious studies and flats for the accommodation of the tutors. The residence of the Greek Orthodox prelate of Kenya, a church and a technical and professional college were also built at the expense of the Archdiocese of Cyprus next to the seminary.

Our Church also takes an active part in the ecumenical movement and has been represented since 1948 at almost all the conferences of the World Council of Churches. It has been a member of the Council of European Churches since 1959, and of the Council of Churches of the Middle East (of which it is a founding member) since 1974.

In 1971, in a spirit of ecumenism, the Archdiocese of Cyprus placed the fifteenth-century monastery of St. Napa at the disposal of all the Christian Churches in Cyprus, to be used as a conference centre by the World Council of Churches and by the Middle East Council of Churches, which contributed financially towards the restoration of the monastery and the maintenance of the centre.

Today there are about 750,000 inhabitants in Cyprus, with the Greek community, most of whom are Orthodox and live in the southern part, comprising 80 per cent. There are also approximately 5,000 Maronites, a similar number of Armenians and smaller communities of Latin Catholics and Anglicans. Our Church maintains exceptionally friendly relations with all of them.

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He undertook the management of the Archbishop's Office from 1959 to 1995 and he is the manager of the journal *Apostolos Varnavas*, the official periodical of the Church of Cyprus. He was a close fellow worker with the late Archbishop Makarios III from 1959 until his death in 1977. He was, and is still, a member of many boards relating to the Church of Cyprus and the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation.

He, also, at the same time, taught in the Gymnasiums of Kyrenia and Lapithos (1955-59) and in the Paedagogical Academy of Cyprus (1959-69) and became later Inspector of the Secondary Education in the Ministry of Education (1969-92).

He has represented the Church of Cyprus at various congresses and Orthodox Christian events. He has published more than thirty books on Orthodox Religious, historical and educational topics.

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