

The Theological School of the Cross

The founding of the Theological School of the Cross by Patriarch Kyrillos and the establishment of the Printing Press of the Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

Patriarch Kyrillos, after His enthronement, apart from the serious issues concerning the Holy shrines, He showed a special interest in founding educational institutions for the education of clergy and laity. In 1788-1808, the established School of the Patriarchate in Jerusalem was prospering. The distinguished scholar Jacob of Patmos, served as its director. Famous Hagiotafites (Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher) who studied with him, followed his work, excelling in education and in their virtue, such as Archimandrite Maximos the Symian who was appointed director of the school by father Anthimos, Hieromonk Prokopios Aravoglou, and Neofytos the Cyprian who left us precious works, that enlighten the history of the Holy Places.

Despite the great dangers faced by the Hagiotafitic Brotherhood during those difficult years and the struggles they endured defending the rights of our nation in the Holy Places, in 1817 they established the big library of the Holy Community and the Parthenion, with the significant assistance of Hieromonk Prokopios Avramoglou , vicar to the Patriarch Polykarpos and monk Anthimos, who served as Chief Secretary of the holy Community and of the Parthenion, both of whom greatly helped in the formation of the library, its enrichment and classification of its books.

Despite Patriarch Athanasios' good stewardship and will, education was downgraded because of the serious problems in Palestine. It was meant for Patriarch Kyrillos to revive it, who being friend of the arts (music) took great care in the

emergence of educated clergy. His great service regarding education, brought about the founding of the Theological School. In November 1843, the Holy Synod of the Church of Jerusalem decided that "The Monastery of The Holy Cross that is outside of Jerusalem, be repaired and become a school for the Holy clergy". Unfortunately this decision was not carried out, and a year later, in December 1844, Patriarch Athanasios reposed in Constantinople and his idea of establishing the school was abandoned only to reappear and assume its realization by Dionysios Cleopas. Cleopas, a clergyman of great accomplishment and broad education, believed that a new school should be founded far from Jerusalem so that its students be completely focused in their studies. So, in November 1851, the Patriarch officially announced to Metropolitan Meletios of Petra, his decision to found the school of the Cross. He appointed Dionysios Cleopas supervisor, and ordered the repair and renovation of this school, with the addition of new halls and other tenements. On 3rd February 1855 the official inauguration of the School of the Cross was performed with great splendour.

Dionysios Cleopas, the first Director of the School, suitably praised greatly this event. Unfortunately he directed the School, only for one year. In June 1855 coming in opposition with some powerful Hagiotafites, he was considered a dangerous innovator and for this reason he was forced to resign. He went to Athens, having been invited by the Greek Government, where in August of the same year, he was appointed professor at the University and General Director of the Risario (theological) School. After his departure, Priest Nicodemos became the director of the School who was later elected Metropolitan of Kyzikos for two years, and was succeeded by Archimandrite Germanos Gregoras, director of the Theological School of Halki. Generally, the School of the Cross, under Patriarch Kyrillos II managed to progress significantly, and the Sionite Church achieved great spiritual strength which was necessary in facing the heterodox propaganda.

Patriarch Kyrillos' as the founder of the theological School, tied for ever his name with the historical period of the renaissance of the spiritual education in Palestine. With the spreading of education, the establishment in 1853 of the first printing press under Patriarch Kyrillos was installed in the monastery of St. Nicholas. As the existing schools and churches in Palestine lacked many necessary books in Greek and in Arabic, Patriarch Kyrillos decided to found a printing press in Jerusalem which was installed at the monastery of Saint Nicholas. Since then the Printing Press has started to print ecclesiastical and instructive as well as other books but with ethical-religious content, both in Greek and Arabic, which are distributed not only in Palestine and Syria but also elsewhere.