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## **The Church of Cyprus: Political Modulator and Financial Power**

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**Abstract:**

*This paper seeks to disclose the Church of Cyprus as an institution with political power, as an ideological mechanism and also as a financial force. At the same time, the establishment of the private nature of religion is examined, while emphasis is given to the Church's attempt to transfer the latter into the public space, something that can be achieved mainly through the distortion of political discourse and of political will in general, along with the use of the metaphysical tools of both the Church and religion. Theoretically, even though the Church does not participate in the exercise of political power, it has the authority, the tools, the voice and, above all, the institutional support to do so. Therefore, in what follows, the Church's most important interventions after Cyprus became an independent state – in the fields of the economy, education, presidential elections and national problems – are reported.*

**Keywords:** Church of Cyprus, religion, politics, authority, institution

### **1. Introduction**

When we are discussing the relation between church and politics, the term 'secularization' is naturally turning up. For many years, scholars have recognized that secularization is not a unitary process<sup>i</sup>. Those who attempted to reveal its different perspectives presented them in terms of processes - like decline, differentiation, disengagement, rationalization<sup>ii</sup> - or in terms of aspects of life - like structural, cultural, organizational, and individual<sup>iii</sup>. The use of 'secularization' in a discussion about institutions helps to analyze the transformation of an institution that had once been considered religious in character into something not thought of as religious.

The Church of Cyprus, considered to be one of the oldest institutions on the island, has participated and intervened actively in the most prominent events that have taken place and which have come to determine the modern history of the isle. The debate on the privileges of the Church, a topic which is considered taboo by many people, is often brought into the spotlight. The Church derives its power from this situation, i.e. from the fact that issues related to it remain inaccessible to the people; this untrodden path is paved by the Church itself, as an institution, and it is fully accepted by society. In this way, the Church becomes involved in politics and the state has become religious, reinforcing an incestuous relationship between the two factions.<sup>iv</sup> The ground for the creation of the Cypriot state has been, to a great extent, set by the Church of Cyprus in a way that the state's power and prestige can be protected – or even expanded. Nevertheless, the question arises: how was the current role of the Church of Cyprus acquired and consolidated?

### **2. A Brief Historical Antecedent**

As an institution – and more specifically as the most important independent institution in the possession of Greek-Cypriots prior to the establishment of an independent state – the Church of Cyprus constitutes a component of the system to such an extent that it authoritatively determines its structure, course and political orientations.<sup>v</sup> The repression of Greek-Cypriots' attempts to express themselves politically by the then rulers of the island rendered the Church the only suitable place for their preparation and organisation. The Church, being a hierarchical and bureaucratic establishment which was represented across the whole geographical area of the island due to the temples that had been built in each region, had a fundamental unifying influence.<sup>vi</sup> The main demands regarding the national restoration of Cyprus, as well as the majority of the attempts to promote national interests, were put forward by the Church, which was perceived as the leader of Greek-Cypriots in the same way that it was perceived during the Ottoman period.

According to the Church, for this leading role to be legalised the possession of the presidential office as the Head of State is not essential, just like it was during the reign of Archbishop Makarios III. Instead, what is of great importance is historical tradition, as this was conceived by the Church and forms the framework towards which citizens gravitate. The Church has a mission, assigned to it two thousand years ago, to continue to protect its flock.

As far as the 'ethnarchic' role of the Church is concerned, we should go back to the period of Ottoman occupation, despite the fact that at that time the notions 'nation' and 'national consciousness' carried a different meaning from those they came to acquire

from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Over the course of Ottoman rule, the dominant collective identity of the Christians was purely religious.

Throughout the Ottoman period, the system adopted for the governance of the island corresponded to that used for all conquered territories. Privileges, of which the Greek Orthodox Church had been deprived during the Frankish and the Venetian periods, were not only restored but they even increased in number. This strengthening of the Greek Orthodox Church's position, along with the provision of certain rights of self-governance to subjugates in the context of the millet system, are two prominent characteristics of the period.

Based on the system that was applied across the Ottoman Empire, subjugates were organised into millets (religious communities), which had their own laws and customs and were under the charge of a religious leader who had the responsibility to the central government to administer and control the behaviour of his flock. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople was head of the religious community of Rum, and both he and the Archbishop of Cyprus were officials of the Empire and had to be submissive to the Porte. In effect, the Church of Cyprus could be seen as a structural part of the Ottoman administrative system.

This was also the case with the Greek Church. It is remarkable that within only a few years after the establishment of the Greek state, the Church managed to prove its own leading role with regards to the idea of nation, and to impose it on the teaching of history in education. As the historian Antonis Liakos astutely remarks, the Church had identified with this idea to such an extent that "it strongly contested and fought against anyone that questioned its superiority in the national struggles. Obviously, this embracement of Orthodoxy and nationalism from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards took place across all Balkan countries, and this is something that should not surprise us. If the Church did not have the required technical knowledge of how to adapt to successive authorities and situations, it would not have managed to survive throughout two millennia".<sup>vii</sup>

When the British arrived in 1878, the society of Cyprus was still structured according to the Ottoman *millet* system and the religious leadership administered their financial and juridical affairs as well as other civic matters<sup>viii</sup>. The church was thus a helpful institution for the administration and the control of the Ottoman periphery<sup>ix</sup>. Late Ottoman reforms, such as the *Hatt-i-Humayun* (1856), granted all religious bodies under the Ottoman Empire the right to self-administration with regard to their community affairs, matters of education and property<sup>x</sup>.

During British rule in Cyprus, the leading role of the Church within the Greek Cypriot community was reinforced. Even though the Ottoman millet system was replaced by the British administration, the traditional over the ethnarchic role of the Church favoured the national and political activity of the Orthodox Church. Not long after the Legislative Council came into existence, the active involvement of the Church's leadership in the political life of the island was observed.<sup>xi</sup> The first religious leader to be elected to the Legislative Council was the Bishop of Kition Kyprianos, who was later succeeded by the Bishop of Kition Kyrillos. During the October 1931 uprising on the island, the leader of the Greek-Cypriots on the Legislative Council was the Bishop of Kition Nicodemus Mylonas.

The continuous preoccupation of the Church with politics gave rise to the hierarchs' lust for power, a fact that had an instant impact on the inner workings of the Church of Cyprus during the decade 1900-1910, a period when, following the death of Archbishop Sophronios, the problem of his succession arose. The 'archbishop issue', which was related to a great extent to the dispute over the question of strategy on the national issue, and it shocked the Greek-Cypriot community and divided the clergy and the citizens into two camps. The leader of the first camp was the Bishop of Kition Kyrillos, also known as 'Kyrillatsos', while the Bishop of Kyrenia Kyrillos, known as 'Kyrillou', was the leader of the second camp. The Church synod elected the bishop of Kyrenia; however, the legality of this election was questioned by the Bishop of Kition and his numerous supporters.<sup>xii</sup>

This development had a political impact as well. In the elections carried out in 1906 to appoint members of the Legislative Council, the Bishop of Kition's party prevailed and therefore provided eight members of the council, while only one was elected from the other party. The winners sought to introduce legislation to control the archiepiscopal elections in such a way that it would, undoubtedly, lead to the victory of their candidate. The Church synod and the Bishop of Kyrenia's supporters reacted forcefully and as a result the island was plunged into civil war. The British High Commissioner, in order to take control of the situation, declared martial law and used the army to restore order. In 1908, a law was introduced that gave power to the Bishop of Kition to assemble an episcopal synod, which was also attended by three Bishops of the Patriarchate of Alexandria. The Bishop of Kition was unanimously elected as Archbishop; however, his opponent continued to consider himself the Archbishop up until March of 1910, when he eventually recognised the election of the Bishop of Kition, consequently resolving the great 'archbishop issue'. Kyrillos II passed away in 1916 and was succeeded by the Bishop of Kyrenia, who died in 1933.<sup>xiii</sup>

During the municipal elections of 1908, fanaticism between the two sides was so intense that the election of a Greek mayor in Nicosia was rendered impossible. On the City Council, which consisted of six Greek-Cypriots and five Turkish-Cypriots, three 'Kitiakoi' and three 'Kyreniakoi' were elected which were in favour of the Bishops of Kition and Kyrenia, respectively. The former supported the doctor Nikolaos Derbis and the latter supported Christodoulos Michaelides. Taking into consideration that after the three sessions held by the City Council the Greek advisors kept insisting on their position, the five Turkish-Cypriot advisors elected Shevket as Mayor of Nicosia, and he served in this position until 1911.<sup>xiv</sup>

All of the above are indicative of the political rivalries that existed within the Church. This situation remained at the same level for several years and reached its climax in the 1940s, a period during which the establishment and function of political organisations is observed. These organisations participate actively in a process that aims at the secularisation of this intra-ecclesiastical conflict.

### 3. Towards a "Political" Church

Immediately after the municipal elections of 1946 and the comfortable victory of the left-wing, the right-wing became aware of the need for a greater coordination of its forces, in order to regain its dominant role in politics. Following these elections, the

Church of Cyprus, through the interference of the Ethnarchy Council, decided to take initiatives which favoured *Enosis*<sup>xv</sup>, while at the same time the Bishopric of Kyrenia decided to intensify its efforts to prevent the left-wing from gaining “national equality”.<sup>xvi</sup> As Makrides argues, ‘because the Greeks of Cyprus have been considering themselves historically and culturally as Greeks, the ‘Great Idea’ in the form of *Enosis* has had an intense appeal. Thus, when the Church fathers called on the Cypriots to fight for union with Greece, it did not require excessive efforts to heat up emotions’<sup>xvii</sup>.

In August 1946, influenced by information coming from the Cypriot Coordination Committee of Athens, according to which the leaders of the Greek opposition, Papandreou, Sophoulis, Kafantaris, Kanellopoulos and Plastiras, considered proper to take the issue of *Enosis* to the United Nations, the vicar Leontios consented to send representatives to London.<sup>xviii</sup>

At the same time, the exiled Bishop of Kyrenia returned to Cyprus on 22 December 1946 and, due to the absence of Leontios, took the role of the president of the Ethnarchic Council. Under this guise, he made a speech at a huge demonstration on 16 February 1947. Despite the unitary character of the demonstration and the participation of the left-wing, the Bishop of Kyrenia could not help referring to whatever related to the “Slavs and the rest of the enemies of Greece”, something which sparked the reaction of AKEL (the Communist Party of Cyprus).<sup>xix</sup>

Following the withdrawal of restrictive laws, it was expected that the upcoming archbishop elections would be held between Leontios and Makarios. The left-wing was determined to be involved vigorously in the elections, seeing as its main goal preventing the election of an anticommunist archbishop. Leontios, the vicar, and the Bishop of Kyrenia Makarios had come to an agreement that the two of them would not present themselves as candidates in the elections and that they would reject any relevant proposal.

Elections for the selection of the 1,004 special representatives were about to take place on 5 May 1947. Once chosen, these representatives would have the responsibility to elect the 66 general representatives, who would then proceed to the election of the new archbishop, along with the help of some clergymen. The left-wing favoured the election of Leontios, who was receiving a lot of pressure from this same party in order to take part in the elections. However, Leontios was bound to the agreement he had made with the Bishop of Kyrenia, which, as stated above, forbade the candidacy of the two in the elections. The latter wanted to make sure that the vicar would remain faithful to his word and, thus, he was constantly reminding him of their contract. The right-wing party supported Porfirios of Sinai.

The story behind the filling of the archiepiscopal chair, which had remained void since 1933, went through different phases and reached its zenith in 1946, when the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Bishopric of Thyateira became involved. Following consultations with the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the British government, it was expected that the delicate position of the Archbishop of Cyprus would be occupied by a person who was “eager to, and at the same time, capable of cooperating with the British authorities”. The withdrawal of the ecclesiastical laws of 1937 and the permission given for the return of exiled bishops resulted from the numerous messages the British government received which assured the ongoing collaboration of the new archbishop and declared the exclusion of the vicar Leontios and the Bishop of Kyrenia from the elections. With this in mind, the Ecumenical Patriarchate assigned Bishop Derkon Ioakim to the position of the third synod member.

The abovementioned bishop came to Cyprus and followed a number of specific instructions that were given to him by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and which aspired to the promotion of the candidacy of Porfirios of Sinai.<sup>xx</sup> Although he faced no difficulty in persuading various members of the right-wing to follow these instructions, the left-wing remained unaffected. In addition, the latter party took advantage of Leontios’s high popularity and created a pan-Cyprian group in support of him.

On 5 May 1947, the day when the election of the special representatives took place, candidates in favour of Leontios significantly prevailed over the rest.<sup>xxi</sup> Their victory was considered a triumph of the left-wing, since most of Leontios’s elected supporters came from its ranks and, additionally, some of its most prominent members were leading the Leontios’s ballot. However, even though the 56 out of the 66 special representatives elected were followers of Leontios, the latter seemed willing to ignore the result and retire to Mount Athos. Bishop Ioakim, in close consultation with Consul Kountouriotis, head of the Greek Consulate, vainly sought an alternative solution. The left-wing, aware of the stealthy actions of the Greek Consulate, threatened that if Leontios was not accepted, it would give instructions to its representatives to support the abbot of Machairas Monastery for the position of archbishop.<sup>xxii</sup> Although the abbot was suffering from severe health problems, he was still nominated by the left-wing as a result of the friendly relations between the two camps. The determined attitude of the left-wing forced Bishops Ioakim and Kountouriotis to compromise and conclude that, under the current circumstances, Leontios was the only solution. Yet, at the same time, even though the right-wing and the Bishopric of Kyrenia did not have any influence on the general representatives, they exerted psychological pressure over Leontios by accusing him of being a renegade.

On June 20, 1947, out of a dramatic situation, Leontios was elected as archbishop in the Elective Synod, despite the Bishop of Kyrenia blackmailing him up to the very last minute that he would abstain from the elections. Without the decisive intervention of Bishop Ioakim who, being the leader of the Synod, managed to make Leontios accept his election and convince the Bishop of Kyrenia to attend the enthronement, it is doubtful that the two (i.e. the election and the enthronement) would have taken place.<sup>xxiii</sup>

The election of Leontios as the new archbishop of the island was a clear victory for the left-wing, in a hitherto forbidden field. Immediately after the elections, the right-wing’s fears regarding control of the most important Greek-Cypriot institution by the left-wing disappeared, since the cooperation between the latter and Leontios was shaken because of different decisions taken on his behalf.<sup>xxiv</sup>

On July 26, 1947, under conditions yet unknown, Archbishop Leontios passed away, having gone through a short period of illness. The fact that the Bishop of Kyrenia Makarios (Myriantheos), a declared anti-communist, took charge of the Vicariate greatly changed the power balance between the left and the right and signalled the beginning of a new dispute over the election of

the next archbishop. The Bishop of Kyrenia Makarios, under the role of the vicar but also being the only bishop on the island at that specific period, was thought of as the prevailing candidate, despite any choice that may be made by the left-wing.

In his report to the Greek government, Kountouriotis, fully aware of the ongoing situation, primarily in the ranks of the right-wing, mentioned that in spite of the uncertainty and hesitation observed in this particular wing, its attitude towards the British proposals (the Consultative Assembly) originated from expediencies – and this attitude could change according to the results of the upcoming Archiepiscopal elections:

*The right-wing, aware of its current electoral weakness, is afraid of the provision of a constitution, since this would signify the predominance of the left-wing in the parliamentary elections. For this reason, the right-wingers favour the preservation of the present regime of Cyprus, looking forward to the moment when they will feel optimistic and strong enough to participate in elections. It would be no wonder if, following the election of a right-winger in the archiepiscopal elections, we observed a positive shift in the right-wing's attitude towards the provision of a constitution.*<sup>xxv</sup>

Obviously, having adopted anticommunism as an official policy, the Church of Cyprus could not have remained passive under such circumstances. On September 7, 1948, the Synod condemned AKEL's members as being atheists, making apparent that it would put forward a plan that aimed at the exclusion of the left-wing from any aspect of the social life of Cyprus which was controlled by the Church Synod.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The support given by the left-wing to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and its rebels during the Greek civil war was the main cause for its condemnation by the ethnarchy. At the same time, though, in this specific case the main reason was its electoral power. The fact that a great part of the flock of the Church had escaped the ideological and political control of the bourgeoisie and the upper clergy awakened the Church and, from that point on, transparency involved in the procedure for the election of the heads of the Church would begin to disappear. The massive participation of the left-wing in the archiepiscopal elections of May 1947 resulted in the crushing defeat of the right-wing candidate Porfirios of Sinai. The possibility of reclaiming ecclesiastical institutions from the bourgeoisie had become attainable only after the unexpected death of Leontios and the undertaking of the vicariate by Myriantheos.

During the elections of October 1947, the supporters of Myriantheos made use of the Church's mechanism. The exclusion of the left-wingers from the electoral lists had contributed to the modification of the composition of the electorate in favour of Myriantheos.<sup>xxvii</sup> Yet, despite the fact that the election of the Synod, having a clear anticommunist orientation, had been achieved, the ruling circles of the ethnarchy nevertheless felt unsafe. Although certain members of the left-wing were deleted, their removal had not been an easy process, since they were great in number. For this same reason, there existed the likelihood that, in future elections, left-wingers would manage to re-enroll in numerous parishes and, thus, the need for their deletion would emerge once again. The most suitable approach towards a definite solution to this issue would be the preparation of new electoral rolls, in which only those accepted by the ethnarchy could be registered. On September 30, 1948, the Church Synod took hold of the situation by modifying the Constitution of the Church of Cyprus accordingly:

*In the electoral roll, there cannot be registered those who find themselves under ecclesiastical penance, those who express opinions contrary to the Christian Orthodox doctrine, those who disrespect either this doctrine or the Church and its representatives and all those who act or work together in ways that promote or facilitate such attitudes, unless they succeed in convincing the Bishop of their honest repentance...*<sup>xxviii</sup>

The political importance of modifying the Constitution is illustrated clearly in the Bishopric of Kyrenia's newspaper:

*Communists and left-wingers are excluded from the elections of the ecclesiastical committees. Not even one of them should be allowed registration. The priests that will not remain faithful to the orders of the Church circular will be subjected to strict disciplinary punishment.*<sup>xxix</sup>

#### 4. The Era of Makarios III: The Ethnarch of Cyprus

On 22 June, 1950, Archbishop Makarios II passed away and, consequently, the Church of Cyprus was once again leaderless. Nevertheless, the right-wing, operating for the first time as a coordinated group, took immediate action. Following the funeral of Archbishop Makarios II, the executive committee of the Coordinating Committee of Cypriot Struggle (SEKA) hastily held a meeting and decided to appoint the Bishop of Kition Makarios as the representative candidate of the right-wing for the archiepiscopal chair.<sup>xxx</sup> The executive committee was comprised of the Mayor of Nicosia, Themistoklis Dervis, the General Secretary of SEK,<sup>xxxi</sup> Michalakias Pissas, and Stephanos Protopoulos, General Secretary of PEK<sup>xxxii</sup>. Once the absence of the Bishop of Kyrenia Kyprianos, who was in Athens together with his representatives, is taken into consideration, it transpires that it was essential for this movement to take place, since it prevented the Bishopric of Kyrenia from proposing Kyprianos as a candidate and thus resulted in the right-wing splintering.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

As in the previous archiepiscopal elections, the ethnarchy, through the vicar Kleopas (Bishop of Paphos), issued a circular stating that people excluded from the electoral rolls would be those who “*find themselves under ecclesiastical penance, those who express opinions contrary to the Christian Orthodox doctrine, those who disrespect either this doctrine or the Church and its ministers and all those who act or work together in ways that promote or facilitate such attitudes, unless they succeed in convincing the Bishop of their honest repentance*”.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In essence, this specific paragraph allowed the priests to exclude from the electoral rolls whomever they wanted, a scenario which had also occurred in the previous elections and which took away the electoral right from a great number of left-wing voters.

Having obtained the support of almost the whole right-wing in the early stages, the Bishop of Kition Makarios had the best chance of winning. Significant reactions were observed on behalf of the Bishop of Kyrenia and his supporters, which addressed and criticised SEKA for its hasty decision to propose the Bishop of Kition for the elections.<sup>xxxv</sup> On the other hand, the left-wing, protesting against the exclusion of its supporters from the electoral rolls, initially suggested a vote for a common candidate.

However, when this proposal was rejected, the left-wingers abstained from the elections and questioned the legitimacy of this procedure, referring to it as an 'electoral coup'.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Eventually, the general representatives unanimously elected the Bishop of Kition Makarios as the new archbishop.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Archbishop Makarios III, having experienced not only pluralism with the right-wing but also the questioning of his candidacy, was determined to gradually move away from the conventional structure of this particular faction. For this reason, he sought, from the very beginning, to strengthen his presence as ethnarch by investing in his influence and complete trust, clearly deviating in this way from the policy adopted by his predecessors.<sup>xxxviii</sup> On 19 February, 1951, the new archbishop, aiming at preventing any conflict with the radical anti-communist members of the right-wing and choosing at the same time to maintain contact with the left-wing, held a meeting with the representatives of AKEL, in an attempt to control and reduce the attacks on him by the left-wing.<sup>xxxix</sup> Moreover, having as his objective to firstly gain control and then the leadership of the right-wing, he proceeded to create the Office of Religious Enlightenment, which had the potential to take action across the whole territory by holding numerous ethnarchy meetings in which representatives from different 'nationalist organisations' could participate.<sup>xl</sup>

As the years passed by, the ethnarchic role of the Church gained increasingly greater prominence, something which can be attributed to a great extent to the character of Makarios. The fact that he was both the 'political' leader of EOKA and the representative of the Greek-Cypriot community during negotiations for the independence of Cyprus further reinforced the position of the Church within the system. After gaining independence, and along with the wide acceptance of Makarios as the natural political leader by both the people and the parties, the role of the Church as the fiduciary not only of spiritual values but also of the political regime was consolidated at an institutional level in society.

This ambiguous role of the Church was challenged even during the reign of Makarios; however, this line of questioning was limited, at least in the beginning, and in addition it had a more political-like character rather than an 'ethical' one. Makarios's opponents, and especially those residing in the extreme right-wing circles of Kyrenia, assisted by Grivas, sought to break down the Church's identity in order mainly to reduce the political power of the archbishop, in the face of whom they could only see the loss of their political positions. Therefore, the attempts to assassinate Makarios which followed were indicative neither of the questioning of the Church's ethnarchic role as an institution nor of Makarios himself as a political or religious leader – the motives were purely political.

These attacks against Makarios, although political in character, originated from the incompatibility between political and religious authority. Even though they started at a relatively early point, they did not reach a climax until the end of the 1960s. The newspaper *Patris* criticised the "false resignation", as it calls it, of Makarios and his demand for regaining his office.<sup>xli</sup>

The newspaper *Kypros* disapproved of Makarios's tendency to get involved with politics and with political parties, and particularly during the presidential elections of 1968. At that time, his rival candidate, Takis Evdokas, gained only 3.74% and accused Makarios of high-handedness and of being strongly supported by the state.<sup>xlii</sup>

Grivas and his followers openly accused Makarios, arguing that he never truly aspired to *Enosis* and that, instead, his main goal was the seizure of power and authority; having political and religious authority in his hands, he had no reason to give it away. When he rejected the *Acheson Plan*, which looked forward to the *Enosis* of Cyprus with Greece in 1964, Makarios once again received the abovementioned criticism. His response to this was that any attempt at *Enosis* would have as a consequence the military intervention of Turkey and subsequently result in the division of the island.

In January 1968, the archbishop officially abandoned the idea of *Enosis*, supporting that under the given circumstances the only possible solution was the maintenance of the already existing regime of independence, opting in this way for something that was attainable rather than simply desirable. At the same time, however, the longing for *Enosis* remained intact. The imposition of a military dictatorship in Greece in 1967 complicated matters further, since the military leaders were claiming once again the role of the 'National Centre' as the regulator of the national problem of Cyprus.

On 8 March, 1970, a failed attempt was made to assassinate Makarios. Grivas returned to the island in the autumn of 1971 and created the paramilitary organisation EOKA B', in order to initiate the fight towards the achievement of *Enosis*. Through the newspapers that were under his control, Grivas continuously accused Makarios of betraying the Greek-Cypriots struggle for *Enosis* in order to avoid losing his rights.

In the elections of 1973, in which no rival candidate participated, the opposition charged Makarios of seeking to be elected "by acclamation":

*Mr. Makarios, the 'ethnarch' that neither 'gets involved with politics' nor is interested in secular authorities, revealed yesterday that he prefers that his re-election take place by acclamation during the gathering of all the Cypriot population, which, of course, will be organized the following Thursday, February 8 in Nicosia. As he stated during yesterday's press conference at the Presidential Palace, 'if no rival candidate appears the gathering of the 8<sup>th</sup> of February will imply popular approval as well'.*<sup>xliii</sup>

On 8 March, 1973, the three Bishops of the Church of Cyprus, namely Anthimos of Kition, Kyprianos of Kyrenia and Gennadios of Paphos, deposed him from his office because, according to ecclesiastical rules, hierarchs are not allowed to hold state and religious office simultaneously. Following his removal, Makarios held a synod of major significance, attended by 13 head priests of Orthodox churches from different patriarchates, among which were the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch. Through this synod, Makarios regained his lost authority, while the three aforementioned bishops were deposed on 14 July, 1973. Nonetheless, on 15 July, 1973, the mission of these three bishops was finally successfully completed through the intervention of EOKA B' and the subsequent coup that took place.

## 5. The Post-Makarios Era

Following Makarios's death on 3 August, 1977, the Bishop of Paphos Chrysostomos was unanimously elected as the new archbishop on 12 November of the same year. Although the given circumstances were not encouraging enough to cause

Chrysostomos to pursue the possibility of his being elected for the presidential position, he kept drawing attention to the ethnarchic role of the Church as well as how it intervened in the public and political life of the island.

As expected, opposition towards continuing the ecclesiastical interventions grew stronger, since Archbishop Chrysostomos had neither the authority nor the approval of his predecessor. Additionally, the new archbishop was not restricted in simply getting involved with politics but he also came to identify greatly with the government of Spyros Kyprianou. As a result, and based on the incompatibility between religious authority and cosmopolitanism, the archbishop was subject to the hostility of the opposition.<sup>xliv</sup>

The political interventions of the Church focused mainly on issues that concerned the Cyprus dispute. The Church's attitude towards any initiative aiming at finding a solution to the island's problem was completely intolerant and aggressive. The declarations of Archbishop Chrysostomos regarding the United Nations' initiative for the resumption of talks in September 1980 were remarkable; specifically, he argued that the talks "*absorbed people's mental capacities, just like opium.*"<sup>xlv</sup> In 1983, drawing upon UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar's indicators and the Church's disagreement with this effort, the opposition effort in Cyprus powerfully raised the issue of the need to divide the Church's responsibilities. Apart from the left-wing, which was always in favour of restricting the Church to its spiritual duties, the right-wing, having Glafkos Klirides as its leader, criticised the archbishop's attitude while calling for him to "*stop presenting himself as the supreme and only political leader of the island*":

*The attitude [of the Archbishop] reminds of the obscurants of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages and not of the enlightened spiritual leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. [...] The vast majority of the Cypriot Hellenism argues against the participation of the Church in politics and condemns its economic activities that are of no benefit to the community.*<sup>xlvi</sup>

Despite the pressure exerted by the left-wing, and at times by the right-wing, the Church maintained the same policies and kept interfering by calling from the pulpit for people's disapproval of the plans or initiatives proposed for the solution of the Cyprus dispute. Andreas Ziartides, General Secretary of PEO<sup>xlvii</sup> and M.P. of AKEL, mentions in an article in the trade union's newspaper *Ergatiko Vima*, republished in the newspaper *Simerini*, the following:

*The archbishop is trying to revive the old ethnarchic role, both for him and the Church. [...] Cyprus is an independent state and member of the UN since 1960. It has its own political parties. It has its parliament and it has elected its executive power headed by its President. These are the institutions that head and guide Cyprus.*<sup>xlviii</sup>

In May 2006, following a long-term and irreversible illness suffered by Archbishop Chrysostomos I, a Wide Synod was held by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Chambésy, Geneva. This synod announced that the archiepiscopal chair was at the stage of widowhood. Thus, the procedure for electing a new archbishop was put forward and ended on 5 November of that same year with the election of Chrysostomos II. His enthronement took place on 12 November and he was the only Archbishop of Cyprus ever to carry out the funeral of another Archbishop of Cyprus.

The new archbishop walked in the steps of his predecessor, following his policy on assessing whatever options concerned the Cyprus dispute. Opting for this direction, he had a lot to offer through his authority as Bishop of Paphos, especially during the period when the *Annan Plan* was the centre of all attention, appearing as the most pertinent solution to the island's problem proposed to this point. Nevertheless, Chrysostomos II chose to take a more 'daring' path, since in spite of the intransigence shown over the Cyprus dispute he openly became involved with the political parties and participated in public debates on political developments on the island. His intervention in the inner workings of DHKO (centre party), under the pretence that he had been one of the founders of the party, is notable in this respect.<sup>xlix</sup> In the two elections that took place for the nomination of the President of the Republic, during which he was the Archbishop of Cyprus, he openly and publically supported candidate Tasos Papadopoulos during the first round of voting in 2008, while in the second round he voted for Ioannis Kasoulides. Five years later, he offered his support to Nikos Anastasiades.<sup>l</sup>

Chrysostomos II not only delved into issues concerning the Cyprus dispute and the presidential elections, but he also intervened in the fields of the economy, education, migration, social politics, the civil service and the island's coal gas industry.<sup>li</sup>

## 6. The Economic Power of the Church

The Church's wealth increased rapidly as a result of the political power that was granted to it by the then occupying power. Prior to the development of the Cypriot economy, the properties and the economic power of the Church were derived mainly from large tracts of land in its possession. Through the passage of time, and along with significant economic growth and development, the Church of Cyprus readjusted its financial activities and invested in industry and the service sectors. In this way, it continued to be one of the most powerful financial organisations in the country and gained more privileges with regards to the taxation of its property.

The maintenance of the ecclesiastical institution's economic power could not have been achieved without the simultaneous empowerment of the Church's position in the bourgeois political system and the public opinions and statements of its leader in the economic field. In his encounter with the Foreign Minister of Romania in October 2012, he expressed his concerns about the agreement with the IMF and debt management on behalf of the government. More specifically, he stated that "*the government seeks cooperation, but it cannot simply command and have the others obey. There exists the need for a dialogue, for talk and reply so as for the golden mean to be found. [...] An agreement will be reached with Troika, but what kind of agreement? Will we agree to destroy everything? Because if a bad deal will be made people will suffer.*"<sup>lii</sup>

The financial reserves of the Church, which total 868 million euro, include not only real estate and bank deposits but also stocks in companies, some of which are mentioned below. Mr. I. Charilaou, manager of the Church Audit Department, stated that the Church's losses from stocks during 2008 reached about 282 million euro. According to Mr. Charilaou, in 2008 the largest proportions were held by the Holy Monastery of Kykkos, with reserves of 554 million euro, followed by the Holy Archdiocese, with 123 million euro. The Bishopric of Limassol ranks third with a fortune of 55 million euro. Expenses account for 46 million euro of outgoings, while it is worth pointing out that the salaries of the clergy cost about 10.5 million euro.<sup>liii</sup>

The wealth of the Church increases mainly because of its business activities in various fields. Recently, its interest has turned towards the field of energy, particularly coal gas. As illustrated through an interview the archbishop gave to the online newspaper Stockwatch on 9 April 2012, he is willing to invest “tens and perhaps hundreds of millions” in coal gas.<sup>lv</sup> In previous attempts aiming at the awakening of the Church, a discussion was held on the possibility of giving part of the Church’s land to Israeli companies for the construction of a new power station which would compete directly against the Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC). More characteristically, the archbishop remarked: “They came in contact with me and offered to buy land from the Church. They proposed a great participation in their capital stock and this is a proposal that really interests us”.<sup>lv</sup>

In addition, the Church possesses a considerable number of stocks in Cypriot banks. It has a controlling interest in the Hellenic Bank and a respectable stake in the Bank of Cyprus, while it has a very small number of stocks in Laiki Bank. Specifically, the Hellenic Bank maintains a very prominent position in the investment portfolio of the Church, since the Archdiocese controls 16.4% thereof, rising to 21% through the participation of other ecclesiastical institutions. In the Bank of Cyprus, the Church follows the Russian Dmitry Rybolovlev, who manages 9.8%, with a 2.83% of the total capital stock, while in Laiki Bank the Church’s investment is limited to 0.23%.<sup>lvi</sup>

In the field of industry, the Church is a major stockholder in the KEO wine industry, which was founded in 1927 and has since established itself as the leading manufacturer and supplier of Cypriot beer. Nowadays, after having taken over some other companies in the industry, it has expanded its operation to include non-alcoholic beverages too. Furthermore, it is a member of the Greek Mining Group, in which the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus holds a 22.94% stake.<sup>lvii</sup> Other companies controlled by the Church are the Greek Mining Company, which is the main means of managing the industrial activity of the archdiocese<sup>lviii</sup>, the Greek Construction Company Ltd., a member of the Greek Mining Group founded in 1975 to mainly help in the organisation of telecommunications in the wider Mediterranean region by developing its workings in informatics, and the cement factories of Vassiliko.

The limitless raw materials and the mining permissions monopolised by the company, founded in 1963, have made it the greatest and most significant producer of raw materials on the island.

Furthermore, the Church actively operates in mass media. The first licence granted for operating a private TV channel in Cyprus was given to the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus’s *O LOGOS* channel in 1992. In 2000, the Greek company Tiletipos, owner of the Greek TV channel MEGA, contacted the Church of Cyprus in order to create a corresponding TV channel MEGA in Cyprus, with the Church’s investment of 25%<sup>lix</sup> in capital stock and the use of *O LOGOS*’s frequency.

Finally, another financial activity of the Church is its participation in the Hermes Airports Ltd consortium, which in 2006 undertook the management and control of both Larnaka International Airport and Paphos International Airport, after having signed a 25-year contract with the Republic of Cyprus. Hermes is a consortium based in Cyprus, in which the Greek Mining Group participates with an 11.33% share, under the control of the archdiocese.

## 7. Conclusion

In traditional societies such as Cyprus, the religious institution of the Church constitutes one of the most fundamental establishments in the system, which ensures the cohesion of social and political life. As the most basic institution representing the Greek community of Cyprus<sup>lx</sup>, the Church has gained the respect of Cypriots, since it was the only institution through which they could have political interference. Additionally, the fact that political life in Cyprus was not institutionalised and neither representative institutions nor basic democratic customs existed on the island exemplifies the wide involvement of the Church in political and public life.

Moreover, the Ottoman Empire had appointed the Church as its sole political representative in Cyprus and as the institution through which it could command and exert control over Greek-Cypriots.<sup>lxi</sup> This determined to a great extent the subsequent legalisation of the political role of the Church, as well as of its ethnarchic character.<sup>lxii</sup> The administrative powers that the Church acquired were added to its privileges, an act which reinforced its secular character since it was responsible for tax collection and had an equal role in the Central Administrative Council of Cyprus. What is more, the Church determined the context within which the education of Greek-Cypriots took place, as well as issues relating to justice.<sup>lxiii</sup> At the same time, the present prominent position of the Church within Cypriot society can be attributed to its economic power which was derived, along with its ethnarchic role, mainly through the transferral of land from farmers to the Church.<sup>lxiv</sup>

The course of the Church’s institutionalisation, as well the current position of this institution within the Cypriot institutional structure as a whole, underlines the need to examine Cyprus’s case in relation to all three factions, i.e. the Church, the secular state and democracy. This suggestion ought to be actioned, because it is generally accepted that each nation has its own traditions, which can hardly be imposed on others. Thus, the model of the ‘irreligious’ state of France, for instance, could not be adopted anywhere else unless by force. Each state has regulated its relationship with the Church, or rather with the religious phenomenon, in a different way and according to its own particular historical experience. As Evangelos Venizelos suggests, this explains why the French experience of the popular state is completely different from Germany’s choice to respect all known religions (including the Orthodox one), from the Scandinavian model of the state (Lutheran) church or from the Italian solution to the regulation of relations with the Roman Catholic Church through a concordat.<sup>lxv</sup>

A secular state does not imply the imposition of atheism, in the sense that atheism has been consolidated consciously as immorality and the lack of a ‘modest lifestyle’. Democracy and the notion of a secular state simply indicate that the state will neither favour any religion or doctrine nor impose atheism.

However, the presence of the Church in Cyprus is interwoven with the institutional structure itself, to such an extent that any discussion on the separation of powers puts the institutional system and its operation under investigation, not only in words but also in practice. As stated accurately by many, the Cypriot state is built on the foundation of the ethnarchic church. It is possible to

explain both historically and politically the creation of a caesaropapist state<sup>lxvi</sup> in 1960, but preserving the components that have rendered the Church an institution with a political role should perhaps be re-examined.

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- <sup>lx</sup> Egglezakis, The Church of Cyprus, p. 309.
- <sup>lxi</sup> Persianis, Panayiotis, *Church and State in Cyprus Education*, Violaris, Nicosia, 1978, p. 7
- <sup>lxii</sup> George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 316.
- <sup>lxiii</sup> Katsourides, *To κομματικό*, p. 56.
- <sup>lxiv</sup> Hill, *A History*, p. 310.
- <sup>lxv</sup> Venizelos, Evaggelos, *Relations between State and Church*, Paratiritis, Thessaloniki, 2000, p. 45. [in Greek]
- <sup>lxvi</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (revised ed.), Penguin Books, New York, 1980, p. 98