

End of the 18th Century

The end of the 18th century brought about a turn on the development of diplomatic matters regarding the status quo of the Shrines, namely, the consolidation of the status quo, as we know it today, starting the process of internal reorganization and financial restoration of the Patriarchate.

The Treaty of Kioutsouk Kainarji (1774) obligated Turkey in ensuring the improvement of the lives of its Christian citizens and the recognition of a person in Russia as protector of the Christians in the Holy Lands.

The Latin and the Armenians made efforts to intervene at the Terrible Golgotha (Calvery), at Gethsemane and Bethlehem but failed. The Armenians trying by any means to acquire more rights on the Holy Sepulchre through participation in its restoration after its eventual destruction, by torching in 1808 the Church of the Resurrection which was then built to a great extent with wood. The decree of Sultan Mahmoud 2nd (1809) which restricted the restoration of the Most Holy Church of the Sepulchre to the Greeks, led to a sharp reaction by the Latin and the Armenians, who were trying by any means, including violence against the Greek workers, to impede the restoration of the Church, hoping to succeed in the issuing of a Firman on the reconstruction of the Church with more favourable conditions for them. Finally the Most Holy Church of the Resurrection was built by the sweat, blood and money of the financially deprived and enslaved "Genus Romani" (Greeks) and it was inaugurated on the 13th September 1810, day of commemoration of the Church of the Resurrection, characterized as the "Miracle of the Faith of the Greeks".

The Revolution of 1821 placed the Hagiotaphites (Brotherhood of the Sepulchre) with the rest of the Greeks under the unfavourable category of traitors by the Sublime High Gate

(the Ruler) and opened the field to the heterodox for their longed for expulsion of the Greeks from the Holy Lands while the Hagiotaphites suffered all sorts of hardships by the Turks. The Armenians in 1824 took over part of Sion and decided to also take over Golgotha, acquiring the same rights on the Holy Sepulchre as the Latin. In 1834 when Palestine was in the hands of Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt and on the occasion of the restoration work on the Shrines, which became necessary after the earthquake of 1834, the Latin and the Armenians together tried to take over full ownership of the Holy Shrines. The pressure of the European powers on Turkey led to the restoration of the abolished after the Crusades Latin Patriarchate in 1847, while the cooperating English (Anglicans) and Germans (Lutherans) protestants as well as the Uniates, appeared already at the Holy Land by 1840. Despite these, the Holy Lands during this period as earlier, availed of a strong Orthodox assistance from the Empire of Russia, whose interference unfortunately despite their help was not totally without self interest.

The arrival in Jerusalem of the Russian Archimandrite Porphyrios Uspensky in 1843 and the founding of the Orthodox Russian Mission in 1848 strengthened the Orthodox presence, however at the same time a climate of artificial juxtapositions was cultivated between the Russian Mission and the Greek Hagiotaphitic Brotherhood and its Arabic speaking flock, so that it would make it easy to blend the Russian interests in the ecclesiastic matters of Jerusalem thus tying the flock to the Russian chariot. The policy which later received unfavourable criticism even in Russia, had its crowning, the events at the end of the patriarchal leadership by the luminous Patriarch of Jerusalem Kyrill 2nd who succeeded in accomplishing significant progress and the Sionite Church acquired strong spiritual strength which was necessary in the fight against heterodox propagandas. The Patriarch Kyrill as founder of the theological school, for ever tied his name with the renaissance history of the spiritual education in

Palestine. With the spreading of learning follows the founding in 1853 of the first printing press by Patriarch Kyrill. Because the existing schools in Palestine as well as the Churches lacked necessary Greek and Arabic books, Patriarch Kyrill decided to build in Jerusalem the Printing Press which he located at the monastery of Saint Nicolas. Since then the printing press started to print ecclesiastic books, educational and divers other but with religious ethical content in both Greek and Arabic languages, which were issued not only in Palestine but in Syria and elsewhere.