

# Period of the Ottoman Turks Rule

F. The new period that began with the rule of the Ottoman Turks in the Holy Land (1517AD) replacing the until then ruling Mameluks of Egypt, proved witness to legendary, with the help of God, struggles of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood (Brotherhood of the Sepulchre) for the protection of the All Holy Shrines, against the schemes of the other Christian dogmas. It is a period of the development and consolidation of the status quo of the Shrines.

This period of the history of Jerusalem is characteristic of the efforts, mainly of the Latin and Armenians, the former based on the diplomacy of the European powers and the latter on economic or other ways of approach to the Office of the High Sultan of Constantinople, in order to overturn the favourable status quo, towards the indigenous (Greek) Church of the Holy Lands and acquire the primacy and the exclusive rights to the All Holy Shrines. Here are some of these struggles.

When the Turks under Selim the successor of Mohammed the Pillager, took over Palestine in 1517, the rights of the Church of Jerusalem were recognized by the Turkish Authority. The Franciscan presence became the object of disfavour and their Monastery was destroyed (1523AD). Gradually however their efforts of blending with the rest of the confessions were strengthened in the status quo of the shrines.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century the re-organization of the Brotherhood of the Sepulchre was consolidated due to the fruitful efforts of Patriarch Herman the Sabbait (1537-1579). Patriarch Herman took care of the repairs to the Shrines, was successful in the issuing of a "firman" (1538) by the Sultan Suleiman, in favour of the Greeks and departed for fundraising to Russia, thus

creating the beginning of the prevailing practice of the "holy migrations" of the Hagiotaphites (Brotherhood of the Sepulchre) to homodox (same confession) countries, mainly the Trans-Danube countries and Russia, for financial strengthening of the All Holy Shrines. He also organized the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre in a closer union with the Patriarch and the Abbot. His efforts were continued by his capable successor Patriarch Sophronios 4<sup>th</sup> (1579-1608).

During the year 1604 the first treaty was signed between France and Turkey which recognized officially the rights of the Latin in the Holy Lands, so the following year the Latin entered Golgotha and the Church in Bethlehem while in the Holy Land the Jesuits appeared as adversaries to the Franciscans. At the same time the Armenians were trying to take over the celebration of the Holy Light but were repulsed by a Sultanic decree of 1611. The ambassador of France in Constantinople conducted a fight against the patriarch Theophanos 3rd, who (Theophanos) however was successful in the issuing of a string of "firmans" (1631-1634) by Sultan Murat, equivalent and in agreement with the decrees of Mohammed the Pillager and of Selim.

Before this, patriarch Theophanos was forced to sell holy heirlooms of great value to avert the surrender of the Lavra and its metohion of the Archangels to the Latin and Armenians who were sent to collect the debt incurred by the careless financial management of the Serbs who lived at the Lavra of Saint Savva.

Patriarch Paisios (1645-1660) repulsed the efforts of the Armenians to inherit the properties of the Abyssinians (Ethiopians) but failed to restrain the efforts of the Armenians on those of the Monastery of Saint Jacob, so in 1658 this monastery became decisively Armenian and the Seat of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

The glorious patriarchal reign of Dositheos 2nd (1669-1707)

illuminated those dark periods and proved a breakwater against the concerted actions of the heterodox, who benefitting from the prevailing historical conditions, were almost successful in evicting the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre from the Holy Shrines. Dositheos, having repulsed a serious effort by France to turn over the shrines to the Latin monks and later escaping two assassination attempts against him in Jerusalem, he went to Constantinople, where he voided the 1677 protracted actions of the delegates of the countries of Austria, France, Poland and Venice by which both new and historical privileges were turned over to the Latin. In a short time he saved (1680) the Monastery of the Holy Cross from the debts of the Orthodox Georgian monks from the usually hastening for repayment of the debt, Latin and Armenians. However the war against the Ottoman Rule by the three fore-mentioned powers and Russia in 1688 worsened the situation for the issuing of the "firmans" by Suleiman in favour of the Orthodox. In 1688 the defeat of Turkey by Austria at the same year led to the issuing of a "firman" in favour of the Latin, such that they proceeded to evict the Brotherhood of the Sepulchre from Jerusalem. However Dositheos vowed that he will not return to Jerusalem before the removal of the Latin from the illegally acquired Shrines, by which he succeeded in the issuing of many favourable but of lesser importance "firmans" for the Patriarchate. Finally not having enough time in life to see through the success of these struggles, he passed on after his repose the relay of the Patriarchate and the struggles for the Faith to Patriarch Chrysanthos who succeeded in the beginning to void the gains of the Armenians on the ceremony of the Holy Light. The Orthodox Patriarch or his Bishop during the years 1719 and 1720 recovered parts of the other rights of the Orthodox. In 1737 the first Orthodox School in Jerusalem was built by Patriarch Parthenios. A new treaty between France and Turkey in 1740 hurt once again the struggles of the Hagiotaphites but two decrees by Sultans Osman (1557) and Osman Mustapha 3rd (1768) issued through the actions of Parthenios, restored the

Hagiotaphites to their legal rights from which they were wrongfully deprived from 1689. Patriarch Parthenios produced the rules of the Brotherhood of the Sepulchre which were later improved.