

## Short History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church

In Macedonia, Christianity began to spread since the time of the holy apostles with their mission to the land, being the first mission to Europe. This first mission was materialized in the beginning of 51 A.D. with successful conclusion in 54 A.D. At the end of the pilgrimage, the apostles visited some Greek cities where they organized and incorporated Christian communities. In the apostolic mission out of Asia, St. Paul arrived in the Macedonian City of Filipi.

According to the book "Deeds of the Saint Apostles", in the city of Troada, St. Paul in his dream confronted a Macedonian who was pleading with him to visit Macedonia and his people (D.A.16.9). The Macedonian nation and people, who only a few centuries before defended the western civilization in Europe, conquered Persia with its ruthless and tyrannical rule over almost all of Asia, now were pleading to the apostolic disciple St. Paul, to come to Macedonia to bring and introduce the new illumination born in Asian Christianity.

St. Paul, without any delay, answered the plea of Macedonia. The following day after his dream, his companions and coworkers Sila, Timothy and Luka escorted him. They sailed to the Macedonian City of Filipi (C.D.A. 16-11-12), fifteen miles from the seashore off the Aegean Sea.

The city of Filipi was an important center of culture, religious and merchant activities, plus all of this, Filipi was a communication center crossed by Via Egnatia. The famous historical Macedonian King, Philip the Second, founded this famous and important city. Later this historical city had much to do with the downfall of the Republic of Rome in 42 A.D. However, now with a visit by the apostle St. Paul and his mission, Filipi became the first European City where Christianity was preached accepted with open arms and love, and became the first European Christian community. The charming and excited new pupils of St. Paul were overwhelmingly Macedonians. The above can be verified from his message to the Filipians where he states that in Filipi, there were very few Greeks and Jews.

After concluding his successful mission in Filipi, and leaving behind the evangelist luka, the apostle St. Paul along with Sila and Timothy departed for Solun (D.A. 17), the largest city and main center of the Roman occupied Macedonia.

Thesaloniki and its ethnic composition were much more colorful in its ethnic diversity. There was a large Jewish community and other nationalities, although again the Macedonians predominated. The apostle St. Paul continued his important mission in the many synagogues in the city and in the city's other pagan religious communities. From now on, the apostolic mission divided itself, visiting many more Macedonian cities like Ber and many others, founding more Christian communities. According to the same information as above, the population in all of the cities was predominantly Macedonian.

The love St. Paul developed for the Macedonians were very warm and overwhelming - he stated the following, "I feel that way for all of you because I carry all of you in my heart." (F.I. 4-1.7.8 )

St. John, the Golden Mouth, tells us about the relationship of St. Paul and the Macedonians "Oh, his love for Macedonia and the Macedonians is very special and tender and plentiful" and further St. John, in his writings, in many places quotes the apostolic disciple always preaching in the other places for his special relationship with Solonikians and the other cities of Macedonia.

In Macedonia, Christianity was the most rooted and developed than in any other part in the Roman Empire, right up to the fourth century. The Roman Emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity as

a state religion of the Empire. It goes without saying, his strength to do that definitely was based in Macedonia. From now on in Macedonia, Christianity was elevated to the highest organization than in any other place in the Roman Empire.

In the Bible are well known the Archiopicropic and Episcopates of The saloniki, Skupi, Astiko and Herakica as well as many others. From the beginning of this process, the now legal Christianity, was stuck to certain stagnation, because of the insistence from Byzantium of certain Greek politicians and higher up clergy, that in no other language of the Empire was Christianity to be preached other than in Greek. These reactions were devastating for the higher level of organization of the Christian communities in the Empire. This stalemate and backwardness ended in the ninth century, with the appearance of the Salonika brothers St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who under the new influences in the Empire, definitely translated the Holy Books from Jewish, Latin and Greek to Macedonian. At that time, the Macedonian language had lost its originality and predominantly became a Slavic language with the influx of the enormous Slavic masses in the Empire from the North.

### **The Apostolic Deeds of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius**

At the beginning of the ninth century, a solid base was prepared for more extensive and organized missionary activities in Macedonia. At that time, the Byzantine Empire was undergoing a period of revival on a cultural and educational level, and this wave also reached towns far away from Constantinople, especially Thessaloniki. In the first decades of the ninth century, Thessaloniki was the home of the family of a high official of the Emperor's administration, aide to the Byzantine strategist of Thessaloniki and the surrounding district. The name of this official was Lav, (Leo), of Greek nationality, and his wife was Marija (Mary), a Slav. They had many children, but only the names of the oldest, Methodius, and the youngest, Cyril, are mentioned. Also unknown is the profane name of Methodius, who acquired this name when he took his monastic vows.

These religious parents taught their children the teachings of Christianity from early childhood, helping them to integrate the exalted Christian truths in their lives. From the time of his youth, Constantine occupied himself with the works of Holy Gregorias of Naius and of Dionisius Areopagus. His father sent him to Constantinopole to continue his education in the imperial school of Magnaura where, in addition to theology, sciences, grammar, arithmetic, geography, astronomy, music, poetry and rethorics were also studied. Furthermore, Constantine studied languages such as Latin, Hebrew and Syrian. Among the ranks of his distinguished teachers was Photius, the greatest polemicist and diplomat of the times, who was later elected Patriarch of Constantinopole. Following the completion of his higher education, Constantine was appointed Librarian at the church of St. Sofia, and was later appointed professor of philosophy at Magnaura. It was then that he acquired the cognomen Constantine the Philosopher.

As for Methodius, the sources are very limited. What little is known is that he acquired a secular education and dedicated himself to state and military service. He was endowed with the virtues of Christian life, and state and military faculty. For a long time he administered the region of Bregalnica and contributed to the Christianization of the Slavs in this part of Macedonia. His brother Constantine played a large role in this success.

The missionary activities of the Holy Brothers among the Macedonian Slavs, especially creating the Slav alphabet are noted in the Life of St. Naum. This preceded the translation of the Holy books into the language of the Macedonian Slavs from the Thessaloniki region and the missions among the Western Slavs of Moravia.

Some time before their missionary activities, the Holy brothers withdrew to the monastery Polichron on Mount Olympia in Asia Minor, where they prepared for their epochally important missionary activities. Their monastery seclusion was interrupted on two occasions when the

Byzantine authorities and the Patriarch of Constantinople dispatched them on missions among the Saracens and the Chazars. They completed these missions with great success.

Rostislav, the Knez of Great Moravia, sent an appeal to the Byzantine Emperor Michael III to send a bishop and teacher that would explain to them, in their own tongue the true Christian faith. The choice fell on the Holy Brothers. They were fully prepared for this mission for they had already translated most of the Holy scriptures into the Slav language. They chose worthy students and assistants and set on their way to Moravia. They were welcomed there with great joy and honor. Soon after, they opened a school, where they taught the future priests and teachers of the Western Slav peoples. This was met by great resistance on the part of the German clergy, and they were accused of being heretics. The two brothers were compelled to go to Rome to prove their orthodoxy. In Rome, Pope Hadrian II received them with great honors. He approved their Slav Holy Books and he ordered that they be placed in the altar of the church Santa Maria Maggiore and that services in the Slav language be conducted in three Roman churches. Cyril fell ill in Rome and he passed away on February 14, 869AD. Methodius continued his epochal mission among the Western Slavs, with the help of his students who were ordained in Rome. The hostility of the German clergy did not cease. Exhausted from toil and torture, St. Methodius passed away in Nitra in 885 AD. His pupils were subjected to torture and prosecution, some of them were even sold off as slaves.

The work of the Holy Brothers following the death of St. Methodius experienced a great crisis. However, it was redeemed thanks to their most talented students, St. Clement and St. Naum, the Holy Teachers, enlighteners and miracle workers of Ohrid. They benefited from the missionary method that declared God's truths to new peoples while respecting their cultural independence, and this became the living model for the Holy Church and for missionaries of all times.

Although they were Byzantine in culture, the Holy Brothers as Cyril and Methodius succeeded in becoming the Apostles of the Slavs. They wanted to serve to the benefit of the Slav peoples and the unity of the Universal Church. For these and such achievements, Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Epistle EGREGIAE VIRTUTIS of December 31, 1980, proclaimed them benefactors of Europe, whose patron is St. Benedict, so proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 26, 1964.

### **St. Clement and St. Naum Successors of the Work of St. Cyril and St. Methodius**

Had it not been for the missionary work of Sts. Clement and Naum in Ohrid, the enlightening Christian and educational feat of the Holy Brothers would have practically been lost. These students of Sts. Cyril and Methodius laid the foundations of Christianity and Slav literacy in their homeland Macedonia. St. Clement was the first Macedonian of spirit erudition and literacy. His activities were firmly linked with the true and thorough Christianization of the Macedonian Slavs, as well as with the foundation and organization of the First Slav Episcopate in Ohrid and Kutmitchevica. St. Clement continued with the translation of the Holy Scriptures in the language of the Macedonian Slavs and he founded the Ohrid University, which took him a step further than his teachers. He created the new Slav alphabet, called Cyrillic, in honor of his teacher St. Cyril of Thessaloniki.

About 3,500 students sought their education at the University of St. Clement. Many of them were ordained priests, deacons and arch-deacons, and many were sent on missions among the Slav peoples on the Balkan Peninsula, and even further abroad. A large number of them also reached far away Russia.

In 893 AD, St. Clement was enthroned bishop. He was the first Slav bishop in the all-Slav Bishopric of Belica. This Slav bishopric is rightly considered by some Church historians as the first organized Slav Church on the Balkan Peninsula. The Bulgarian Church of the time, that was organized following the Christianization of the Bulgarians in 846 AD, had senior Byzantine clergy.

Thus, St. Clement, student and affiliate of the Slav apostles and teachers Cyril and Methodius, became the first Macedonian Slav bishop, renowned man of letters, teacher, and preacher of the

Christian Gospels in the ninth and tenth century. He is the founder of Slav literacy and literature in Macedonia. The model he set out for his life was that of his teacher, the great Methodius, and he took care and prayed not to sway from his ways. He knew Methodius like no one else, for he had been with him from the days of his youth, and was witness to his deeds and achievements. St. Clement was one of those Slav youths that the Holy Brothers prepared as aides in their missions in Moravia and Panonia, and later among the Macedonian Slavs. They were trained to translate the Holy Writ and the Holy Scriptures from Greek into the language of the Macedonian Slavs. One can rightly conclude that St. Clement was a part of the translating activities of the Holy Brothers, as well as an author in his own stead. Not only did he preach, he also wrote down his discourses, so as to assist the inexperienced priests in their sermons. Led by such an aim he wrote sermons, patterns for all holidays round the year.

### **The Literary Activity of St. Clement of Ohrid**

The total number of all St. Clement's epistles and morals has not yet been established. To this day they have not been collected in one Complete Works. We find them in transcripts from the twelfth and thirteenth century, where often St. John Chrisostomos is listed as the author, although the content, language, and style reveal St. Clement as the author. He is also probably the author of the Panonic Hagiography of Sts. Clement and Methodius. He translated the Flower Triode that contains church songs sung from Easter to Pentecost. There is the probability that he is the author of the Holy Service and the Life of St. Clement, the Roman Pope, as well as of the oldest service dedicated to St. Cyril and St. Methodius.

### **St. Naum of Ohrid**

Following his return from Great Moravia, the Bulgarian Prince Boris kept St. Naum at the monastery St. Arch-angel near Pliska. There he preached in the Slav language for seven or eight years. Upon St. Clement's election as bishop of the Dremvik-Velika Bishopric, he conditioned his acceptance of this high ecclesiastic function on the calling of St. Naum to Macedonia to replace him in his preaching and teaching activities in Devol and Kutmichevica. Tsar Simeon, who succeeded Prince Boris, fulfilled St. Clement's request in 893 AD.

Following his return to Macedonia, St. Naum had only one wish, to devote himself to ascetic and monastic life. This is why he immediately commenced the construction of a monastery that he dedicated to the holy Arch-angels Gabriel and Michael. It was located on the other side of the Ohrid lake, opposite the monastery St. Pantelei mon where St. Clement conducted his services. The monastery was finished in 895 AD, and it was consecrated by St. Clement. Then St. Naum accepted the monastic vows and withdrew to his monastery, where he died ten years later. The monastery was later dedicated to him and bears that name to the present day.

St. Naum is known as a transcriber and translator of sermons and other theological literature. With these activities, he played a very eminent role in the development of Macedonian-Slav literature and culture. He is known to have been devoted to prayer, a great spiritual teacher and leader of monks. He is considered the founder of monastic life in Macedonia and elsewhere.

St. Naum was buried in his monastery, and his holy relics are still there today. Even following his earthly demise, he continues to pray for us and to perform his miracles. His holy relics are miraculous, and miracles happen on his tomb in the monastery St. Naum in Ohrid. To this day, the holy teacher helps us and is the benefactor of the Macedonian people and of all who turn to him in faith. He also heals various illnesses, especially those who are mentally ill.

The clergy and the faithful highly regarded the saint's ecclesiastic and educational activities, so at the end of the tenth century, St. Clement and St. Naum were canonized as Saints. It is not by chance that the present day Ohrid Archbishopric, restored by the Macedonian Orthodox Church is called the Church of St. Clement and has St. Clement as her patron-protector.

## **The Ohrid Literary School**

Following the death's of St. Clement and St. Naum, the literary school was continued by their students. They were mainly preoccupied with transcribing the works of their teachers. Very few of them are known as authors, and in most cases they remained anonymous, including those that composed accounts of the Lives of the two Teachers. This is implied by the anonymous biographer of St. Naum in the First Life, where it is said that following the order of the Bishop of Devol, Marko, he took to writing the Life of the Ohrid Saints and Teachers. Furthermore, on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of St. Clement, another author composed a very poetic Service, that remains a rare and very beautiful memorial of our literature from this early period.

Among the direct disciples of St. Clement and St. Naum was St. Constantine the Presbyter, later the Bishop of Preslav. He was known for his works "Azbuca molitva" ("The Alphabetical Prayer") and "Proglas kon svetoto evangelie" ("The Proclamation of the Holy Gospels"), inspired by a solemn feeling for the progress of the Slav literacy and its first authors. His works also included "Poucno evangelie" ("The Didactic Gospel") and the translations of four epistles against the Aryans of St. Atanassius of Alexandria: "The Catechism of St. Cyril of Jerusalem", "Service for Methodius, Archbishop of Moravia", "I storikin" ("History"), "Crkovno Skazanie" "The Church Tale". Constantine appeared also as a philosopher and a moralist, and he was sharp and bold in attacking egotism and greed. According to him, the riches of life was a gift of God to all men, and no one had the right to procure them for themselves, to the detriment of others. He preached universal compassion.

Crnorizec Hrabar also continued the work of St. Clement and St. Naum. He lived in the tenth century and is known by his work "O Pismenah" ("About Literacy"), a panegyric and homage to Slav literacy and to the work of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. He defended the Slav alphabet and protected the Slav cultural opus. He wrote: "the Slav letters are holier and deserve greater respect, for they were created by a holy man, while the Greek letters were created by the Hellens who were unaware of God".

## **The Establishment of an Independent Church In Macedonia During the Times of Samoil's Kingdom**

There is no information under what jurisdiction the Bishopric of Velika and Dremvis, headed by St. Clement, fell under. Before him, this Bishopric was under the jurisdiction of the Constantinople Patriarchy. Nonetheless, it is without doubt that St. Clement was the founder of the future autonomous Ohrid Archbishopric. Following his death in 916 AD, religion, culture and education continued to flourish. This spiritual growth advanced among the many monks in the monasteries. From the point of view of church organization, things also started to move in an independent direction. The territory of Macedonia was divided into new Slav Bishoprics headed by Slav Bishops. This organizational structure in the church of the strong Macedonian state progressed into a truly independent church with its own Archbishop and its own Synod situated in Prespa, the seat of Tsar Samoil. He was constantly at war with Byzantium and did not recognize the jurisdiction of the Constantinople Patriarch over the bishoprics in his state. The organizational structure of the church was on a metropolitanate basis. On the small island of Ahil in the Prespa Lake, there is a church and depicted in the apses are twelve bishops thrones, with a throne of the Archbishop, that leads to the conclusion that the Church had its own Synod.

According to recent historical discoveries, it is believed that Samoil received his crown from Rome. Thus, the proclamation of the Ohrid Archbishopric into a Patriarchy is in correlation with this act. Together with the royal crown, the papal delegates no doubt brought with them the church insignia for the first Macedonian Patriarch, Filip. According to habitual practice in the Middle Ages, the new Ohrid Patriarch, together with his church dignitaries and the papal delegates, anointed Samoil tsar. Then the seat of the Kingdom was transferred from Prespa to Ohrid, and so the See of the Patriarchy as well. Its jurisdiction encompassed the overall state of Samoil, and as Samoil's

Kingdom expanded, so did the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

According to historical data, in addition to the bishoprics in Macedonia, the Ohrid Patriarchy contained bishoprics in Thessaly, Epirus, Albania, Dukijan, Travunija, Zahumje, Rashka, Bosnia, Srem and the Danube basin of Bulgaria. And even after the fall of the Kingdom of Samoil, the Byzantine Emperor Basileus II, assessing the extraordinary role of the Ohrid Patriarchy, did not abolish it, rather he demoted it to the rank of an autocephalous Archbishopric. Its borders remained the same, as well as its rights and privileges. At that time, under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric there were 31 bishoprics in Macedonia (with the exception of Thessaloniki and Halkidiki), Albania, Epirus, Thessaly, Serbia and the whole of Bulgaria. Thus, Ohrid became an important church center for the greater part of the Balkan Peninsula, and a church center of the like of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and others.

The death of Basileus (1025) marked the end of the tolerant policy towards the Ohrid Archbishopric and towards the Slavs in general. In view of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Greek Archbishops started appointing Greek bishops in Macedonian bishoprics, with the aim of assimilating the Macedonian Slav population into Greek.

With the liberation from Byzantium in the second half of the twelfth century, there followed the liberation movements of the Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula; in Rashka, the Zhupan Nemanja succeeded in bringing together all Serb districts and in 1170 he proclaimed himself Great Zhupan. He wanted to create an independent church in his state. The idea of establishing an autocephalous Serbian church was initiated by his youngest son, the Monk Sava. According to the canons, the Serbian church issue could only be resolved through the Ohrid Archbishopric. On the other hand, Nemanja and his son Sava knew that the Ohrid Archbishop Homatian would not easily renounce his primacy and privileges.

In 1175 there was an uprising in Bulgaria, and the supporters of Asen created the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. In 1176 an independent Bulgarian church was established, the Trnovo Archbishopric. The Second Bulgarian Kingdom encompassed Macedonia, yet it left the Ohrid Archbishopric to act independently, reducing its jurisdiction in favor of the Trnovo Archbishopric. The Bulgarian Archbishop expelled all Greek bishops and placed in their stead bishops of Slav descent which he himself ordained.

The second Bulgarian Kingdom fell following the death of Tsar Kaloyan (1207). At that time, the Sebastocrat Strez established himself in Prosek (Demir Kapija) in Macedonia, and with the help of the Grand Serbian Zhupan, Stefan Nemanja, he succeeded in luring neighboring Macedonian towns including Ohrid. The Ohrid Archbishopric, already reduced, was now situated only in the territory of the Duchy of Strez. It was, however, free from the pressure of the Trnovo Archbishopric. The interests of Strez and of the Ohrid Archbishop coincided in the attempts to maintain the independence of the Duchy and the Archbishopric. During the time of Strez, the Ohrid Archbishopric even succeeded in retrieving some of its bishoprics that had been taken away by the Trnovo Archbishopric.

Following the death of Strez (c. 1215), his Duchy was divided between the Latin Thessaloniki Kingdom and the Kingdom of Epirus, while the Ohrid Archbishopric lost its southern Macedonian bishoprics of Meglen and Strumica. And so it remained until the fall of Ohrid to the authority of the King of Epirus, Theodore. Then the Ohrid Archbishopric led a successful fight against the Patriarch of Nicea and once again gained control over some of the bishoprics that had been taken away. At that time, the Ohrid Archbishopric had a dominant position in the state and it succeeded in once again expanding its jurisdiction, gaining control over the bishoprics of Skopje, Ser and Servis.

This was the time when the struggle between the Greek and Slav bishops began. In Ohrid, the meeting of the council of bishops was called, chaired by the Archbishop Homatian. The bishops were divided in two groups; the Greek group was headed by the Metropolitan of Voden, while the Macedonian group was led by the Bishop of Meglen. A dispute arose concerning the recognition of

the rank of those bishops appointed by Kaloyan. Following the intervention of King Theodore Comnen, a compromise was reached; Greek bishops appointed by Kaloyan were to leave the bishoprics, and in their stead, local bishops of Macedonian-Slav descent were to be appointed.

### **The Ohrid Archbishopric - Mother of the Serbian Orthodox Church**

In the twelfth century and later, political developments on the Balkan peninsula were rather quiet. In 1204, the Crusaders conquered Constantinople and established the Latin Kingdom. The Byzantine Emperor Theodore Lascaris and the Patriarch of Constantinople took shelter in Asia Minor. Thus, the Byzantine Empire was reduced to a small region on the south side of the Sea of Marmara with its seat in Nicea.

In Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia, the Kingdom of Epirus was established and it included the see of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

The Monk Sava, aware of the animosity between the Nicean King Lascaris and the Despot of Epirus, circumvented the Ohrid Archbishopric and sought autocephaly for the Serbian Orthodox Church from the Patriarch of Nicea. In doing, so he violated the canons, because all bishoprics in Serbia at that time were under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric. Nonetheless, in 1219 he succeeded in gaining autocephaly from the Patriarch of Nicea. Protests from the Ohrid Archbishopric were in vain; Sava organized the autocephaly of his church. Nine Serbs, mainly brought from Mount Athos, were ordained bishops for the needs of the nine bishoprics.

The Serbian Orthodox Church was under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric. It is the daughter church of the Ohrid Archbishopric. Yet today, oblivious of this truth, the Serbian Orthodox Church pretends to be the mother of its own mother church, the successor of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

When later the Serbian state started expanding south, the Ohrid Archbishopric was forcefully denied some bishoprics that were placed under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. When King Dushan reigned over the whole territory of Macedonia, he had two autocephalous Archbishoprics in his state: the Ohrid and the Serbian Archbishopric. Soon after, Dushan decided to proclaim himself Tsar. According to church canons, the crown of a tsar could only be received from a Patriarch. Thus, it was necessary for the Serbian church to be declared a Patriarchy. To this end, he was assisted by the Ohrid Archbishop and the Trnovo Patriarch. In 1346 a great popular church Assembly was held in Skopje, where Archbishop Joanikij, who later crowned Dushan tsar; was proclaimed Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

During the times of Tsar Dushan, the Ohrid Archbishopric freed itself from the reins of the Byzantine court and it became fully independent. The Archbishop was no longer appointed by the Tsar, but was elected by the bishops that he appointed without interference from state authorities. The Archbishopric continued to be the spiritual and cultural center for the Macedonians, who in effect constituted the whole flock. Stefan Dushan held himself correctly and respectfully towards the Ohrid Archbishopric. All the changes in the Serbian state and church transpired with the participation and blessing of the Ohrid Archbishop. The Ohrid Archbishop took part in the Assembly in which the Serbian patriarch was proclaimed, as well as in the wedding of Tsar Dushan. Namely, Archbishop Nicolai attended the Assembly with his Holy Synod, as did the Synod of Trnovo and the Trnovo Patriarch. They both proclaimed Joanikij II Patriarch, and later the three church dignitaries crowned Tsar Dushan. The participation of the Ohrid Archbishop was seen as a replacement for the Patriarch of Constantinople, who declined to participate on the crowning ceremony. At that time, the Ohrid Archbishopric was in a good financial situation. Dushan, his successors and their senior officials were generous in assisting the Archbishopric, especially in building and restoring churches and monasteries.

### **The Ottoman bondage**

Following the dissolution of Dushan's Kingdom, the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric was divided among existing despoties and states such as the Kingdom of Volkashin, which included the seat of the Arch bishopric, Ohrid, the Hlaten despoty, Simeon's Kingdom in Epirus and southern Albania, the Elbansan Duchy, and the despoty of Velbuz. King Volkashin, and later his son Marko, respected the autocephality of the Ohrid Archbishopric. It was the sole church authority in Volkashin's state. The close ties between the Ohrid Archbishops and the kings of Prilep were all the more natural in view of the fact that both relied on one ethnographic entity: the Macedonian Slavs. As with the Archbishopric, created as a result of the wish of Macedonian Slavs for ecclesiastic and religious independence, by distancing himself from Despot Uglesha, Volkashin expressed the wish of the Macedonian Slavs to secure for themselves independent political growth. During his time, the Ohrid Archbishopric grew in every respect and expanded its territories. Its jurisdiction was recognized by Despot Uglesha. The Ohrid Archbishop was his advisor on church matters. That is why, in addition to his see in Ohrid, the Ohrid Archbishop also had a residence in Seres, the seat of Uglesha.

Following the Battle of Marica in 1371, and the deaths of Volkashin and Uglesha, the Ohrid Archbishopric began to lose its gains. In 1375 the Serb Patriarch was forced to send a delegation to Constantinople to appeal for the lifting of the schism from the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchy that was established during the time of Dushan.

In the last decade of the fourteenth century, Macedonia was already under Ottoman rule, and after 1408, Ohrid as well. The Ottomans did not encroach upon the autocephality of the Ohrid Archbishopric. In their conquests, they showed tolerance towards the Christian faith. With the final fall of the Balkan Peninsula under Ottoman rule, the four independent Orthodox Churches: the Patriarchy of Constantinople, the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Patriarchies of Pek and Trnovo found themselves within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Bishoprics of Sofia and Vidin that were taken away from the Constantinople Patriarchy were adjoined to the Archbishopric of Ohrid. Towards the middle of the same century Vlashko and Moldavia were also joined, and later some orthodox communities from Italy and Dalmatia.

Although its jurisdiction expanded, the Ohrid Archbishopric suffered great material damage from the Ottomans. The conquest of Macedonia was accompanied by devastation of the cities and villages, and by looting of Christian properties. The flight of the population meant losses in revenue and impoverishment of the bishoprics.

As a result of the Ottoman looting, the urban population started abandoning their homes and retreating to the mountains. The same was happening in flat-land villages. Moreover, there was massive Islamization of Macedonians, especially around Ohrid lake and Prizren, at the deltas of the rivers Drim and Radika. Whole villages accepted Islam.

The Ohrid Archbishops could not be of help to their flock. They even tried maintaining good relations with the Ottoman authorities, which caused the Macedonian population to look upon the Archbishopric with lack of trust. The stronger the Ottoman feudal system grew, the more the position of the Christian population in Macedonia deteriorated. This in turn undermined the position of the clergy. The Archbishopric was forced to pay large taxes from which it was initially exempt.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Ohrid Archbishopric lost territories from its jurisdiction. In 1557, the brother of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha Sokolovik, Makarij, succeeded in restoring the Patriarchy of Pek. From then on, the Ohrid Archbishopric was relieved not only of the Serb bishoprics, but also some in Macedonia, such as Skopje, Mordozov, and the town of Razlog. At the same time, the authority of the Ohrid Archbishopric was restricted by the Constantinople Patriarchy.

The difficult economic situation compelled the Ohrid Archbishops and their Mitropolitans to go to Europe in search of charity. Most frequently, they went to Rome where they appealed for material assistance. But foremost, through Rome they sought to create ties with the catholic states, in order



to liberate themselves from the Ottomans. This was especially the case during the time of Archbishop Atanasij. Namely, towards the end of the sixteenth century, he visited the European countries on two occasions, seeking military help for the expulsion of the Ottomans, promising internal rebellion in Macedonia.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Russian influence in Macedonia became stronger; and the clergy and the people placed great hopes on Orthodox Russia. The Russian tsars, generously extending their help to the churches and the monasteries on the Balkan Peninsula, encouraged the enslaved Christians, and attempted to incite their struggle against the Ottomans.

The Macedonian people and the Ohrid Arch-bishopric were in the same difficult position throughout the eighteenth century. At that time, physical torture increased and Ottoman fanaticism reached its peak. As a result of the great terror over the unprotected population there was massive Islamization in many villages in the Veles, Kichevo and Meglen regions. Such conditions fully impoverished the population, and this was reflected in the financial state of Arch bishopric. At this time the Archbishopric incurred large debts it was not able to pay back.

### **The Non-Canonical Abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric**

The Patriarchy of Constantinople skillfully used the poverty and weakness of the Ohrid Arch-bishopric. It attempted to prove before the Sublime Porte that only the Patriarchy of Constantinople could repay the debts of the Ohrid Archbishopric, were the latter to be abolished and annexed to the Patriarchy. It even succeed in appointing Ananij, a man of the Patriarchy, at the head of the Ohrid Archbishopric. However; the Macedonian bishops rejected him, hoping to preserve the autocephality of the Archbishopric. At the regular meeting of the Bishops' Council, instead of Ananij, they elected the Bishop of Pelagonija, Arsenij, a Macedonian, Archbishop. He would be the last Macedonian Archbishop before the abolition of the Archbishopric by the Sultan's order.

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Samoil, decided to deliver a final blow to the Ohrid Arch-bishopric. He convinced the Ottoman authorities that the Ohrid Bishops were the enemy of the Ottoman Empire and asked the authorities in Constantinople to call in Arsenij regarding the debts of the Archbishopric. In Constantinople, under the pressure of the Ottoman authorities, and the detained bishops of the Ohrid Archbishopric who supported the abolition of the Arch bishopric, Arsenij submitted his written resignation on May 17,1767. His resignation marked the abolition of the Ohrid Arch-bishopric. The Patriarch Samoil, with the help of influential Greeks and Turks, arranged a Sultan's decree that abolished the Ohrid Archbishopric, and its bishoprics were joined to the Constantinople Patriarchy. The Sultan's decree forbade any appeals against the abolition of the Archbishopric, and any protest was rendered impossible.

### **The Many Noble Fruits of the Ohrid Arch bishopric**

The extensive Christianization of the Macedonian people, and the spiritual enlightenment that resulted from the apostolic activities of the ancient Ohrid Archbishopric, based upon the missionary work of our spiritual father and teacher Clement of Ohrid, bore a multitude of noble fruits. The holy evangelic truths lightened and enlightened our ancient fathers and great-grandfathers, ennobled their souls and hearts, and inspired many devout authors to create spiritual and artistic values throughout our holy Macedonian land. Numerous are our churches both in towns and villages. Numerous are our monasteries and monastery churches built in the most picturesque places, by lake shores and river banks, on mountains and plains.

Of special beauty are the many cave churches and monasteries. There are a multitude of frescoes and icons done by our excellent zographs, and their masterpieces fill with exaltation the best connoisseurs of medieval art, and are presented in art encyclopedias. The woodcarvings that decorated our churches have been nurtured for centuries to reach their peak at the end of the

eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. The woodcarvings in the church of "St. Spas" in Skopje, in the monastery "St. Jovan Bigorski", and in the monastery "St. Gavril Lesnovski", rank among the highest masterpieces of woodcarving in general. This centuries-old church-folk tradition is still alive today. The Orthodox Macedonians were superb builders of churches and monastery complexes which until recently hosted many monks, nuns, and devotees. These servants of the Church dedicated their lives to their Savior Jesus Christ and to their brothers and sisters in faith. They were teachers of faith and patriotism. They successfully preserved the holy message of the founder of the Holy Macedonian Church, and kept the holy evangelistic truths and basic Christian principles for devout Christian life. That's why the love towards the churches and monasteries, towards priesthood and monastic life is so profound. That's why the churches have been preserved and restored, and why new ones are being built, particularly today when we are enjoying our free renaissance period.

### **Conditions in Macedonia Following the Abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric**

Following the abolition of the Ohrid Arch-bishopric, the Patriarchy in Constantinople insisted on eradicating the whole pattern of life in Macedonia based on church regulations and customs (tradition). First, all local bishops were replaced by bishops phanariots, who did not speak the language of the congregation. Church services in the Slav language in bigger towns were banned. Domestic priests were replaced by those of Greek origin, or sometimes by Greekophiles. They used their authority for collecting church taxes, especially bishop's fees, to gather wealth. This, of course, caused a strong revolt among the congregation and led to justified protests. As a rule, these bishops and novice priests came to Macedonia with just one aim:

to get rich and then return to some Greek Bishopric. They considered themselves humiliated for having served in a nation that spoke a Barbaric language.

Monks and priests in villages and smaller towns were Macedonians, as the Greek clergy showed no interest in such less profitable positions. Following tradition, the Macedonian clergy came from families of priests. As a pattern, one son replaced the father that was the only way to preserve the domestic clergy in Macedonia. The young learned from the elders who inspired them to persevere in a sincere and deep faith in God and a strong patriotic feeling. During the two periods of slavery, Ottoman and Phanariot, they carried the holy messages of Sts Clement and Naum, the messages of the Ohrid Archbishopric. They maintained church and popular traditions, strengthening the faith of the people that freedom would come and with it the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric.

### **Socio-Political Changes in Turkey and the Position of the Macedonian Church**

In the immediate period following the abolition of the Ohrid Arch bishopric in 1767, Macedonia was in a grave political and economic crisis. In 1768 the Russian-Turkish War began. During this six year war, the Russian Empress Katherine II called the people of the Balkans to an uprising. However, the internal situation in Macedonia wasn't conducive to any action of that nature. This was a period when the Macedonian people were cruelly tortured and robbed by Turkish war deserters and Albanian outlaw bands. Turkey turned to Macedonia for supplying its army, and this completely impoverished the people. Many measures were taken to prevent Macedonians from taking any part in the war on the Russian side. In order to prevent the participation of the Christian population in anti-Turk uprisings, Turkey called in Albanian volunteers and sent them to Morea. Later, a part of these volunteers spread throughout Macedonia and started their merciless raids. Soon after, their leaders seized power and became independent from the central Turkish authorities.

This hard situation remained unchanged during the wars between Austria, Russia and the Ottoman Empire (1787-1792). These wars brought new outlaw bands that consisted mainly of Turkish

soldiers and mercenaries. Well armed and mounted groups of several hundreds attacked unprotected towns and villages, harassing both Christians and Muslims alike. These bands caused real anarchy in Turkey, until Sultan Mahmud II (1808 - 1839) finally succeeded in eradicating them. Strong state authority enabled Macedonian villagers to go about their field work, while in towns, craftsmanship and trade gained new initiative. Soon, large fairs were organized for domestic and imported goods, and conditions were created for exchanging goods with western countries.

At the end of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, particularly after the signing of the peace treaty between Russia and Turkey, the latter opened its doors to international trade. The port of Thessaloniki once again became an important factor for the economic prosperity of Macedonia.

### **The Wake of Patriotism of the Macedonian People**

Heavily oppressed by double, Turkish and Phanariot, bondage, the Macedonian people were exposed to systematic Greek assimilation, especially among the rich and the intelligentsia, where it was more voluntary and conditioned by economic interests. Greek assimilation was particularly fierce among the middle classes. Our scanty intelligentsia, educated mainly in Greek schools, was a sincere devotee to Greek culture and education. Those who later became Macedonian scholars, were at first hellenophiles. To mention just a few: Dimitar and Konstantin Miladinov, Rajko Zhinzifov, Janaki Strezov, Partenie Zografski, Kuzman Shapkarev, Gligor Prlichev and others. The resistance against hellenization in Macedonia came first from the monks of the Slav monasteries on Mount Athos, the Hilander and the Zograph monasteries. The majority of the monks in these monasteries were Macedonians. There exist numerous sources to prove this. For example, Konstantin Atanasov from Shtip, in his "Brief Account of 12 Monasteries on Athos" of 1866, states that the Monastery of Hilander housed monks from Macedonia, many of whom had contributed to the revival of Slav literature and culture. Also in the monastery of Zograph lived monks from Macedonia who later became revivalists.

Russian Slavophiles also contributed to the awakening of the Macedonian feeling among the Slavs. This brought up the acute issue of the churches of the Slav peoples and the restoration of their autocephality.

### **The Foundation of Macedonian Church-School Communities**

In Macedonia, this process first began by the founding of church, and later of educational-church, communities. The Macedonian middle class showed a special interest in church and social matters and took an active part in their activities. The oldest record of this type of church community is registered in Ohrid in 1758. It can be explained by the fact that Ohrid was the administrative center of the Ohrid Archbishopric and an ecclesiastic cultural center in Macedonia where new social trends were reflected. There were many similar ecclesiastic communities, such as in Prilep, Veles, Skopje, Shtip, Kriva Palanka, Kukush, Tetovo, Nevrokop, Kumanovo, Gorna Dju-maja, Voden and Strumica. There was practically no town in Macedonia without such a community.

In addition to the basic objectives of the Macedonian church and school communities - to preserve the Macedonian element and the basic traits of the Macedonian national Ohrid Archbishopric, their activities also extended to repairing dilapidated churches in Macedonian towns, and building new, large, astounding churches.

The Macedonian middle class --*the esnaf*-- was well organized, and prominent citizens together with the common people built wonderful new spacious churches.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Macedonian church educational communities in Prilep built the church of the Holy Annunciation.

In 1816, the church community of Veles began the construction of the church St. Panteleimon.

As a result of the strong Greek influence, the Macedonian church-school community in Bitola was organized somewhat later, towards the middle of the 19th century in the churches St. Dimitrij and St. Nedela, where strong church-educational activities developed and flourished. Renowned Macedonian revivalist, such as Rajko Zhinzifov, Dimitar Make-donski, Jordan Hadzi Konstantinov Dzinot, took part in the work of the schools in Bitola church-school community.

The church community in Shtip was in existence from the beginnings of the nineteenth century, and it was most active in the two churches --St. Nikola in Stip and in The Dormition of the Virgin in the Shtip village of Novo Selo.

In Kumanovo, the *esnaf*, organized in the local church community built the wonderful church St. Nikola in just two years (1849-51).

Great activities were also developed by the Macedonian church-school community in Tetovo, at the church St. Kiril and Metodij.

Same is the case in Resen, Krushevo, Kriva Palanka, Bansko and Enidze Vardar.

In Kukush, the Macedonian church-school community was founded in the thirties of the nineteenth century. Macedonian revivalist Dimitar Miladinov and the Bishop of Kukush and Poljani, Partenij Zografski, taught in these schools.

In Nevrokop, the Macedonian church-school community built the church of the Ascension of Christ and opened a Macedonian school, while the church-school community in Gornodzumaja built the church dedicated to the Virgin.

The church-school community in Thessaloniki developed a particularly significant church and educational movement.

In Serez, the church-school community appointed Hieromonk Teodosij Gologanov as the Chairman of the community. Later, Gologanov became the Bishop of Skopje and exerted enormous efforts for the restoration of the Ohrid Arch-bishopric.

In Voden, the Chairman of the Macedonian church-school community was Archmandrite Pave Bozigrobski, a celebrated translator of parts of the Gospels in the Macedonian language. In the church community, he opened a school, as well as a reading room.

As one can see, the activities of these Macedonian church-school communities encompassed building town churches in Macedonia and advancing significant educational, social and judicial activities.

The church-school communities and their church, cultural, educational and patriotic activities were a confirmation that following the abolition of the Ohrid Arch-bishopric the Macedonian people of the church acted in the spirit of St. Clement's and St. Naum's messages. They confirm that in the period of our church and national revival, the desire to act as an independent people and independent church was alive and strong. The work of our masons, zografts, wood carvers, teachers and judges increased the awareness of the Macedonian people as an independent ethnic and Church factor.

The period of the Macedonian church and national revival is, in fact, a kind of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

### **The Revival Movement in Macedonia and church related activities**

The beginnings of the Macedonian revival are closely connected with renowned activists in education within the church in the first half of the nineteenth century. Schools in the Macedonian language and their financial sustenance were to a large extent supported by Macedonian monks from monasteries on Mount Athos. The first such school was opened in the Zograph monastery on Mount Athos, and extended help to other neighboring Macedonian towns to open their own schools.

In the thirties of the nineteenth century, one of the most enlightened monks of the Zograph monastery, Archmandrite Anatolij, made an attempt to open a printing shop in his monastery, but failed.

Parallel with the opening of popular schools, the first men of letters emerged, announcing the cultural revival of the Macedonians. Among the many, we shall mention Joakim Krchovski and his younger contemporary Kiril Pejchinovich-Tetoec, both coming from the midst of the church.

**Joakim Krchovski**, a modest monk, left no record of his life save his works written in the vivid popular language of the time. We know nothing about his birth nor his death. According to Kiril Pejchinovic, Hadji Joakim Krchovski attended school at the monastery of St. Jovan Bigorski. There he wrote his book "Razlicni poucitelni nastavljenja" ("Various moral teachings"). He was a teacher in many towns in Macedonia and a fervent preacher of the evangelic truths. He died c.1820. Legend has it that he was married until 1817, and became a monk after his wife's death.

Among Joakim's works are: "Povest za vtoroto strasno Hristovo prisestvie" (The History of the Second Terrible Coming of Christ) and "Mitarstvata cudata na Presveta Bogorodica" ("The Gifts and Miracles of the Holy Virgin"). His desire was to elevate his people to a life worthy and appropriate to righteous Christians, so that they may, in a befitting manner, await the end of their earthly life. He openly criticized the egotistic rich and favored the poor. He raised his voice against superstition, and he judged it severely along with laziness and avarice. He fought bitterly against fatalism and the belief that the events of one's earthly life is predestined by God.

His works were printed with the help of Macedonian merchants and craftsmen, which can clearly be seen from the list of subscribers.

**Kiril Pejchinovic-Tetoec** was born in the village of Tearce ('etovo). He attended the monastery school of Presveta Bogorodica Precista, in the vicinity of Kichevo. He continued his education in the monastery St. Jovan Bigorski and completed it in the monastery of Hilander on Mount Athos. He was raised in a very religious family, so as a child he was almost predestined to become a monk. His father Perchin, together with his uncle Dal mat, sold all their property in Tearce and left for Athos to become monks. Kin left with them, took his monastic vows and received the monastic name Kiril. There are no records why he left Athos, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he was appointed abbot of the monastery St. Dimitrij in village Sushica, in the vicinity of Skopje. His first task there was to rebuilt and restore the looted monastery complex. He also enriched and organized the monastery library. At that time, he was engrossed in the idea of writing and printing his own epitaph as a literary work. This was the time when he wrote his famous book "Duhovno ogedalo" ("Spiritual Mirror"), a manual for the clergy. The book was printed in Budim, in 1816, and was received with animosity by the phanariot bishop from Skopje. The Bishop's animosity rose further when Kiril Pejchinovich opened the Slav school in his monastery. Soon after, he left Marko's monastery and headed for Athos to take counsel with his uncle. In 1818 he returned to Macedonia and his native village Tearce and set out to renew the monastery of Leshok. Having renewed the monastery and its complex, he opened a Slav school. He was keen on collecting old manuscripts and books and he set up a rich monastery library. Here, he wrote two more books "Zitieto na Knez Lazar" ("The Life of Knez Lazar") and "Uteshenie greshnim" ("Consolation for those that have transgressed"). He died March 12124, 1845. Before he died, he engraved his own headstone, which stands in his memory to this day in the monastery of Leshok.

In his book "Ogedalo" ("Mirror") he clearly depicts the position of the Macedonian people and their attitude towards the oppressors, the Ottomans. At that time, religion was the only support that offered consolation and salvation to the enslaved population. Very often, he identified religion with nationality. His books were written in the vernacular and were very popular at the time.

### **The Printing Shop of Teodosij Sinaitski**

Hadji Papa Teodosij, Archmandrite of Sinai, was born in Dojran in the second half of the nineteenth century. He attended Greek schools in Constantinople. These facts come from his autobiography.

His secular name was Teohar. Upon returning to Dojran, he got married and became a priest. However, his wife died early, so he started visiting Macedonian monasteries. In 1828 he arrived on Sinai, in the monastery of St. Catherine, where he took his monastic vows and received the name Teodosij of Sinai, after the monastery. The Sinai monastery attracted Macedonians for centuries, especially those who longed for spiritual Christian deeds and for ascetic enlightenment. As early as eleventh century, there was a large Macedonian colony there that cultivated the old Macedonian literature. Significant Macedonian documents written in glagolics have been found on Mount Sinai, such as the Sinai Psalter and the Sinai ritual book. Teodosij rose to become Archmandrite of the monastery. In the monastery, he started studying Macedonian literacy and translating prayers from Greek into Slavic that he sent to his sons in Dojran.

In 1831 he stayed in Thessaloniki, where in the church of St. Mina he conducted services in the Church Slavonic language. While serving in churches throughout Macedonia, he also collected alms for his monastery. Then he met Kiril Pejchinovich Jovan Hadji Konstantinov Dzinot and other revivalists. He was fully convinced that his people needed Macedonian, not illegible Greek books. In 1838, he decided to open his Slavic printing shop in Thessaloniki. In the first three years, three books were printed. His printing shop was destroyed in the great fire that ravaged the merchant center of Thessaloniki. Soon after the disaster, with the financial support of Kiril Pejchinovich, the printing shop started working again, printing new books; then a fire destroyed it for the second time. Soon afterwards, Teodosij returned to his native Dojran and became a miller. He died in the fifties of the nineteenth century.

Other books printed in Teodosij's printing shop included: "Nachalnoe uchenie so molitvi utrenija" ("First Reader of Prayers"). This was a kind of elementary reader, written by Anatolij Zografski of Lazaropole, "Kratkoe opisanie na dvanaeset atonski manastiri vo Sveta Gora" ("A Short Description Of The Twelve Monasteries On Mt. Athos"), was a guide to Athos, un which a description of the monasteries was given. The book is believed to have been written by Daskal Kamche (a teacher from the village of Vatasha, Kavadarci). "Utshenie greshnim" ("Consolation For Those That Have Transgressed") by Kiril Pejchinovich was another good example. The fifth book was a three language dictionary. In three columns, words and sentences are given in Macedonian, Greek and Turkish. Researchers have determined that the Macedonian and Greek texts had been copied from the "Four Language Dictionary" by the priest Danail from Moscopole, while the Turkish text was the work of the editor of the book. The books printed in the printing shop of Teodosij of Sinai greatly contributed to disseminate the idea that there was a need for a vernacular Macedonian language. This meant victory of our spoken national language over the dead Church Slavonic and foreign Greek language.

### **New Churches Prosperity of Religious Art in Macedonia**

In the first half of the nineteenth century, due to the economic growth of the middle class and the relative leniency of the Ottoman Turks, new and bigger churches began to be built in Macedonia. These churches are a true expression of the new Macedonian church architecture and the new Macedonian renaissance painting. Wood carving that decorated the interior of churches also flourished. One by one, new town churches sprang up; two in Bansko, (1808,1835), two churches in Nevrokop, (1811,1841); in Bitola (1830); in Kratovo (1836); in Veles (1837); in Prilep (1838); in Shtip, Gorna Dzumaja and in other towns. Villages followed suit and started building new, or renovating old, churches. In 1851 the monastery church St. Joakim Osogovski in Kriva Palanka was built. The church has 12 domes. The main builder was Andrea Zografski - Renzovski, assisted by craftsmen from Kriva Palanka and by people from neighboring villages. As for this active building period, it is worth mentioning the names of the renowned craftsmen and self taught architects of the Renzovci family, Nedo Mijak and Stojan Vzenko, as well as craftsmen from Krushevo, Prilep, Bansko, Kostur and other places.

Fresco painting also flourished at that time. The best fresco painter at the time was Dicho Zograph,

from the Mijak village of Tresonche. His icons are characterized by light tones, a baroque style, and golden colors. From the eastern part of Macedonia came the icon painter Tomo Visinov - Moler and his son Dimitar Molerov from Bansko. Also well known were fresco painters Petre Filipovski-Garkata, from the village of Gari and Makarij Frckovski from Galichnik, who mastered their craft in the workshops of the Venetian masters. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were many groups (*taifa*) of fresco painters, mainly from the Mijak district: Lazaropole, Gari, Tresonche, Osoj, Rosoki, Galichnik, Bitushe and Trebishte.

For many years the woodcarver Makarij Frckovski worked together with Petre Garkata; later he organized his own *taifa*, the members of which were his brothers Gurchin and Trajan and his sons. He carved the iconostasis in the church of St. Spas in Skopje, St. Nikola in Prishtina and St. Bogorodica in Pazardzik, Bulgaria. The works of our wood carvers throughout Macedonia, and wider on the Balkans are many.

### **National Church Struggle Against the Constantinople Patriarchy**

The un-canonical abolition of the Ohrid Arch bishopric and its submission under the jurisdiction of the Constantinople patriarchy was received unfavorably. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the middle classes, now economically strong, were fully aware of the oppression and injustice committed by the bishops appointed by the Patriarchy. The memory of the glorious Ohrid Archbishopric, their Mother Church, intensified their demands for its renewal.

The Patriarchy, sensing the danger of the growing resistance to its presence, used increasingly harsh countermeasures. It activated all its institutions in Macedonia in order to quell the national activities, especially those calling for the introduction of the Slavic and Macedonian languages into churches and schools.

In the sixties of the nineteenth century, a very strong movement was organized throughout all the towns in Macedonia. Its aim was to overthrow the jurisdiction of the Patriarchy. However, the success was only partial. The majority of the Macedonian people rejected the jurisdiction of the Patriarchy, but they failed in restoring the Ohrid Archbishopric, mainly because of the opposition of the Turkish authorities. On the other hand, the powerful Bulgarian bourgeoisie in Constantinople succeeded in winning the favor of the Sublime Porte, and in 1870 established the Bulgarian Church, known as the Exarchy.

The Macedonian people, having no other option but to chose between the Constantinople Patriarchy and the Bulgarian Exarchy, opted for the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Church; by being a Slavic church, it was believed to be much closer to the Macedonian interests. A part of the Macedonian population remained under the spiritual rule of the Constantinople Patriarchy, while some church-school communities in the southern part of Macedonia leaned towards the Roman Catholic church, hoping to set up an autocephalous Macedonian church by becoming Uniate. This inevitably led to a division of the Macedonian people, which would later have a strong impact on our national affirmation, when each church exercised its own national propaganda with the aim of assimilating the Macedonian people. Under the veil of church issues, Greek, Bulgarian and Serb chauvinists would carry out their perfidious nationalistic and assimilating propaganda.

Yet taking sides with one or another church community recognized by the Turkish authorities did not deter the Macedonian people from the idea of restoring the Ohrid Archbishopric as the church of the Macedonian people. Movements dedicated to the cause appeared, struggling not only for the Macedonian language, but for the Macedonian Church, the Archbishopric of Ohrid, as well.

It is a well known fact that in 1873 a number of Macedonian educational church communities made an attempt to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric. It is also known that after the Congress of Berlin, eight educational church communities asked for the blessing of the Pope to restore the Archbishopric. The same movement emerged in 1885. However, the most significant attempt was made by the Metropolitan of Skopje, Teodosij Gologanov, who during the period of 1890-1892

fought to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric.

### **The Unsuccessful Attempts of Mitropolitan Gologanov to Restore the Ohrid Archbishopric**

Mitropolitan Gologanov, born in Nevrokop was appointed by the Exarchy. From the very start of his arrival, he strongly opposed the nationalistic church propaganda in his bishopric in Skopje and other bishoprics throughout Macedonia. His idea was to create objective conditions to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric. In 1871 he distanced himself from the Bulgarian Exarchy and through negotiations, first with the Constantinople Patriarchy, then with the Roman Catholic Church, tried to achieve his goal -restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric. At one point, it seemed that his struggle would bear fruit as an agreement was reached with the representative of the Roman Catholic Church in Constantinople; all they were waiting for was the Pope's agreement. Again, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, united in their nationalistic church propaganda, aborted the attempt. Mitropolitan Teodosij was summoned to Constantinople, then sent to Bulgaria as an outcast.

### **Further Attempts to restore the Ohrid Arch bishopric**

The fervent attempts to restore the Ohrid Arch-bishopric were closely connected with the struggle of the Macedonian people for their national affirmation. The period following the Ilinden uprising was filled with promises from the Great Powers. In order to quiet the Macedonian people, they promised many reforms, among the most significant of which was considered the restoration of the Ohrid Arch-bishopric as an autonomous, autocephalous Macedonian church.

It is not by pure chance, then, that Krste Misirkov, Dimitrije Chupovski and other intellectuals, supporters of Macedonian national rights, focused their attention on the Ohrid Arch bishopric, demanding its restoration as an autonomous Macedonian orthodox church. In 1913, Macedonian students in St. Petersburg who gathered around their newspaper "Makedonski glas" ("Macedonian Voice") were adamant in their plea for an independent Macedonia and for a national church of the free and independent Macedonian people, the Ohrid Archbishopric.

However, the unfavorable political conditions in Macedonia had negative repercussions for the Macedonian Orthodox Church as well. After the Balkan Wars, Macedonia was divided among Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, which meant imposition of church jurisdiction of the three neighboring countries over the Macedonian people. This situation remained until the liberation of Macedonia and the creation of the Macedonian state.

### **The Establishment Of The Serbian Orthodox Church And The Macedonian Bishoprics In Vardar Macedonia**

After the restoration of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on December 1,1918, conditions were created for setting up one Orthodox church. In addition to the Serbian, Karlovac and Montenegro bishoprics, and the Orthodox churches in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the bishoprics in the Vardar part of Macedonia also came under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Serbian Orthodox Church bought these bishoprics from the Constantinople, although the latter had no church authority over the majority of the Macedonian population. The decision brought on March 19,1920 by the Synod of the Patriarchy reads "the canonical order and customs, and the work of the church administration should be regulated in compliance with the current political changes; following these changes, church issues should be dealt with carefully in order to accommodate to those changes and to secure not only their proper and complete execution, but also to allow the church and the Christian people to benefit from them".

The rest of the Macedonian bishoprics were divided and came under Greek or Bulgarian church



authority, with either Greek or Bulgarian bishops. The situation was the same with the bishoprics in the Vardar part of Macedonia that came under the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, where all bishops were Serbs. The bishops and their collaborators seemed to have forgotten their role as genuine spiritual shepherds of Christ's spiritual flock. Rather, they continued with the arrogant and shameful strategy of assimilation of the Macedonian people, thus becoming mercenaries of the chauvinistic and megalomaniac policies of their country. The ruling regimes of those countries engaged the Orthodox church in serving their inhumane and non-Christian purposes in Macedonia. Various cultural educational, nationalistic and patriotic societies were set up, in which the bishops and their close collaborators played key roles in the assimilation of the Macedonians.

Even today, when Macedonia has its freedom, its statehood and an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church that is willing, with the Serbian Orthodox Church to practice the Holy Evangelic truths and, in the name of Jesus Christ and His holy church, has offered the olive branch of reconciliation, the Serbian Orthodox Church has remained adamant. And, instead of being ashamed and asking the forgiveness of the people to whom it has inflicted much injustice and suffering, it uses all possible means not to recognize the autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox church as a genuine successor of the ancient Ohrid Archbishopric, which has contributed greatly to all Slavic churches. Such an attitude exercised by the neighboring orthodox churches can be viewed not only as un-orthodox, but also as utterly inhumane.

### **The People's Liberation War and the Restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric**

Macedonia took an active part in the People's Liberation War against the invaders and their accomplices in order to free the country from the fascist occupiers, and to gain national freedom, statehood, and an independent church. The first official document related to the regulation of the church issue was brought on September 15, 1943 by the newly established Bureau of Religious Affairs, attached to the High Command of the Liberation War of Macedonia. This document is in fact the beginning of the end of all efforts and desires of the Macedonian people for the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric; the beginning of the end of the centuries long struggle for their own, independent and autocephalous orthodox church. Immediately after the consultations with the Bureau of Religious Affairs, the First Clerical Assembly was held on the liberated territory in the village of Izdeglavje, in the vicinity of Ohrid, where resolutions of major importance for the future of church administration in Macedonia were reached unanimously. At the Assembly, the clergy refused to recognize the jurisdiction of any foreign church and demanded the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric so that the church and religious life in liberated Macedonia could be conducted by the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Such initiatives were also raised by groups of priests in parts of Macedonia that were not yet liberated in order to preserve Macedonian church treasures and to make necessary preparations regarding the organization of the Orthodox church of the Macedonian people in the liberated homeland, with domestic Bishops and priests. A group of priests were especially active in the still un-liberated Skopje, and that paved the road to major church events in Macedonia.

Later, with the war still raging, an Initiative Committee to coordinate the activities related to the organization of the Macedonian Orthodox Church following liberation was set up in the village of Gorno Vranovci, which also co-opted other priests. The extended Initiative Committee took over church leadership, and made major preparations for the convening of the First Macedonian National Church Assembly. A member of the Committee visited every town in Macedonia, and in all church centers elected religious committees comprising of three priests and three laymen to replace the previous Bishop's representatives. They were given instructions to prepare for the upcoming Church Assembly.

### **The First Macedonian National Church Assembly**

The first Macedonian National Church Assembly was held in Skopje, on March 4-5, 1945. Its aim was to restore the ancient Ohrid Archbishopric and to set up an autocephalous Macedonian Church. Over 300 delegates, priests and laymen, took part in the Assembly. After hearing out the report on the importance of the Ohrid Archbishopric in the history of the Macedonian people, and the discussion by many participants, the Assembly unanimously passed a resolution for the future position of the Church in the liberated part of Macedonia. The Resolution provided that:

1. the Archbishopric of Ohrid is to be re-established as an autocephalous church, not subject to any other local church;
2. the church is to have its own nationals as bishops and clergy and is to preserve the characteristic qualities of the Macedonian people who would be nearer to their home church;
3. the first Macedonia Archbishop is to bear the title "Archbishop of Ohrid", and the Macedonian Orthodox Church the name St. Clement's Archbishopric of Ohrid.

The resolution further stipulated that the Archbishop was to be promoted in Ohrid and enthroned on the throne of the Archbishop of Ohrid. The restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric was to be announced to all autocephalous churches in the world.

The seventh article of the Resolution anticipated an alternative in compliance with the Federal order of the new Yugoslavia "were a pan-Yugoslav Patriarchy to be created, the Macedonian Orthodox Church would join its ranks, together with the other Orthodox Churches in Yugoslavia". This apparently expressed the sincere feelings of Macedonian Orthodox Christians for brotherhood and unity among the Yugoslav peoples on a religious basis.

Taking into account church canons for organizing the Macedonian Orthodox church by restoring the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Assembly elected a new Steering Committee to organize the Orthodox Church in Macedonia and endorsed it temporarily with executive and legislative authority.

At a meeting held in September of the same year, the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church declared that it could not recognize the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church claiming church jurisdiction over the territory of Macedonia and full subjugation of the Orthodox Macedonians, as it had been in the period between the two World Wars.

### **Clerical Conference in Skopje**

Having received the decision of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Steering Committee convened an extensive clerical conference. Its purpose was to inform the Macedonian priests of the negative attitude of the Serbian Orthodox Church towards the strong desire of the Macedonian people to have their own autocephalous church, to which they had both a historical and canonical right. The conference was held on May 9-10, 1946 and about 200 priests from all parts of Macedonia participated. After lengthy arguments and profound discussions, in an atmosphere of bitter protest, the following resolution was passed:

1. The Macedonian church is to have its own national Archbishop and complete autonomy in settling all internal ecclesiastical and national issues.
2. The bishops are to be chosen by the people and the clergy.
3. Efforts for a speedy formation of the Orthodox Church of Yugoslavia must be set under way, where all Orthodox churches of the Yugoslav peoples will enter on the basis of absolute equality
4. The churches in the Republic are to be self-governing in internal church affairs, governed by their own hierarchy who would be members of the Bishops' Council of the Church of Yugoslavia with equal rights and duties.
5. Each church is to have one representative in the Synod of the Church of Yugoslavia.
6. Representatives of all the churches are to prepare a new Constitution for the church of Yugoslavia which is to be adopted by a National Church Assembly.

With this resolution, the Macedonian clergy remained adamant in carrying out the demands of the Orthodox Macedonian believers, that the Macedonian Orthodox Church preserve its national traits and the traits of St. Clement. The final resolution of this issue was protracted until 1958.

### **Second Macedonian National Church Assembly**

The leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church was unrelenting towards the re-establishment of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, and towards the organizing of the Macedonian Church. As a result of this denial, the Steering Committee, supported by the clergy, passed a resolution on July 23, 1958 calling for a Second National Church Assembly. The Assembly was held in Ohrid, the see of the Ohrid Archbishopric from time immemorial, in the church of St. Sofia, where the decision was reached for the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric. This was followed by the election of a Macedonian Metropolitan as the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, who bore the title Archbishop of Ohrid. This was Dositej, Bishop of Toplice, born in Mariovo. A special delegation of the Assembly enthroned the new Archbishop of Ohrid on the throne of St. Clement, in the church that bears the name of the founder of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the first Slav bishop, spiritual teacher and enlightener. The Assembly also elected the first native bishops for the three bishoprics in Macedonia. At the same time, the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was adopted, an event of historic importance.

It was then believed that the Macedonian people had finally resolved the problem of the church. However, the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church once again made an attempt to hinder the development of the Macedonian Orthodox Church by failing to fulfill their obligation of presenting the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church to other sister orthodox churches. As so many times before, attempts were made to subjugate the Macedonian bishoprics under the total jurisdiction of the Serbian church, without taking into account the un-befitting church manner, and the un-canonical and perfidious way it had usurped the Macedonian bishoprics during the period of the First World War.

Following such interference in the internal affairs of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the obstruction in her affirmation as an autocephalous church, the Holy Bishops' Synod was forced to call the Third Macedonian National Church Assembly.

The Second National Church Assembly took place in Ohrid, on October 4-6, 1958. In the presence of 219 delegates, priests and laymen, as well as numerous guests, the Assembly adopted a:

#### **DECISION**

##### **I**

This National Church Assembly has reached a decision to restore the ancient Macedonian Ohrid Archbishopric that was forcefully abolished in 1767, and whose eparchies were annexed to the Patriarchy of Constantinople; the same is to carry the name "Macedonian Orthodox Church."

##### **II**

In accordance with the basic canonical regulations that the borders of the church should concur with the borders of the state, this Assembly has decided that the church borders of the eparchies of the Macedonian Orthodox Church concur with the borders of the People's Republic of Macedonia.

##### **III**

The Macedonian Orthodox Church encompasses the Skopje Metropolitan, the eparchies of Ohrid-Bitola and Zletovo-Strumica with all parishes that are on the territory of the People's Republic of Macedonia.

##### **IV**

The Head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is the Metropolitan that bears the title of "Archbishop of Ohrid and Skopje and Metropolitan of Macedonia".

The seat of the Metropolitan is in the city of Skopje.

The Metropolitan together with the Bishops of the eparchies are the highest spiritual authority of the Orthodox churches in Macedonia.

## V

The life and activities of the Macedonian Metropolitan, as well as the overall church life, will be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and provisions of the Macedonian Orthodox Church that will be adopted by this Assembly, and in accordance with the canon of the Orthodox Church.

## VI

This Assembly will elect the first Metropolitan and Bishops of the Eparchies of the Macedonian Orthodox Church from among the ranks of its indigenous priesthood, according to the Rules that are to be adopted by the Assembly.

## VII

With the aim of preserving the church and canonical unity in the Orthodox church on the territory of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the Macedonian Church recognizes the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the chief leader of the Orthodox Church. The Patriarch represents the unity of the Orthodox Church.

## VIII

The rights and the relationships between the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Macedonian Orthodox Church will be determined by a special accord.

## IX

This National Church Assembly, following the election of the Metropolitan and the Bishops of the Eparchies, will continue its activities as the first legislative and administrative organ of the Macedonian Metropolitan.

## X

The enthronement of the elected Bishops and the negotiations, *Le.* The conclusion of an agreement with the Serbian Orthodox Church is exclusively under the authorization of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Assembly.

The decision for the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric that was announced in the cathedral church of St. Sofia in Ohrid was received with overwhelming delight, expressed in tears of joy, prayers of thanks and frenetic applause.

In the resolutions of the of the Holy Bishops Synod No.47/1959 and No.6/59 section 57 of No.17/4 June, 1959, the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church accepted the resolutions of the Macedonian National Church Assembly of 1958.

I.The Holy Bishops' Synod confirms that the bishoprics of Skopje, Ohrid-Bitola and ZletovoStrumica decided at the national church Assembly held on October 4-6, 1959 to separate into an independent Macedonian church governed by the Constitution adopted at that Assembly, and remaining in canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church through its head, His Holiness, the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Furthermore, Article 2 stipulates suggestions for changes and additions to the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church adopted by the Assembly. In addition to Article 1, another most important provision for the Macedonian Orthodox Church is Article 6 in which the Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church resolved:

"Article VI. This Decree abrogates all regulations of the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church referring to the eparchies and bishops within the territory of the People's Republic of

Macedonia."

The resolution of the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church of June 1959, both canonically and logically, meant full acceptance of the Assembly's resolutions, the acknowledgment of the independence proclaimed by the Macedonian Orthodox Church; in practice granting of canonical dismissal. This is quite clearly confirmed by the decrees in Articles 1 and 6, and by the fact that in accordance with the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Resolution of the Bishops' Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, no prerogatives over the Macedonian Orthodox Church were granted to the Serbian Orthodox Church through any of its organs. Even the acceptance of the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the supreme head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was a merely symbolic gesture. He himself received almost no prerogatives in relation to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. In practice he was nothing more than titular head since, according to the Constitution, the Macedonian Orthodox Church had its own head in the person of the Archbishop of Ohrid and the Metropolitan of Macedonia, who possessed all rights of the heads of other autocephalous orthodox churches. The one limitation, in so far as it could be called such, consisted in the sole right of the supreme head to represent the independent Macedonian Orthodox Church before other churches.

One month after, on 19 July, 1959, the Serbian Patriarch German visited the Republic of Macedonia. On the joint archiepiscopal liturgy with Archbishop Dositej in the church "St. Mina" in Skopje, they consecrated the newly elected Bishop of Prespa and Bitola, Kliment.

The very visit of Patriarch German, accompanied by the Bishop of Bachka, Nikandor and the Bishop of Banat, Visarion, was an open confirmation of the recognition of the newly proclaimed independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The performance of the Holy Archiepiscopal Liturgy, in which the Serbian Patriarch German was accompanied by the Head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Dositej, was in fact an act of the reconciliation between the Serbian Orthodox Church and Macedonian Orthodox Church. This was also recognition of the National Church Assembly and its decisions. At the same time this was recognition of the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The pronouncements of Patriarch German on more than one occasion contributed to our hopes and wishes that the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church would bring joy for the sister Serbian Orthodox Church. During his visit to the church "St. Sofia" in Ohrid, the Patriarch German said: "Now I can see that we were mistaken, for that which has happened now, should have happened a long time ago". These words expressed public criticism of the earlier position upheld by the leadership of Serbian Orthodox Church towards the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

At the official luncheon given by the Head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Dositej, in honor of the newly consecrated Bishop Kliment, the Serbian Patriarch proposed a toast: "Wishing Your Beatitude every blessing, I wish that you may lead the Orthodox Macedonian people on the path of Eternal Salvation..."

In May 1962, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Aleksij I visited Macedonia. He was accompanied by the Serbian Patriarch German and several bishops from the Serbian Orthodox Church. On that occasion, on 25 May, 1962, the holy day of the Slav teachers Sts. Cyril and Methodius, a holy liturgy was performed in the church of the Virgin in Kamensko, Ohrid, at which the Patriarch of Moscow and Russia, Aleksij I, the Serbian Patriarch German and the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Macedonia Dositej assisted. We mention this as being a very important occasion, since it was the first time the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church participated in a service together with the heads of other autocephalous churches.

The Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was persistent in asking Patriarch German to present the Macedonian Orthodox Church before other autocephalous churches -- to inform other Orthodox Churches of the changes that occurred in 1958/59 within the Orthodox Church of Yugoslavia and of the existence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Regrettably, in May 1966, the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church refused to present the Macedonian Orthodox Church before other Orthodox Churches.

In a letter no.226 of December 5,1966, the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church addressed the Bishop's Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church with a demand for recognition of the autocephality of Macedonian Orthodox Church. When this was refused, the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church began with the necessary preparations for upholding the Third National Church Council.

### **The Third National Church Assembly**

The Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church called the Third Macedonian National Church Assembly on July 17,1967 in Ohrid. Present were all members of the Assembly and many guests. Bishop Dositej, following ancient church traditions, invoked the Holy Ghost in the early morning hours in the cathedral church of the Ohrid Archbishopric, thus announcing the work of the Assembly. In the beginning, some changes and amendments to the Church Constitution were made, by setting up two new bishoprics of the Macedonian Orthodox Church: the Debar-Kicevo bishopric and the American-Canadian-Australian bishopric. The Holy Bishops' Synod submitted a report on the negative attitude of the Serbian Orthodox Church towards the autocephality of the Macedonian Church, with special accent on the situation created following the latest Bishops' Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The report was unanimously approved and a resolution was passed. The members of the Assembly, on behalf of the clergy and the entire Macedonian people, demanded that the Holy Synod proclaim the autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

On 18 July, 1967, on the solemn session held in the church "St. Clement" in Ohrid, the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church set to paper the holiest pages of the contemporary church history and signed the previously approved by the Council.

## **DECISION FOR THE PROCLAMATION OF THE AUTOCEPHALITY OF THE MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

### **Article 1**

The Macedonian Orthodox Church, successor to the restored Ohrid Archbishopric, is proclaimed AUTOCEPHALOUS.

### **Article 2**

The head of the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church is the ARCHBISHOP that holds the title "ARCHBISHOP OF OHRID AND MACEDONIA".

The present head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, his Beatitude Dositej is bestowed with the title "ARCHBISHOP OF OHRID AND MACEDONIA".

### **Article 3**

The diocese of the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church is concurrent with the borders of the Macedonian national state, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia.

### **Article 4**

The autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church, being part of the one holy ecumenical apostolic Church, accepts and protects the Bible, the rules of all ecumenical and indigenous Councils, as other autocephalous orthodox churches do, and discards all other schismatic teachings.

### **Article 5**

The autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church is steered in accordance with the Bible, the Holy

Traditions, the Apostolic Rules, canons of the holy ecumenical and indigenous councils and the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

#### **Article 6**

A copy of this Decision is to be sent to all autocephalous Orthodox churches, as well as to all eparchies and church communities of the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church.

#### **Article 7**

The proclamation of this decision is to take place before the National Church Council of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the clergy and the devout Christians on the holy Service in the church St. Clement in Ohrid.

#### **Article 8**

This Decision comes into force immediately upon adoption.

Thus, the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church passed a resolution proclaiming the autocephality and at the same time for restoring the autocephality of the renowned Ohrid Archbishopric. The first paragraph of the Decision reads "the Macedonian Orthodox Church, successor to the restored Archbishopric of Ohrid, has proclaimed its autocephality". This Decision corrected yet another historical injustice.

In reaching the decision for proclaiming the autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox Church as the successor of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Holy Bishops' Synod was led by the facts that the roots of Christianity originated from apostolic times. Upon their arrival, the Macedonian Slavs found themselves in a Christianized environment, in which they too began to accept the faith. The expansion of Christianity reached its peak during the time of the disciples of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement and St. Naum, the miracle workers of Ohrid. By preaching the teachings of Christ in the language of the Macedonian Slavs, they strengthened their Christian faith even more. At that time, the Ohrid Archbishopric was active in Macedonia, which during the rule of Tsar Samoil was promoted to a Patriarchy. Later however, it was once again demoted to an Archbishopric. The Archbishopric of Ohrid was active for 800 years. In those difficult times of bondage, the church was the protector, not only of the Macedonian people, but also of neighboring orthodox peoples. It was abolished illegally by a Decree issued by Sultan Mustafa III in 1767. The Macedonian people, however, never ceased to demand its restoration and struggled to attain this holy goal. Further, the Decision states, "in the period following the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, its bishoprics were submitted under the jurisdiction of several neighboring orthodox countries... such a state in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes lasted until April 6, 1941, when the exKingdom of Yugoslavia disintegrated. Of exceptional importance for the consolidation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was the decision brought by the Episcopal Assembly of the Serbian Orthodox Church in June 1959, at which in addition to the recommended changes and amendments to the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church adopted at the Second National Church Assembly in 1958, it was stated that, "the Holy Bishops' Synod confirms that at the National Church Assembly held from October 4-6, 1958, the Bishoprics of Skopje, Ohrid, Bitola and Zletovo-Strumica decided to separate into an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church, which is governed by the Constitution adopted at the Assembly". This resolution in fact, sanctions the decision reached at the Second National Church Assembly. It is confirmed with the provisions of the already mentioned decision that states, "this decree also abrogates the regulations of the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church regarding to the eparchies and bishops in Macedonia". In practice this is the granting of canonical dismissal. The canonical unity between the two independent churches was expressed by the acknowledgment of the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the supreme head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The resolution passed by the Serbian Orthodox Church stated "in the interest of preserving unity in the Serbian Orthodox Church, all changes in the Constitution and the regulations passed by the Episcopal Assembly must be founded on the canonical principles of the Orthodox Church". As for the Holy Synod of the

Macedonian Orthodox Church, it has always been consistent with the traditions of the past, and it has always been governed by the dogmas and canons of the Holy Orthodox Church.

However, as the Serbian Orthodox Church failed to realize the resolution for an independent Macedonian church and did not fulfill its obligation to introduce the Macedonian Orthodox Church to the other local Orthodox Churches, the only remaining solution was the proclamation of the autocephalous status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the capacity it once had as the Archbishopric of Ohrid. The head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church received the title Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia. According to the Assembly's resolution, the jurisdiction of the Macedonian Orthodox Church encompassed the bishoprics in the Republic of Macedonia, and the Macedonian church communities abroad. The decision of the Council ends as follows: "the Holy Bishops' Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, on behalf of its devotees and for the benefit and fulfillment of the teaching of our Savior Lord Jesus Christ, thinks and believes that the act of the proclamation of the autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, announced at the Holy Bishops' Liturgy in the church St. Clement of Ohrid on July 19, 1967, will be accepted and recognized by all sister holy orthodox churches and will receive their blessing".

The proclamation of the autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was approved and welcomed with joy by all people of good will, at home and abroad. This is proved by the numerous messages of felicitation and congratulation from the highest ranking officials of the political and social life of the Republic of Macedonia and Yugoslavia, as well as from the Macedonians from the Diaspora and those temporarily living and working in Western European countries. Among the first to congratulate the occasion was the representative of the Executive Council of the Republic of Serbia and the League of the Clergy Association from Belgrade.

The proclaimed autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was welcomed enthusiastically by our compatriots in America, Canada and Australia. Apart from the already existing Macedonian church communities in these countries, many new ones were organized in places where larger Macedonian communities existed. New Macedonian churches and culture halls were built. Many requests were sent to the Holy Bishops' Synod for appointing priests, Macedonians, from the homeland. The Macedonian communities in these distant countries had grown into centers in which Macedonians expressed and satisfied their spiritual, cultural and national feelings and needs.