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RESTORATION OF THE ST. CLEMENT'S OHRID ARCHBISHOPRIC-PATRIARCHATE AS THE MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND OHRID ARCHBISHOPRIC

By Aleksandar Trajanovski

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Abstract

This is a brief narration of the creation of St. Clement's Ohrid Archbishopric-Patriarchate as the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric from ancient times to recent times. The author first returns to the founding of the first three Macedonian and, generally, European Christian churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea by the Apostle Paul and his associates around the middle of the first century, AD. Then, he proceeds to the creation of the autocephalous Archbishopric Justiniana Prima (534-545) by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I in Skopje or in its surroundings. The work of the Holy Apostle Paul and Emperor Justinian I was continued by the Slavic brothers, Sts. Cyril and Methodius of Thessalonica and their closest disciples and associates, Sts. Clement and Naum of Ohrid. As a result of their church-educational and social work, when numerous churches and monasteries were built in Macedonia and autochthonous monasticism was founded, Emperor Samuil (967-1014) created the so-called Prespa Metropolitanate or Archbishopric. Its autonomy was confirmed by Pope Gregory V. The emperor elevated the Archbishopric to the level of a patriarchate. When Samuil transferred the capital from Prespa to Ohrid, it was known as the Ohrid Patriarchate. After the collapse of Samuil's state (1018), the Byzantine emperor Basil I lowered the Church to a level of archbishopric. The Ohrid Archbishopric persisted for about eight centuries until 1767, when the Turks abolished it in a non-canonical manner, and transferred its dioceses to the jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople. Then began the numerous attempts of the Macedonian people to restore its former St. Clement's Ohrid Archbishopric as the Macedonian Orthodox Church. This happened in 1958, while the restoration of its autocephaly took place in 1967.

We can follow the beginnings of the Macedonian church history or today's Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric (MOC-OA) indirectly, yet continuously, since the appearance of the first Christian church communities in Macedonia. They appeared toward the middle of the first century A.D, when on several occasions, the Apostle Paul visited ancient Macedonia which was under Roman rule. When the apostle with his associates, Silas and Timothy, were preparing his second trip to the city of Troas, he had a vision. The Scriptures¹ says: "During the night Paul had a vision: in front of him stood a man, **Macedonian**², who had begging him, saying; 'Come over to **Macedonia** and help us!' After that vision, we immediately *wished to go to Macedonia* because we understood that the Lord calls us there to preach the Gospel" (Acts 16, 9-10).

After the Apostle Paul, accompanied by his missionaries, arrived in Philippi, he established the *Philippi Christian church community* and from there, he began to preach Christianity. In the city of Thyatira, he christened the first Macedonian woman named Lydia. Once he had founded *Philippi church*, he arrived in Thessalonica and Berea, where he founded *Thessalonca*³ and *Berea Christian churches*.⁴ Thus, the Apostle Paul and his associates founded the first three Macedonian churches, the first ones located in Europe.

In the fourth century, in the Roman *Province of Macedonia*, before it was divided into four parts, and then into *Macedonia Prima* and *Macedonia Secunda*, the late antiquity Macedonian cities of Thessalonica, Stobi, Skupi, Heraklea Lyncestis, Bargala, Zapara, and others became episcopal centers. Later, among the famous early Christian bishoprics in Macedonia, the most famous were *Thessalonica Archbishopric* and the Archdiocese in Skupi

¹ See for more details: Gjorgji Pop Atanasov, *The Bible for Macedonia and Macedonians*, Skopje, 1995, 146; Ratomir Grozdanovski, *Saint Apostle Paul and Macedonia*, Skopje, 2007, 219.

² In order to specifically highlight certain more important words and institutions, and even whole sentences in the article they are bolded (cursive), (spaced), underlined, shown in italics or otherwise.

³ At the head of the Thessalonica municipality (church) the Apostle Paul assigned the *Macedonian Aristarchus*, as is noted in the source „Аристарх Македонхнин из Фесалоники“. (See: *Библих*, Moscow, 1999, 1201).

⁴ About the genesis of the first Macedonian and European Christian church communities/churches, see: Aleksandar Trajanovski, *Church-School Municipalities in Macedonia* (Skopje: INI, 1980), 37-45.

near Skopje. The establishment of the independent church in Macedonia, **Iustiniana Prima**, (534-545) at the time of the famous Byzantine emperor Justinian I (527-565)⁵ was based in Skupi or Baderiana (today's the Skopje village of Bader).

The work of Saint Apostle Paul and Emperor Justinian I was continued by the holy brothers, Cyril⁶ and Methodius⁷ of Thessalonica and their most famous students and followers, Sts. Clement and Naum of Ohrid, especially through their famous Bregalnica and Pannonian (Moravian) missions. After returning from their last mission, St. Clement (840-916) and St. Naum (835-910) were sent as teachers and priests to the region of Kutmichevica in the locality of Devol and Glavinitsa, and in the city of Ohrid. There, beside the establishment of the Ohrid Literary School (individual authors also consider it as the first Slavic University) and the creation of the Cyrillic script (893), St. Clement was appointed as the first Slav-Macedonian bishop (of Dremvica, Velika, and Tiveriopol). So, at the time of Samuil's state (967-1018) in Macedonia, Slavic Macedonian clergy and monastics were installed in Ohrid, in the village of Zrze, Prilep area, on Mount Athos, and elsewhere.

On that basis and on the basis of the created traditions, beside the already built churches and monasteries, Emperor Samuil (967-1014) also inherited already formed monastics. Thereby, a church organization grew in Macedonia with its seat on the island "Sv. Achilles" on Prespa Lake, known as *Prespa Metropolitanate*, and later as *Prespa Archdiocese*. Its independence was confirmed by the church dignitaries from the Vatican sent by Pope Gregory V (996-999). They, as well as the prelates and the clergy of the Prespa Church, crowned Samuil and granted the church an autocephalous status at the level of archbishopric, while the king regarded it as patriarchate, because based on a medieval unwritten rule, in each kingdom, there should be a patriarchate. When Samuil moved the capital from Prespa to Ohrid, he also moved

⁵ It is thought that he was born in the village Tauresium or Taurizion, i.e. today's village of Taor.

⁶ His secular name is Constantine (872-869).

⁷ Known under his secular name Michael (810-885).

the seat of the Church, which since that time, has been known as the **Ohrid patriarchate**, and later **Archbishopric**.

At that time, the diocese of the Ohrid Patriarchate matched the frontiers of Samuil's state. At the beginning of the eleventh century, over 20 bishoprics were under its jurisdiction: bishoprics of Ohrid and Prespa, Devol, Glavinica, Bitola, Meglene, Strumica, Berea, Skopje, Morozvis, Srbica (Servija) Stag, Trijadica (Sofia), Vidin, Velbužd, Belgrade, Nish, Prizren, Lipljan, Raska, Srem, Branichevo, Dorostol, and others.

After the collapse of Samuil's state (1018), the Byzantine emperor Basil II, in his famous decrees of 1019 and 1020, reduced the church to a lower rank, that is, to the level of an archbishopric without abolishing its autocephaly. Although the Ohrid Archbishopric preserved its independence—autocephaly, it submitted to the Byzantine emperors almost throughout the entire period of Byzantine rule in Macedonia. Thus, after the death of the last Archbishop of Ohrid of Macedonian origin, John of Debar (1018-1037), the Byzantine emperors often nominated Greeks for archbishops who were then promoted by the Holy Synod (SAS) of the Ohrid archdiocese to head it. Only the lower clergy was chosen from among domestic Macedonian population.

At that time, the diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric included 30 eparchies: Ohrid-Prespa, Kostur, Glavinica, Meglene, Pelagonia (Monastir), Strumica, Morozvis, Velbužd (Kyustendil) Trijadica (Sredetz), Nish, Belgrade, Srem, Skopje, Prizren, Lipljn, Raska, Drinopol (Adrinopol) Butrint, Vela, Himar, Ioannina, Stagska (Stashka at Meteors), Petra (Peter) Srbichka (Serfijska), Berea (Verijska), Drastar, and others.

After the great Serbian medieval conquests of Macedonia, the Ohrid Archbishopric still remained an independent (autocephalous) church with an insignificant reduction of its diocese on account of the newly established Peč Archbishopric.

When Macedonia fell under the Ottoman rule, the Ohrid Archbishopric not only preserved its independence but also received certain privileges by the Sultan. Wishing to have a peaceful environment during their conquering expeditions to Europe, the Ottomans held a tolerant attitude towards the Ohrid Archbishopric and allowed its spiritual self-governing, demanding loyalty by the Ohrid Archbishopric and the believers under its jurisdiction, as well as their collection of church taxes, because part of those taxes, in the form of *peshkesh* (gift) went to the sultan's treasury.

After the abolition of the (Bulgarian) Patriarchate of Trnovo (1393), for a certain period of time, the eparchies of Sofia and Vidin found themselves under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric. After the gradual fall of the Serbian medieval state under the Ottoman Empire, starting from 1439 onwards, Peč (Serbian) Patriarchate was gradually abolished and in phases (eparchy after eparchy). Thus, all of its eparchies fell again under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric. After the establishment of the Union of Florence (1439),⁸ Hungarian-Wallachian and Moldovan eparchies and their ten and more bishops, fleeing from the Union, came under the nominal authority of the Ohrid Archbishopric. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Ohrid Archbishopric also established its spiritual authority over the so-called Italian Orthodox Eparchy,⁹ as well as over the Berea and Drach eparchies. So at certain times, the Ohrid Archbishopric covered more than 30 eparchies in a wide area.

The Ohrid Archbishopric as an autocephalous church was governed by an independent head, an archbishop, sometimes also named as patriarch. The seat of the Church was in the cathedral church "St. Sofia," that is, the "Presentation of the Virgin Mary" in Ohrid. The Archbishop, as an independent head, represented the Church with other local Orthodox churches and states. As chairman of the Holy Synod, he chaired it and convened it at least once

⁸ At this time the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople entered a union with the Roman Catholic Church.

⁹ They were the Orthodox Church municipalities in Dalmatia, Venice, Southern Italy, Apulia, Calabria, Sicily and Malta, with its capital in Catania (at Sicilia). There, among numerous Italian Catholics lived many Orthodox Macedonians, Greeks, and Albanians, who emigrated and escaped from the Turks.

a year. If needed, ecclesial-people's councils were convened in order to solve important issues related to the church and people. With regard to the administration, the Ohrid Archbishopric was divided into eparchies (metropolitanates and dioceses), *archepiscopal regencies* and *parishes*. Metropolitans and bishops governed their dioceses or church-monastery centers independently according to the Orthodox church canons. Ohrid Archbishopric had its *ecclesiastical courts* and other auxiliary bodies. They regulated certain religious-educational, hereditary, family, marital and divorce cases and disputes outside the Ottoman law. Thus, the believers of the Ohrid Archbishopric enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in the sphere of its internal church, religious and social affairs. Thereby, the **Ohrid Archbishopric has maintained and nurtured St. Clement's, and consequently the Macedonian religious spirit, traditions, and general national identity of the Macedonian people for centuries.**

In order to attribute a greater importance to the Church (Ohrid Archbishopric), it later came to represent a continuation of the former Autocephalous Archbishopric Justiniana Prima. Therefore, certain leaders of the Ohrid Archbishopric were also decorated with titles of Archbishops of Justiniana Prima, each time identifying it and emphasizing it as Justiniana Prima of Ohrid. Such is the example of Archbishop Chariton (1643-1651), who in documents (charters) and with his signatures, was marked as "*Chariton, by God's mercy, Archbishop of Justiniana Prima of Ohrid, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, West Pont and patriarch of others*" or, often, more briefly, as "*Chariton, by God's mercy, Archbishop of Justiniana Prima of Ohrid.*"¹⁰

The Ohrid Archbishopric experienced its first territorial losses after the Ottomans abandoned the previously tolerant (even privileged) relationship to the Church and after the restoration of the Peč Patriarchate (1557). In addition, soon after, the Ohrid Archbishopric lost

¹⁰ Централнуј государственуј архив древних актов-Москва, Греческие грамоту, Фонд 52, Опис 2, д. 4, 506 (1654) и д. 250 (1664).

its eparchies in Wallachia and Moldova, Berea and the Italian eparchy to the Ecumenical Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople. So at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Ohrid Archbishopric had power over 17 eparchies in Macedonia and over some eparchies in Albania.

The difficult financial situation of the believers under the jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archbishopric especially came to the fore in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. All of it enabled the Archbishopric to be exposed to attacks by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. When after long efforts and preparations it gained acceptance by the sultan, interfering directly in the affairs of the Ohrid Archbishopric, Sultan Mustafa III on January 16, 1767, in non-canonical act with a charter (*berat*), abolished the Ohrid Church. Thus, all its dioceses fell under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Then, based on the Ottoman *Sharia* law and *millet* system, all believers of the *Ecumena* were treated as the Rum or Urum-millet, which in translation means Greek people. Thus, strong Hellenization began on the territory of the former diocese of the Ohrid Archbishopric insofar as many Greek schools were opened which were under the rule of the Greek Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

In the late eighteenth century, throughout the entire nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, there were numerous organized attempts to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric as a Macedonian St. Clement's Church. However, those numerous attempts and struggles to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric as the Macedonian Orthodox Church, sometimes even on an Uniate basis, with the assistance of the Vatican or other European and American corporations and powers in the middle of the second half of the nineteenth century, led to joining the struggles of economically stronger Bulgarian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, with considerable help of the Russian diplomacy for the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1870). After the Exarchate was established, it included the Veles Eparchy from Macedonia and the Pirot and Niš eparchies from Serbia. According to Article 10 of the charter for

establishing the Exarchate, by way of "*istiljami*"¹¹ if two-thirds of the Macedonian population stated that they wanted to go under the power of the new church, then their desire had to be granted. Because, the few Macedonian bourgeoisie and the less economically strong Macedonian citizenship and intelligentsia failed in their numerous attempts to restore the Ohrid Archbishopric as a Macedonian national church, a larger part of the Macedonian believers, choosing between two evils and churches, the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarian Slavic Church (Exarchate), they accepted the latter church institution, believing that the new Slavic Church would gain favorable positions for themselves. Thus, in 1873-1874, the Exarchate established its jurisdiction over the Veles Diocese, then after it conducted "*istiljami*," it managed to impose itself upon the Exarchate bishops in the Skopje and Ohrid dioceses (metropolitan Nathaniel Kuchevishki of Macedonian origin). Later (1897), the Exarchate managed to win another four of sultan's charters (*berats*) for its new bishops in Macedonia in Bitola, Debar and Kičevo, Strumica and Nevrocope dioceses. Given that in the same Macedonian dioceses, there still remained Patriarchal Greek bishops, in those Macedonian metropolitan centers, there were now two foreign church diarchy, Greek and Bulgarian.

Later, again with the help of the Russian diplomacy, Serbian propaganda won (1897) the right to appoint Serbian bishops in Macedonia, such as the Metropolitan Firmilian (Dražić), who became the head of the Skopje diocese. Still, later (1910) again with Russian help, the Serbian Orthodox Church acquired also in Veles and Debar diocese based in Kičevo, headed by the Bishop Barnabas (Rosić). Thus these Macedonian eparchies were under a foreign church triarchy Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian.

After the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), World War I (1914-1918) and the Versailles Peace Conference (1919), Macedonia was divided into three, that is, four parts among its neighbors. Since then, Macedonian dioceses in the Aegean part

¹¹ A form of referendum.

came under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and there, Macedonian believers experienced strong Hellenization. The Strumica diocese (until 1919) and Nevrocope diocese were under the rule of the Exarchate and were subject to Bulgarianisation. Dioceses in Vardar Macedonia, bought from the restored Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), fell under its jurisdiction and were Serbianized. This situation lasted until the beginning of the World War II.

After World War II, at the *First Church and People's Council* held in Skopje on March 3-4, 1945, the participants of 300 delegates and mainly Macedonian clergy, adopted a resolution to restore the St. Clement's Ohrid Archbishopric as a Macedonian Orthodox Church. However, due to living in the Yugoslav federation, this desire was hindered by some Serbian radical bishops. Rigid and intolerant determinations of the leadership of SOC prevented the efforts of the Macedonian clergy and intelligentsia to re-establish the Ohrid Archbishopric as St. Clement's Macedonian Orthodox Church. Some members of the Macedonian civil and spiritual intelligentsia (the most ardent Macedonian were called autocephalists)—who during World War II and even more so after the war, exhibited patriotic outbursts of emotions for the achievement of the dream of creating a complete and united Macedonia within its ethnographic and geographical borders, including efforts toward the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric as a Macedonian church—experienced persecution. The ominous secret services (UDB): The Directorate for Security (OZN-a) and the Department for protection of the people (UDB-a) jailed some of them (e.g. Cento, Methody Gogov, Nicola Apostolski and many others) by means of fabricated charges and trials. Some of them were sent to the infamous prison on Goli Otok (Venko Markovski, Panko Brashnarov and others), while others were executed (Dr. Kosta Terziev, Dragi Spasov, Risto Gavrovski,¹² and others).

¹² State Archive of the Republic of Macedonia - Skopje, F.: OZN-a, Box No. 8, Material No. 11 and 14; F.: KPM/SKM, Box No. 2, 2; Biljana Petkovska, *Priests Martyrs*, (Bitola, 2016), 126-139.

In order to rapidly resolve the Macedonian church issue, on July 23, 1958, an extended Plenum on the *Church or Initiative Board* organizing a Macedonia Orthodox Church was convened. This was headed by the moderate autonomist wing of MOC, which was headed by the priest Nestor Popovski. They submitted a report on the way and the stages through which the issue of resolving the Macedonian Church passed. Among other things, the Plenum also reviewed the decision of the Holy Synod (SAS) of SOC of June 10, 1958, regarding the issue of creating an independent church in Macedonia, submitted by the Initiative Board for organizing the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Then the minutes No. 1702 and 445 of July 5, 1958 of SAS of SOC were reviewed, by which the Holy Synod of SOC gave its permission for organizing an independent local Orthodox Church in Macedonia. Their minutes contained the following provisions:

1. to recognize His Holiness Serbian patrijarh HH Vicentius (Prodanov) as administrator of the vacated three dioceses in the People's Republic of Macedonia, provided that the administration would not take more than two interval sessions of the Holy Synod of SOC, and

2. to distribute to the Holy Synod of SOC a wider list of candidates for election of bishops, natives who will be elected for bishops of the three dioceses at the same time.

The first candidate for bishop of Macedonia was the titular bishop of the Serbian patrijarh, Bishop **Dositej** (Stojkovski).¹³ Other candidates for Macedonian bishops were Nikola Trajkovski (Bishop Clement)¹⁴ and Tomo Dimovski (Bishop Naum).¹⁵

After the above two candidates had consented to sacrifice and become monks and then bishops, they had to receive so-called small chrism in the Monastery "St. Mary" in the village

¹³ Dimitar Stojkovski, (Mavrovo, 7. XII 1906 – Skopje, 20. V 1981) became monk as Dositej in the monastery "St. Virgin Mary Pure", in Kichevo. He graduated from the Seminary in Bitola and the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade. In 1951 he was ordained a bishop of Toplica and a vicar of Patriarch Vicentius (Prodanov, 1950-1959).

¹⁴ Clement (Nikola Trajkovski (Bitola, 3. VIII 1912 – 2. I 1970).

¹⁵ Naum (Tomo Dimovski, Bitola, 1908 – 27. XI 1977).

of Pobozhje. Once they entered into the monastic brotherhood, they completed their monastic service in a stay there and until October 4, 1958, "they were exposed to *epiclesis*" in the church "St. Nicholas" Gerakomija in Ohrid. On October 4, 1958, in the presence of 219 delegates, the *Second Church and People's Council* took place in Ohrid. On Sunday, October 5, 1958 in the cathedral church "St. Sofia," a sacred archbiepiscopal liturgy was held where the first Archbishop HB Dositej was installed as the head of the revived Archbishopric of Ohrid as the **Macedonian Orthodox Church**.

After this event, the Archbishop Dositej sent a letter to the Serbian Patriarch German (Djorić, 1958-1978) that at the Second Church and People's Council in Ohrid, a decision was made that he (the Serbian Patriarch) was chosen and accepted to be the supreme head of the restored Ohrid Archbishopric as Macedonian Orthodox Church,¹⁶ and that MOC remains in canonical unity with SOC. On the occasion of this change, and for the joy of the believers of the MOC, for the first time since 1945, SOC brought a positive decision on the Macedonian Church issue. Namely, at its regular June session, the Holy Synod of SOC made a positive decision that it agreed with the decision made at the Second Macedonian Church and People's Council in 1958, which states:

"The Holy Episcopal council concluded: the dioceses of Skopje, Ohrid, Bitola and Zletovo-Strumica at the Church and People's Council held on October 4-6, 1958 in Ohrid, **were separated into an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church**, which is governed by the Constitution adopted at this Council, and it further remains in canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church through its head, His Holiness the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church." What is especially important for the MOC is noted in point VI of the Holy Synod of SOC in the conclusion that briefly states: "This Decision **shall supersede the provisions of the Constitution of the SOC** referring to the dioceses and episcopos on the territory of the

¹⁶ Accordingly, in the future, he should have been titled as "Patriarch of Serbia and Macedonia"

People's Republic of Macedonia." In fact, a canonical release of the Macedonian dioceses in Vardar Macedonia was given, by which the restored Ohrid Archbishopric as Macedonian Orthodox Church became an *independent* church institution headed by its own leader and governed by its adopted Constitution.

In order to provide full independence of the MOC, two Macedonian bishops had to be selected and consecrated, who together with the Archbishop, would manage the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Church, and accordingly, the empty positions in the stated Macedonian dioceses would be filled. Thus, during the visit of Patriarch German to the People's Republic of Macedonia on July 19, 1959, after the festive episcopal liturgy in the Skopje church "St. Mina," the Serbian Patriarch German, bishop of Bačka Nikanor, the Archbishop of Ohrid and Skopje and Metropolitan of Macedonia HB Dositej, and Macedonian clergy had consecrated the bishop of Prespa and Bitola. On July 26, 1959, at the church "St. Nicholas" in Štip, the new Bishop of Zletovo and Strumica Naum was ordained.

On May 25, 1962, accompanied by the Patriarch "of Serbia and Macedonia" HH German, His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russian HH Alexei, with a church delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC),¹⁷ visited Macedonia and the MOC. The high church delegation of the ROC and SOC, with joint service of the prelate and clergy of the MOC headed by the Archbishop Dositej, held a joint liturgy in honor of the Sts. Cyril and Methodius in the church "St. Mary" Kamensko in Ohrid. In a way, this ecclesial act with the festive liturgy of the heads of the ROC, SOC and the MOC and their accompanied clergy meant a kind of recognition of the autocephalous status of the MOC.

In the period from 1958 to 1966, the Holy Synod of MPC eagerly expected the moment when SPC would introduce the MOC before other local Orthodox churches as an

¹⁷ Nestor Popovski, *Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia HH Alexei Visited the Macedonian Orthodox Church*, V. MPC, IV/2, Skopje, 1962, 55-77.

(autocephalous church. Waiting for the reply, but also preparing for full emancipation from the SOC, in spring 1966, the Holy Synod of MPC ordained the new candidates for bishops with the monastic name Methodius,¹⁸ the Bishop of Velička, and Cyril,¹⁹ and the Bishop of Tiveriopol, being the fifth bishop of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

However, after 1962, the relations between SOC and MOC cooled and worsened. On the advice of the Athenian Archdiocese and the Ecumenical Patriarch (Athenagoras) addressed to the Serbian Patriarch German, due to the reaction of certain Serbian reactionary bishops, it resulted in SOC terminating further support of the autocephalous status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, demanding the dioceses People's Republic of Macedonia to be returned under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as it was from 1922 to 1941.

Therefore, MOC hurried their preparations ahead of the 200 years jubilee of the non-canonical abolishment by a Sultan's charter (*berat*) of the former St. Clement's Ohrid Archbishopric (1767-1967). In that sense, having once ordained two new Macedonian bishops, Cyril and Methodius, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Holy Synod of MOC convened the *Third Church and People's Council Ozz* on July 17-18, 1967 in Ohrid. Then the Macedonian Orthodox Church was declared independent—autocephalous church.

After the restoration of the autocephaly of MOC, the Church grew further, both in the country and among Macedonian emigrants in the European and overseas countries. Churches and monasteries were built with great enthusiasm in the country, and also among the Macedonian emigration. For the needs of the Church, the Theological High School (1967) and the Orthodox Theological Faculty (1977) were founded, which bear the name of the patron of the church "St. Clement of Ohrid." Because the quantities of the Holy Myrrh were reduced, the

¹⁸ Methodius (Gjorgji Popovski), (Prilep, 25. III 1914 – 25. II. 1976).

¹⁹ Cyril (Nikola Popovski), (Crev Dvor, 23. VI 1834 – Skopje, 10. VI. 2013).

Holy Synod of MPC prepared and consecrated new holy myrrh in April 1971 in the church "St. Demetrius."²⁰ That was constantly repeated according to the needs of the Church.

After the restoration of the autocephaly of the St. Clement's Ohrid Archbishopric as **Macedonian Orthodox Church**, especially when the name was added (on December 12, 2009)—**Ohrid Archbishopric** (MOC-OA), it now exists and lives as an independent church-canonical life today. Even though it is still not recognized by other Orthodox local churches as an autocephalous church, and despite numerous attempts and efforts to finally achieve it, of which symptomatic is the attempt in 1968,²¹ it works and lives its own, independent ecclesial life. According to the 17 points of the elaboration of the decisions on the autocephaly of the MOC-OA, as an administrative part of the one, universal and apostolic Church, it emphasizes that it keeps the Scriptures, the sacred tradition, apostolic rules, and regulations of the ecumenical and local people's councils, and it will comply with them according to the Constitution of the MOC, adopted on October 6, 1958.²²

In the current period, the diocese of today's MOC-OA in the Republic of Macedonia consists of eight dioceses, namely Diocese of Skopje, based in Skopje, whose bishop is the Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia and Metropolitan of Skopje HB Stefan, with his residence in the suburban monastery "St. George," located in Kriv Dol on the Fortress; Diocese of Prespa and Pelagonia, based in Bitola, headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Peter, with residence in the impressive "St. Metropolitanate" in the city; Diocese of Bregalnica in Štip, headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, with residence in the metropolitan building under Isar next

²⁰ See more in: Protodeacon Stojan Jankovski, *Renewed another church tradition - Peacemaking and consecration of the Holy Myrrh*, V, MPC, XIII/1, Skopje, 1971, 76-80.

²¹ See more in: Aleksandar Trajanovski, *Attempts for recognition of the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church at the Moscow Pan-Orthodox Conference, according to the diary of the Bulgarian Patriarch Cyril*, "The Yearbook" 8, Theological Faculty "St. Clement of Ohrid" - Skopje, 2002, 267-282

²² See: *Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church*, Skopje, 1959, 58; *Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church*, V. MPC, I/1, Skopje, 1958, 21-37; *Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church* (Consolidated text), Skopje, 1995, 104; *Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church* (Consolidated text), in the collection: *Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church* (Documents), Prepared by Cane Mojanovski, I, Skopje, 2004, 131-167.

to the church "St. Nicholas"; Diocese of Debar and Kičevo based in Ohrid, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Timothy, based in the metropolitan residence Plaosnik under Samuil 's Fortress; Diocese of Strumica, headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Naum, based in Strumica; Diocese of Vardar Valley based in Veles and headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Agatangel; Diocese of Tetovo and Gostivar, based in Tetovo in the cathedral church "St. Cyril and Methodius," headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, and Diocese of Kumanovo and Osogovo,²³ based in Kumanovo in the cathedral church "St. Nicholas," headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph. The famous and historically important monastery "St. Transfiguration" in the village of Zrze, Prilep, is governed by His Eminence Bishop Clement, who is also synodal secretary. Those Macedonian monastic communities that are also important are: the monastery "St. Naum" (formerly "St. Archangel") on the southern shore of Lake Ohrid, headed by Archimandrite Nektarios (who is proposed for the enthronement of the Bishop of MOC), the monastery "St. John the Baptist," headed by Archimandrite Partenij, the monastery of Lesnovo "St. Gabriel," headed by Archimandrite Damascus, the monastery of Slepche "St. John the Baptist," headed by Archimandrite Serafin, and others. The famous female monasteries are the following: female sisterhood in the Markov monastery "St. Demetrius" (Sister Iliana), the monastery "St. Mary" in Matka (Sister Perpetua), the monastery "St. Nicholas" in the village of Ljubanci (Sister Eprosina), the monastery "St. Athanasius of Alexandria" in Zurce (Sister Anastasia), the monastery "St. Mary" in Rajčica (Sister Barbara), the monastery "St. Virgin Merciful Eleusa" in Velusa, the sisterhoods in Berovo, Dojran, Jankovec, and others.

Beyond the borders of the Republic of Macedonia in the diaspora overseas and in the European countries, there are four Macedonian dioceses, including: American-Canadian

²³ The Diocese of Polog and Kumanovo on August 17, 2013 was divided to the Diocese of Tetovo and Gostivar and Diocese of Kumanovo and Osogovo.

Diocese, headed by His Eminence, the Metropolitan Methodius, based in the church "St. Clement of Ohrid" in Toronto; Diocese of Australian and New Zealand, headed by the Administrator, Metropolitan Peter, based in the Metropolitanate building in Melbourne; European Diocese, headed by His Eminence, the Metropolitan Pimen, based in the church "St. Naum of Ohrid" in Malmö, Sweden, and the Diocese of Australia and Sydney, headed by its administrator Metropolitan Timothy, based in metropolitanate building in Sydney. The most famous monastery complexes in the Macedonian diaspora are the "St. Clement of Ohrid – Miracle Worker" near Melbourne, in the region King Lake, also in the so-called Macedonian Park, "St. Naum of Ohrid" in the area of Rocklin (Melbourne, Victoria), and others.

The above-mentioned dioceses of the MOC-OA are divided into numerous episcopal vicariates headed by vicars. These are in turn, divided into parishes or church municipalities headed by parish priests and priests. According to the 1991 census, the MOC-OA had 1,355,816 members, where 66 percent of Orthodox believers out of 2,233,960 are Macedonian citizens, over 400 priests, and 830 active religious buildings (churches, monasteries, chapels), of which 80 are located outside the borders of the Republic of Macedonia. Since then, that number has doubled to over 600 active priests.

Following the rise of the Church, today the MOC-OA has branched into 12 dioceses with over 40 episcopal vicariates and over 500 parishes, with approximately 2,000 active churches and monasteries and more than a hundred monks and nuns in the monastic brotherhood and sisterhoods living and working in the country and abroad.²⁴

²⁴ Metropolitan Naum, *Facing the Absurd*, Veljusa, 2007, 197; See also: Aleksandar Trajanovski, *Restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric as Macedonian Orthodox Church and its schematism*, (Skopje, INI), 1008, 501.