Organisation and Divisions in the Orthodox Church in Cyprus: Post-Independence Events and Changes in Context

Marios Sarris

Abstract

This paper provides an analytic framework through which one can make sense of events and changes that took place in the Orthodox Church in Cyprus after 1960. It deals, primarily, with events in the post 1973 period and, more specifically, the twenty first century. The paper addresses the historical context of these developments in order to illuminate the logic of Orthodox Church organisation. Moreover, it delineates the boundaries of groups involved in shifting alliances both within and outside the enlarged Synod and identifies the causes of internal division. The paper seeks to strike a balance between the standard ethnographic strategy of maintaining the anonymity of actors and the need to make the text meaningful to an otherwise informed readership.

Keywords: Orthodox, Church, Cyprus, nationalism, history, organisation, synod, cleavage, factionalism, politics

Introduction

Western analysts and diplomats often have difficulties understanding the role that the Orthodox Church plays in Cypriot politics. Based on western assumptions, they mistake the views and acts of the archbishop with those of the Church and they treat the body of the Church as a monolithic entity. The aim of this paper is to explain the logic of Orthodox Church organisation and to illuminate the context in which events and changes in the Orthodox Church in Cyprus took place after 1960.[1]

The paper incorporates a rather extensive section on the historical background to post-independence events. Its primary aim is to help the reader contextualise developments after independence. A thorough analysis of the all important institution of the ethnarchy is beyond the

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1   I would like to thank Hubert Faustmann, Andreas Panayiotou and Rita Severis for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. Constantinos Varravas provided valuable assistance in tracing some of the dates that appear in the text. I am also indebted to the two anonymous referees and the guest editor for their constructive remarks. Special thanks go to Christina McRoy for proofreading the material. Responsibility for the views expressed here is, of course, entirely mine.

scope of this paper. The section that deals with post-1960 events does not concentrate on the controversial rule of Makarios III and his political role in the 1960s. Instead, it shifts its emphasis to the period after 1973 and seeks to illuminate the current context of Church politics. This is covered in the more substantial ethnographic part that appears at the end of the paper. A note on the very name of this Church is also included at the beginning of the paper. It might help dissolve some of the ideological clouds of the present.

The Spell of Nationalism(s)

Official references to the 'autocephalous *Greek* Orthodox Church of Cyprus' [my emphasis] that appear in the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus echo nineteenth century Greek nationalism. The use of the adjective 'Greek' is particularly problematic in view of the fact that, currently, the Orthodox population of Cyprus is predominantly but not exclusively Greek. Increasing numbers of Russian, Arab and other Orthodox people who officially make the body of the island's Church can vote in ecclesiastical elections. The same applies to smaller numbers of late converts to Orthodoxy who belong to various national groups and qualify for membership. It is, however, a standard and rather old scholarly practice to name 'Greek' all Orthodox Churches that use the Greek rite, and not just the ethnically Greek ones, in order to distinguish them from the 'Latin' Church. To this day, the Arab Orthodox community of Lebanon is officially designated as 'Greek Orthodox' in the Lebanese constitution.

In recent years, an increasing number of people in Cyprus employ the term 'Cypriot Orthodox' or 'the Church of Cyprus' in order to identify the local Church. Some of the scholars who opted for the latter designation have been taken to task by Schabel for implying that the other Christian Churches of Cyprus (such as the Latin Church) are somehow not so 'Cypriot' (Schabel, 2001, p. 43). Indeed, Cyprus has no State Church in the sense that England does.[2] Many of late attempts to brand the island's Orthodox Church as 'the Cypriot Church' reflect the emerging forms of Cypriot nationalism that grew particularly strong in some quarters of the Greek community after 1974.

The same applies to the designation 'Cypriot Orthodox' which is no less suspect. The use of the adjective 'Cypriot' conceals allusions to an *ethnically* Cypriot Church – a construct to which Cypriot nationalists are ideologically committed in varying degrees. In this regard, the term is as much a nationalistic label as the adjective 'Greek' when used by Greek nationalists to describe the same Church. The alternatives 'Cypriot Eastern Orthodox Church' or 'Eastern Orthodox Church of Cyprus' pose problems of a different sort. As Ware (1963, p. 16) points out, the Orthodox Church is truly ecumenical and can not be limited to the 'East' or to 'eastern people'.

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2   For a brief exposition of the legal position of the Orthodox Church in the Republic of Cyprus, see Tornaritis (1990, pp. 2-12).

In view of the above, it might be useful to examine how the Orthodox Church views itself. In the Orthodox Tradition that precedes the advent of modern European nationalisms (ethnic or civic), autocephalous or independent Churches are viewed as *local* and not as national associations (*ibid.*, p. 15). The testimony of the local Church is seen as the manifestation of Orthodox Christianity in a certain region. In the light of this, it is much more appropriate to describe the island's Church as, simply, the 'Orthodox Church *in* Cyprus'. For the purposes of this paper, I am adopting this term of reference to the Church knowing that it is not exactly amenable to the taste of either Greek or Cypriot nationalists.

One can make a particularly strong historical case for this choice of term in the Cypriot context. The situation in Cyprus differs markedly from that in the Balkans where modern states created their respective national Churches to serve their nation-building purposes. The Orthodox Church in Greece, for example, is a by-product of nineteenth century Greek nationalism.[3] In the case of Cyprus, however, the Church predates the modern State by fifteen centuries. If anything, an ancient Church created a modern state in Cyprus, and not *vice versa*. In the fifth century AD, when Orthodox hierarchs in Cyprus made history by gaining the autocephaly of their Church, neither the modern Greek nation nor the modern Cypriot state existed on the map. This was an achievement that the smart head of a small island Church masterminded through dreams, miraculous discoveries and skilful diplomacy.[4] It was certainly not a national aim that he attained after reading the scrolls of Greek or Cypriot nationalists. To reduce the Orthodox Church in Cyprus to a 'Greek' or 'Cypriot' national Church is to project the competing ideologies of the present into the past.

The Historical Context

Two main layers of administration marked civic life in the eastern Mediterranean in Hellenistic times. The imperial structures of Alexander and his epigones ranked supreme to all other forms of authority. At a lower level of governance, the independent city-states of the classical era were allowed to confederate and maintain most of their civic functions. These regional associations came to be known as 'Commons' (Κοινά) and could be found all over the Greek-speaking world. Their responsibilities extended to coinage, athletic games and religious festivals among other things. The creation of the 'Common of Cypriots' (Κοινό Κυπρίων) marked the time when Cypriots entered world history as a unified polity.

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3   For a discussion of how nineteenth century Balkan nationalists employed religion in the process of nation-building, see Castellan, 1984 and Roudometof, 1998. On the relationship between nationhood and Church in Europe, see Hastings, 1997.

4   For a discussion of the historical context in which events and deliberations leading to the confirmation of Cypriot ecclesiastical independence took place, see Hackett, 1901, pp. 13-32 and Englezakis, 1996, pp. 57-69.

This decentralised model of local government extended to the Roman period, when Christianity started spreading to the Greek world. As a result, the organisation of the early Church was modelled on that of the existing civic structures and developed to resemble the con-federal arrangement of the Commons. This was bound to occur since early Christianity did not grow in a socio-cultural vacuum. Doctrine gradually emerged to legitimise the essentially 'con-federal' and democratic character that Orthodox Church Synods acquired at both the local and ecumenical levels. In the Orthodox iconographic depiction of the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit appears in the form of tongues of fire which are 'cloven', descending *separately* upon each of the apostles (Ware, 1963, p. 246). In Orthodox symbolic terms, this is equal to a divine maxim granting equal voting rights to all members of a Synod, irrespective of the size of the flock that each hierarch shepherds. An extreme manifestation of this principle can be seen in the Ecumenical Synod where the voting power of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia(s) equals that of the Head of the autocephalous Church of Sinai – an abbot managing a handful of Greek monks in the desert. In this essentially 'con-federal' arrangement, the sheer logic of the 'one-man-one-vote' principle informs what the Greeks call 'synodical democracy' and safeguards against the possibility of a big Church dominating the small ones.

In the Orthodox Tradition, a Church is granted autocephaly on the grounds of its apostolic foundation. On this premise, an autocephalous Church remains in communion and doctrinal agreement with other Orthodox Churches but it can run its own affairs independently. It can do so as long as it maintains a minimum of thirteen bishops in accordance with the apostolic precedent of Jesus and his twelve disciples. As for the Head of the Orthodox Church, local or ecumenical, he remains 'first among equals'. His privileges are generally reduced to the rights of convening and representing his Synod.[5] In most other respects, he remains equal to the other bishops or patriarchs. The Head of the Church is subordinate to his Synod in the same spirit that the Synod is subordinate to him. This means that the Head can not take decisions without the consent of the majority in the Synod, and the majority of Synod members can not take decisions without the consent of the Head. The Head's views on key issues express the views of his Church only to the extent that they have been approved by majority vote in the Synod. Once decisions are reached by majority rule in the Synod, the minority has to abide by them in both word and deed.[6]

Latin attempts to introduce the *filioque* into the Creed were dismissed in the Greek East as an expression of the Pope's ambition to abolish synodical democracy and to dominate the Church. The *filioque* represents a modification in the way the Trinitarian doctrine is formulated, especially in relation to the role which the Holy Spirit is theologically assumed to play. The original passage

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5   In Cyprus at least, the archbishop's privileges extend to the rights of presiding over the Synod, ordering the consecration of bishops, officiating all over the island without the local bishop's permission, and sending encyclicals to all the island's churches.

6   The minority has the right to register its disagreement in the minutes of the Synod's proceedings.

in the Creed according to which the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father' was altered in the West with the addition of the phrase 'and the Son' (*filioque*, in Latin). The Greeks objected to the insertion of the phrase and to the idea of the Spirit proceeding from the Son. They allegedly saw in it an implicit attempt to subordinate the Spirit to the Son. Disagreement over those three very small words sparked a doctrinal dispute which culminated in the Schism of 1054.[7] From the Greek clerical standpoint, however, the abstruse semiotics of the wording could have immense implications for Church politics and organisation. In Catholic thinking, as perceived by the Orthodox, the Head of the Church represents Christ on earth, while the Holy Spirit guides the formulation of doctrine. To subordinate the Spirit to the Son, as the Greeks had alleged, was synonymous to granting the Pope the exclusive privilege of arbitrating over Christian doctrine. This led to yet another authoritarian doctrine in the West which asserts the 'infallibility of the Pope'. The latter was proclaimed in July 1870 by the Vatican Council convened by Pope Pius IX. The pronouncement of the Pope's infallibility when speaking on matters of faith and morals *ex cathedra* was a reaction to the loss of temporal power that the Vatican suffered as a result of the advent of modern Italian nationalism. Papal infallibility survived the humanism of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and was re-affirmed in July 1973 by the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In general, the Catholic Church maintained a centralism of authority and organisation which is completely unknown in the Orthodox East. The religious cult figure that makes the Pope is nowhere to be found in the surroundings of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The 'charisma' of any Orthodox patriarch, bishop or priest is incessantly and relentlessly contested by the competing charismas of a number of his equals.[8]

In recent years, a number of historians of the Latin period in Cyprus shifted their emphasis from conflict and the higher clergy to patterns of actual co-existence, accommodation and cultural exchange between Greeks and Latins on the island (Coureas, 1997; Schabel, 2005; Carr, 2005).[9] Arguing against perceived wisdom, Schabel (2001, pp. 34-86, 2005) contested the view that the Orthodox Church in Cyprus was persecuted and suppressed by the Latin Church.[10] It is, however,

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7   For a historically and theologically informed treatise on the breach in Christendom, see Sherrard, 2002 [1959].

8   This is a *structural* feature of Orthodox Church culture. It manifests itself most vividly in the association of twenty principal and independent monasteries on Mount Athos which mirrors the organisational structure of the Orthodox Church. While monks of one monastery celebrate the 'magical charisma' (Weber, 1993 [1922], pp. 2-3) of their elder-abbot through references to his feats of spirituality, the monks of a neighbouring monastery dismiss his qualities as a mere *plani*, illusion or delusion, which they consider to be the work of the devil. The theological definition of *plani* refers to 'error, beguilement, the acceptance of a mirage mistaken for truth' (Palmer, 1979, p. 362). For an analysis of the mechanisms through which spirituality is constructed and contested on Mount Athos, see Sarris, 2000.

9   For earlier works and views, see Hackett, 1901 and Englezakis, 1996, pp. 305-314.

10   On a brief deconstructionist note, Cyprus' accession to the European Union and gradual incorporation into western political structures marks the emergence of a 'revisionist' approach to Latin rule in Cyprus.

accurate to say that the authority of the Orthodox Church was much reduced during Latin rule. The Latin rulers of Cyprus reduced the Orthodox Synod to four bishops whom they forced to establish bishoprics in rural centres. It is my contention that the adversity of the measures taken against the Orthodox Church owed less to the religious hostility that the Latins felt towards the local Greeks and more to the politics of administration. The relatively democratic, con-federalist and decentralised nature of Orthodox Church organisation was compatible with a system of small land-holding but not with the large estate feudalism that the Latins introduced to Cyprus after the twelfth century. The partial displacement and subordination of the Greek clergy to the Latin Church in Cyprus re-addressed the relationship between the island's economic infra-structure and its political supra-structure.

This is not to deny the fact that a Byzantine land aristocracy existed on the island before the arrival of the Latins. Nicolaou-Konnari admits that the historical record is silent on the extent to which the new feudal structures super-imposed by the Latins caused a complete break with established Byzantine social and institutional arrangements, especially in rural areas (2005, pp. 13, 28-29, 31-32). Both Nicolaou-Konnari and Schabel, however, stress that the subordination of the Orthodox clergy to Latin bishops aimed at controlling the numbers of Greek serfs who opted for either priesthood or monkhood in order to achieve emancipation and redeem themselves of their manorial obligations (Nicolaou-Konnari, 2005, p. 34; Schabel, 2005, pp. 191-193, 200). This lends additional support to the claim that the measures taken against the Orthodox Church were rooted in the new economic structures.

As in other parts of their empire, the Ottomans restored the Orthodox Church in Cyprus to its former position and endowed it with secular powers as well. Significantly, this coincides with the abolition of the feudal system and the re-distribution of land to both Christian and Muslim peasants. With time, the Orthodox archbishop of Cyprus, assisted by the bishops and the abbots of principal monasteries, acquired the right of collecting the empire's taxes from the Christian subjects and assumed extensive administrative responsibilities. In return, they became responsible for the orderly behaviour of their flocks and acted as security against popular insurrection. The organisation of religious groups into communities (known as *millets*) whose leaders acted as political representatives (or *ethnarchs*) to the authorities became a key feature of the Ottoman political system. The archbishop rose to political power and even gained the rights of appointing the Dragoman of the Saray, the highest office in the Governate, as well as communicating directly with the Porte. With money flowing into the coffers of the Church, the Ottoman era became, quite literally, its golden age.[11]

However, it would be too crude an argument to say that the Church acted as a mere instrument of control and collaborated with the Ottomans in plundering its people. Islam had

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11   For more information on the Ottoman period in Cyprus and the position of the Orthodox Church, see Hackett, 1901, pp. 190-237; Luke, 1921; Hill, 1952, pp. 305-400; Philippou, 1975; Gazioglou, 1990; Jennings, 1993.

already established a presence on the island and the Church could not reduce the Greek peasants to destitution. Mass conversions to Islam could mean not only the loss of Christian souls to the infidel but also reductions in the tax revenues of the Church. Afterall, the archbishop and his suffragan bishops were officially acknowledged to be both representatives *and* guardians of their flocks. In their latter capacity, at least some took the responsibility to protect their flocks seriously. They stood up to rapacious Ottoman governors against government malpractice and *excessive* taxation (Hill, 1952, pp. 310, 316-317). Rather than viewing the Church as an exploitative institution of indirect ruling, it might be more appropriate to see it as an intermediary force that was 'sandwiched' between the demands of the Ottoman government and the need to maintain its grip on the Christian subjects.

The Orthodox bishops were allowed to return to their old towns but the Synod was not restored to its former membership. At the onset of Ottoman rule, the hierarchy was composed of the archbishop and three bishops. With time, occasional additions to the Synod were made as convenient and these included the abbots of Kykko and Machaera as well as the archimandrite and the exarch of the Archbishopric (Hill, 1952, pp. 312, 315, 579). In fact, the system remained in a state of flux for many years making it difficult for the Church to manage its own affairs and to practically defend its autocephaly. Whenever trouble arose in the ranks of the incomplete local Synod, the Cypriots referred to outside ecclesiastical authorities to adjudicate on the matters at dispute (*ibid.,* pp. 313-316, 327, 332). This situation continued during the British period and gave rise to the so-called 'archiepiscopal question' – a contest between two bishops of the Church that led to the archiepiscopal see remaining vacant for nine years (1900-1909).[12]

The Period after Independence

Given the logic of Orthodox Church organisation described above, the Latin measures had immense repercussions on the Orthodox Church in Cyprus. Since then, the island's Orthodox Church remained autocephalous only *in name*. On major issues concerning the Church, the Synod could not take decisions as it had not been a 'Full Synod' (Πλήρης Σύνοδος) of at least thirteen member bishops. On some occasions in the post-independence period, archbishops convened a 'Greater Synod' (Μείζων Σύνοδος) in order to resolve matters that threatened stability in the Church. Hierarchs from other Greek Churches and Patriarchates were invited to participate in the Cypriot Synod in order to have a quorum of at least thirteen members. In a situation like this, the archbishop invites the Heads of the ancient Patriarchates to send three individuals of their choice each to man the Greater Synod. Combined with the archbishop's privilege of determining the timing of the Greater Synod, this gives him a relative advantage in influencing the outcome of the Synod's proceedings. This may well explain why successive archbishops since the end of Latin

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12   For a detailed discussion of the 'archiepiscopal question' in Cyprus, see Hill, 1952, pp. 577-603.

rule lacked the incentive of restoring the Synod to its former membership. Schabel's implicit suggestion that a larger number of bishoprics would have made the Church less viable economically (2001, p. 57) is, in my opinion, much less plausible an explanation.

The first time that the need for a 'Greater Synod' arose was in 1973 when the bishops Anthimos, Gennadios and Kyprianos rebelled against archbishop Makarios. They proceeded to dethrone the archbishop on the (rather sound) theological argument that his role as an Orthodox hierarch was not compatible with the office of state president. The motivation behind the three bishops' act was fundamentally political. After independence, Makarios established a regime of power based on an extensive system of political patronage. Parts of the Right which were excluded from the state's clientelistic relations were radicalised enough to become Greece's long arm in Cyprus.[13] The ecclesiastical dispute over the archbishop-president's twin identity represented an attempt by the Junta then ruling Greece to undermine Makarios. The latter was quick to respond by convening a 'Greater Synod' of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus. For this purpose, he invited a number of hierarchs from the Greek Patriarchates of the Middle East that rested beyond the political reach of the Junta in Athens. This 'full' Synod declared the rulings of the 'lacking' Cypriot Synod invalid, reinstated Makarios and, in turn, dethroned the three dissenting bishops. Nine years later, the dethronement of Gennadios and Anthimos was revoked at the initiative of Makarios' successor, Chrysostomos I, who convened a Greater Synod for the purpose.

The Church's inability to take decisions was manifested again in the late 1990s. Amidst accusations of the Church becoming too 'worldly' and overtly 'political', a charismatic monk called Athanasios arrived on Cyprus from Mount Athos at the invitation of the archbishop. Athanasios' return to his native country was bound to stir controversy in local Church politics. He had a massive appeal to the public, and especially to young people. The speeches that he made in a chapel at the University of Cyprus attracted scores of students. His sermons lacked the pomp which people learned to associate with Orthodox preachers. His appeal to *spiritual values* marked a contrast to the nationalistic or puritanical discourses of other clerics. Athanasios employed an idiom that made key ideas in Greek patristic literature accessible to those who were not theologically inclined. A revival of monastic life on the island was partly attributed to him, although not always uncritically. In February 1999, despite Communist Party (AKEL) opposition, he was elected bishop of Limassol, a stronghold of popular left wing support since the 1930s. The charismatic monk's popularity and success were bound to provoke the reaction of established authorities and bureaucratic structures within the Church; especially in view of forthcoming electoral contests in the Church. Soon after, some of the country's media thrived on explicit accounts of homosexual liaisons that the young bishop was allegedly involved in. This was too serious an accusation to level against a bishop of the Church even by Cypriot standards.

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13 For a discussion on disaffected groups forming the opposition to Makarios' rule at national level, see Attalides, 2003, pp. 52, 125, 127. For an analysis of the same process at village level, see Loizos, 1981, pp. 55-61.

Archbishop Chrysostomos I, who had succeeded Makarios in November 1977, was sympathetic to the young Athanasios. He convened a 'Greater Synodical Court' (Μείζον Συνοδικό Δικαστήριο) in November 2000 and invited clergymen from abroad to attend. The evidence produced in the Synod was overwhelmingly in favour of Athanasios' innocence. The decision to acquit him of all charges was unanimous.

Both incidents highlight the difficulties that the Church faced as late as modern times recovering from the blow that it suffered to its structures in the twelfth century. Whenever the Church faced a controversy, the archbishop called the shots by convening a Greater Synod and inviting outsiders to attend. This state of affairs was a far cry from the 'synodical democracy' of the Greeks, and did little to enhance the independence of the local Church. Chrysostomos II will go into the history books as the archbishop-reformer who, upon his election to the throne in November 2006, re-instituted all the bishoprics that the Latins had abolished. By March 2008, when the last bishop was consecrated, the Orthodox Church in Cyprus could boast a full Synod of seventeen bishops. In doing so, Chrysostomos enjoyed the support of the rest of the Synod. If there is one thing that all Cypriot bishops agree upon, it is their resentment of outsiders meddling in their own affairs. The enlarged Synod is a fully functioning body in need of no external assistance. More importantly, perhaps, it grew sufficiently big to allow for internal cleavage.

Cleavage and Factionalism

In December 2009, a hacker was reported breaking into the computer records of the UN special representative to Cyprus and releasing their contents to the Greek Cypriot media. Among other things, the records appeared to contain an analysis of the power dynamics in the Synod. According to the reports, bishops were divided into 'liberals' and 'conservatives' on the basis of their views on the Cyprus dispute. Advisors to the UN representative could, perhaps, do with the briefing of an expert or two. This analysis, if true, oversimplifies the situation in the Synod. It fails to grasp the complexity of permuting alliances within the Synod as well as the ways in which these strategies interact with national politics. Divisions within the hierarchy of the Church result from three different causes. Each cause or principle produces a typology of division which cuts across the other two.

The first principle is a form of cleavage that manifests itself in almost all Orthodox Churches in which the clergy is predominantly Greek. It leads to the internal fragmentation of the clerical establishment into three main *ideological currents*: the *ethnarchikoi*, the *organosiakoi* and the *paterikoi*. Each of these groupings takes a radically different position on a number of key issues. The most important of these concern the relationship of the Church to the State, its openness to social otherness, and its involvement in inter-religious dialogue.

In Cyprus, the *ethnarchikoi* trace their modern ideological ancestry to Makarios III and make the dominant group in the Synod. They remain strong defenders of the ethnarchic role of the Church. This role is no longer understood in its historic sense in which the archbishop acted

as the political representative of the religious community. It rather pertains to the right of the Church to actively interfere in political developments concerning the 'national issue'. Consequently, the *ethnarchikoi* believe that the Church should maintain a strong involvement in the economy that would empower it to perform this role. Excessive engagement in business activities is often justified by them on these grounds. On social issues, they retain a conservative outlook which, in its moderate form, verges on constructive indifference. Although they often adopt a largely pragmatic approach to social issues, few resist the temptation of sticking their noses into people's bedrooms. On matters of inter-faith dialogue, they fervently advocate regular communication and better relations with the other Christian Churches, especially when political gains are at stake. Over the years, the Cypriot *ethnarchikoi* have been consistent supporters of their Church's participation in the World Council of Churches.

The *organosiakoi* form a minority in the Synod. They represent an established movement of active religious groups and organisations which are devoted to home missionary and educational work. They publish a number of periodicals and books, provide catechism classes and run programmes of youth work. Although they cooperate with Church authorities, their organisations spring from private initiative and maintain certain autonomy from Church structures. It is a form of religious activism that draws its inspiration from Christian saints such as St. Basil. St. Basil had established an elaborate complex of religious and welfare institutions in Cappadocia in order to tend the needy among his flock. Very much like the *ethnarchikoi*, the *organosiakoi* defend the Church's role in national politics. Unlike the *ethnarchikoi*, they oppose its openness to other religious groups. Their rejection of the Catholic and Protestant Churches can often be expressed in terms which have been described as absolute and dogmatic. They also endorse an exclusively intellectualist approach to matters of theology. On social issues, they are by far the most conservative group in the Church. They adopt a strict moralist approach to Christian life and have specific expectations about how people (and especially women) should look, dress and conduct themselves in their private lives. A lower middle class ethic informs their attitudes to social issues and, in some quarters, they can occasionally display strong puritanical tendencies.

The *paterikoi* represent the latest and most controversial addition to the Synod. This group espouses a return to the mystical theology of the Greek Fathers of the Church. They advocate a spiritual apprehension of truth and resent the scholastic and intellectualist approach to theology that many modern Greek scholars adopted over the years as a result of studying in the West and, more specifically, Germany. They consider this a digression from the Orthodox patristic tradition in which theology was never divorced from the monasteries. In fact, the *paterikoi* are part of a wider revivalist tendency that aims at reversing the effects of Western Christian influence on all aspects of Orthodox life. As early as the 1960s, an artistic movement led by Photis Kontoglou in Greece started the process of displacing the Italian Renaissance style from Orthodox iconography in favour of the old and more 'spiritual' Byzantine style.

On the relationship between Church and State, the *paterikoi* is the group least likely to encourage an active involvement of the Church in politics. On some occasions, they stress that the

primary obligation of the Church is to shepherd its flock and not to lead the nation. Bishops belonging to this group spend more time listening to people's confessions than doing business. They draw their inspiration from members of the Hesychast monastic movement of the fourteenth century AD who sought to attain a mystical state of 'inner stillness' *(hesychia)* through the renouncement of the world rather than active involvement in it. The most important figure in this tradition is Saint Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), bishop of Thessaloniki. However, what makes the *paterikoi* stand out from the rest is their liberal latitude on social issues which is quite unprecedented for modern Orthodox standards. The *paterikoi* dwell upon the stress which the Fathers of the Orthodox Church laid on the 'uniqueness of each person'. They appeal to this principle in order to justify their own readiness to accept an individual's unique characteristics and to accommodate his or her idiosyncratic nature. Among the circles of the *paterikoi*, one can experience the rather striking sight of young men with pony tails, Lennon style glasses and worn-out jeans serving in church. This may not be much of a novelty in the twenty first century, (in fact, it is quite old fashioned), but it is certainly a far cry from the spectacle of Orthodox women wearing long skirts and cuddling up together at the rear of the temple. Despite their openness to social otherness, the *paterikoi* remain less enthusiastic on matters of inter-faith dialogue. Their lukewarm attitude to the religious other has led to accusations of the *paterikoi* being 'fundamentalists' and 'religious fanatics'. Yet, their reluctance to embrace a spirit of reconciliation with the Catholic and Protestant Churches is expressed in less uncompromising terms than those adopted by the *organosiakoi*. The *paterikoi* argue that they embrace the representatives of those Churches in a spirit of Christian love, but they would refrain from any activities that could imply acceptance of their 'heretical' views. In fact, the misgivings that the *paterikoi* have about inter-religious dialogue owes a lot to the scepticism with which they view Western Christianity. In many respects, they are much more open to Islam than they are to Western Christianity.

In the last few years, the *paterikoi* made inroads into the young and most educated sectors of Greek Cypriot society.[14] Their growing appeal to large sections of the population gave rise to controversies. When a bishop attempted to replace village church icons painted in the debased westernised style with ones belonging to the Byzantine tradition, he met resistance by locals. Some of these icons were donated to churches by people whose descendants still lived in the villages. From the point of view of the local Church, both the icon-painter and the donor ideally remain anonymous in the Byzantine iconographic tradition. From the point of view of some of the locals, the icon acted as a reminder of their ancestor who donated it to the church, and celebrated his lineage in the village. So when the bishop stepped on his descendant's toes, they were up in arms. On other occasions, a bishop found himself accused of 'brainwashing' people when a number of university graduates under his spiritual influence joined monasteries and convents on the island.

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14   As early as 1993, Peristianis (1993, p. 261) predicted a revivalist tendency in Cypriot Orthodoxy but he did not expect it to happen in the direction of the historic Church.

From the point of view of some other bishops and their representatives in the media, a young person should not join a monastery without his parents' consent. From the point of view of those defending the act, the bishops levelling these accusations, like all higher clergy in the Orthodox Church, came from the ranks of the monks themselves. The debate highlighted differences in the ways monastic life is construed, pertaining to a rather artificial split between Athonite and local Cypriot monasticism. In short, the *paterikoi*, or at least some of them, will continue being the subject of controversy for as long as they pose an ideological threat to established elites, both within and outside the Church.

These three trends partly shape the complicated picture that the Church currently presents at the higher echelons of administration. Alliances within the Synod permute depending on the topic that is being discussed. When the subject in question concerns the Church taking positions on matters political, the *ethnarchikoi* side with the *organosiakoi* and outvote the more reluctant *paterikoi*. When social issues are addressed, the *ethnarchikoi* (usually) stand by the *organosiakoi* and marginalise the more liberal *paterikoi*. And when matters regarding inter-faith dialogue are raised, the *paterikoi* enjoy the solidarity of the *organosiakoi* but fail to outnumber the more constructive *ethnarchikoi*. The permutation is not perfect for, as I shall demonstrate, other factors come into play to make the situation even more complex. If, however, one suspends consideration of the other variables, the net effect is a Church which favours engagement in national politics, remains conservative or indifferent to social challenges, and supports inter-faith dialogue. The extent to which the positions taken by the three groups comply with the norms of a pluralistic society and a democratic secular state varies accordingly. The overall picture is summarised below in the form of a matrix. The plus (+) signs stand for positions which are conducive to a secular and pluralistic environment while the minus (-) signs stand for the opposite. The signs in the matrix represent an evaluation of their respective positions from a liberal standpoint. If one wishes to take a conservative line, one only needs to reverse the signs.

	Ethnarchikoi	*Organosiakoi*	*Paterikoi*
Involvement in politics	-	-	+
Openness to social otherness	-	-	+
Support to inter – religious dialogue	+	-	-

The second (and currently more important) cause of division in the Synod is a by-product of the archiepiscopal elections held in 2006. The three candidates in the election (bishop Athanasios of Limassol, bishop Nikiforos of Kykko and bishop Chrysostomos of Paphos) remain the key leading figures in the Synod, each backed by a group of other bishops. Chrysostomos of Paphos won the election despite enjoying an electoral support of less than ten per cent. His success owes much to the peculiarities of a complex electoral system, as well as to his ability to outmanoeuvre the two leading candidates by playing one off against the other. Immediately after ascending to the

throne, Chrysostomos started the process of re-instituting the old bishoprics. Interestingly, his choices of new bishops strengthened the Athanasios group in the Synod. This surprised many observers as Chrysostomos is the man who had propagated the accusations against Athanasios in the past. The archbishop's move, however, is a purely strategic one and makes perfect sense in the light of the power dynamics that developed in the Synod. By strengthening Athanasios' hand in the Synod, Chrysostomos sought to counterweight the influence of the all powerful bishop of Kykko, Nikiforos. This leaves him and his team occupying the 'middle ground' in the Synod and determining the outcome of the vote. While the Athanasios and Nikiforos camps carve their respective territories up, the archbishop sits on the fence and runs the show. This is how he controls the Synod for he has only a thin majority in it.

The third cause of division in the Synod can be traced in the interplay between Church and national politics. Factions within the Church may occasionally strike alliances with political forces, especially during electoral contests that take place in either domain. The extent to which these alliances are formalised depends largely on the political culture of the parties involved and their readiness to respect the boundary between religion and politics. In the last archiepiscopal elections, for example, the Communists became the only political force to officially back a candidate, following a legacy of interference in Church affairs that dates back to the 1940s. The heads of other political parties directly or indirectly expressed a personal preference for one candidate or another, but stopped short of making it party policy. Once again, the Communists exhibited their inability to observe a most fundamental norm in secular democracies regarding the separation of the two realms. This denied them any moral ground to level criticism against the archbishop for interfering in the presidential elections of 2008. Their complaints (however justified currently and historically) had lost all political legitimacy as a result of them lapsing into the same sin only two years earlier.

Nikiforos continues to enjoy the staunch support of the Communist Left and the tacit approval of the Liberal Right. These forces are usually designated as 'moderate' in their readiness to accept some of the Turkish conditions on a settlement to the Cyprus dispute. The archbishop is flanked by the parties of the Centre which take a 'harder line' in rejecting these terms. In the event of a political settlement, Nikiforos will support it only if he feels that it has a good chance of surviving the referendum. The archbishop will oppose it by all means and at all costs. This makes Athanasios the *key man* in the Synod. His symbiosis with a Communist mayor in Limassol has been free of any conflict during the last three years. At the same time, he maintains good relations with some of the more radical forces in the Right. As to what his political leanings on the Cyprus dispute might be, this could be the subject of another paper.

Conclusion

Cypriots entered world history as a unified polity with the formation of their 'Common' in Hellenistic times. The early Christian Church on the island developed structures in parallel to

those of the Common. As a result, Orthodox Church organisation in Cyprus, as in other parts of the Greek world, acquired a confederal-democratic character. This system of Church governance gained theological legitimacy through the adaptation of doctrine to existing institutional arrangements. It was abolished after the arrival of the Latins in the twelfth century AD who reduced the bishops to four, and subordinated them to the local Latin Church hierarchy. The re-institution of the abolished bishoprics in 2008 marks a turning point in the modern history of the Church. With a full Synod of seventeen bishops, the Orthodox Church in Cyprus regained its autonomy not only in name, but also in practice.

Alliances within the enlarged Synod shift in accordance with a number of criteria. Each produces a different typology of groupings that cuts across the other. Two *paterikoi* bishops sharing the same ideological outlook on matters political, social and doctrinal, may participate in two different bishop-led factions of the Synod, and seek different alliances with political forces outside the Church. Despite the shifting nature of alliances, the Synod remains a democratic body in which decisions are taken by majority vote. On key issues, the views of the archbishop reflect the views of the Church only to the extent that they have been sanctioned by majority rule. Whenever a controversial issue comes to the fore, local analysts and foreign diplomats should not jump into conclusions about what the position of the Church *is*, or what it *might be* in the future, on the basis of public statements made by the archbishop to the press. The Synod of the Orthodox Church in Cyprus is far from being a monolithic body.

Secularisation is another area in which developments have occurred since 1960. Makarios III became the last archbishop to act as both religious leader and political representative of the Greek community. His death in 1977 marked the end of the institution of the ethnarchy only technically. The Church redefined its ethnarchic role after 1977 and continues to pursue it to the present day. The ethnarchic strand remains the dominant force in the Synod but, as I have tried to show in this paper, it is no longer unchallenged within the Church.

Opposition to the ethnarchic tendencies of the leadership originates from both within and outside the Church. The Communists' rise to state power in 2008 and Cyprus' accession to the European Union in 2004 constitute landmark events in this respect. Their combined effect can only further the process of secularisation in the Republic. Upon taking office, the Communists broke a long established norm of Cypriot political culture and appointed a minister of Education and Culture without seeking his prior approval by the Church. On a second front, that of taxing the Church, they were forced into retreat as a result of mishandling the affair and underestimating the ultimate protection which the constitution offers to the Church against the confiscation of its properties. On their part, European bodies have established a record of judicial decisions which favour the separation of Church and State, although the matter largely remains the prerogative of member states. Their rulings on the saga concerning Greek identity cards and religious symbols in Italian schools bear testimony to this fact. It remains to be seen how the Church will respond to the combined pressures of the European Union, the ruling Communists and an increasingly secular Cypriot public.

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