



Summary :

Although he occupied the patriarchal throne for a short period, Dionysios V of Constantinople (1820-1891) played an important role in ecclesiastical matters, particularly in the so-called "issue of privileges".

Other Names

Charitonidis

Date and Place of Birth

22 March 1820, Adrianople

Date and Place of Death

12 August 1891, Constantinople

Main Role

Patriarch of Constantinople

1. Activity of Dionysios V until his ascension to the patriarchal Throne

Dionysios V of Constantinople, whose secular surname was Charitonidis, was born on 22 March 1820 in Adrianople (Edirne). He studied there until the age of 19 and then worked as a teacher in Saranta Ekklesies (Turkish: Kirk Kilise, Kırklareli) for 8 years, plus 3 more in Didymoteicho (Turkish: Dimetoka) in Thrace.

In 1851 Dionysios was ordained deacon; in 1855 grand archdeacon (Megas Archidiakonos) and Megas Protosyngelos in 1856. On 26 July 1858 he was elected metropolitan of Crete. He remained in the metropolitan throne of Crete until 1866, when he was removed from the island accused by the Sublime Porte of fomenting the Cretan Uprising.¹

On 16 November 1868 he became metropolitan of Didymoteicho; after Patriarch Gregorios VI resigned, he became deputy ("topotiritis") of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In 1873 he became metropolitan of Adrianople and remained there until 1880. It is worth mentioning that on 6 February 1879 an attempt was made against his life by supporters of the Bulgarian Exarchate and he was saved thanks to the intervention of the Russian general Viltschekovski. In the period 1880-1886 he was [metropolitan of Nicaea](#), before he returned to the diocese of Adrianople on 22 January 1886. His second term of office at the diocese of Adrianople lasted only for a year. After Ioakeim IV resigned, Dionysios was elected new Ecumenical Patriarch on 23 January 1887.²

2. The significance of the ascension of Dionysios V to the patriarchal throne

The ascension of Dionysios V to the patriarchal throne was particularly important for the internal ecclesiastical matters of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, since it represented the first defeat of the supporters of Ioakeim. Dionysios and Ioakeim were the two candidates for the throne; the first received 12 votes and the second 5 votes.³ This development showed the leading role the metropolitan of Rhodes –and subsequent metropolitan of Herakleia and [Chalkedon](#) – Germanos would play in the battle against the supporters of Ioakeim. It is worth mentioning that Spanoudis, who supported Ioakeim, said that Dionysios had abandoned the management of ecclesiastical matters to Germanos and, as a result, the latter had become the "invisible manager of the Patriarchate".⁴

3. Dionysios V and the issue of privileges

The period Dionysios V was in the patriarchal throne is closely connected with the issue of privileges. It was then that the privileges of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were questioned; Dionysios adopted a particularly determined attitude. The privileges had been



questioned in the first term of office of Patriarch Ioakeim III (1878-1884) as well. When the latter resigned in 1884, the Synod would not elect a new patriarch unless the Sublime Porte gave in. The Porte acceded to the request and did not broach the issue of privileges when Ioakeim IV was patriarch (1884-1887). However, in the years of Dionysios V there was a new violation of the patriarchal privileges. Among other actions, the Porte ousted in 1888 the metropolitans of Serrai and Kastoria unbeknown to the patriarch, issued **berats** for Bulgarian bishops in Ohrid and Skopje (1890) and demanded that ecclesiastical courts stop hearing cases of wills and inheritances.

After an extraordinary meeting of the two ecclesiastical bodies, the Synod and the Mixed Council ("Meikto Symvoulío"), it was decided that the patriarch should resign and the churches of both Constantinople and the provinces should close. No ecclesiastical mysteries would be performed unless there was a special need and only at night.⁵ Dionysios V offered his resignation for the first time on 23 July 1890⁶ –which was not accepted – and for the second time on 2 August 1890. This time the two ecclesiastical bodies exerted pressure on the Porte to accept the patriarch's resignation. The Porte suggested in return that members of the Synod should participate in the committee formed to settle ecclesiastical matters. However, Dionysios V refused. The Church proclaimed itself "en diogmo" (subject to persecution) in 4 October 1890; the churches belonging to the Patriarchate closed and no religious service was performed from 3 October until 24 December 1890.⁷

This action worsened dramatically the relations between the Patriarchate and the Porte causing another serious problem for the Ottoman government. Finally, after the intervention of the Tsar of Russia, who threatened with war in case the patriarchal privileges were not maintained, the Sublime Porte gave in⁸ and announced officially on 24 December 1890 that the privileges would be respected.⁹

Dionysios V died on 12 August 1891. He was an important prelate who played an important role in ecclesiastical matters, despite his short term of office in the patriarchal throne.

1. Μαυρόπουλος, Δ., *Πατριαρχικά Σελίδες, Το Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχείον από 1878-1949* (Athens 1960), p. 13.

2. Σταυρίδης, Β.Θ., *Οι Οικουμενικοί Πατριάρχαι, 1860 - σήμερα*, τόμ. Α': *Ιστορία* (Thessaloniki 1977), pp. 317-318.

3. Νανάκης, Α. (Αρχιμ.), *Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου Νεώτερα Ιστορικά Α'* (Thessaloniki 2000), pp. 90-91.

4. Σταυρίδης, Β.Θ., *Οι Οικουμενικοί Πατριάρχαι, 1860 - σήμερα*, τόμ. Α': *Ιστορία* (Thessaloniki 1977), pp. 321-322.

5. Κυριακός, Α.Δ., *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία από της ιδρύσεως της Εκκλησίας μέχρι των καθ' ημάς χρόνων* (Athens 1881), pp. 26-27.

6. According to Stavridis, Dionysios offered his resignation on June 23 and not on July 23, as claims Gritsopoulos. See Σταυρίδης [Stavridis], Β.Θ., *Οι Οικουμενικοί Πατριάρχαι, 1860 - σήμερα*, τόμ. Α': *Ιστορία* (Thessaloniki 1977), p. 322, and Γριτσόπουλος [Gritsopoulos], Τ., "Διονύσιος Ε'", *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Ε'* (Athens 1965), p. 26.

7. See Κυριακός, Α.Δ., *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία από της ιδρύσεως της Εκκλησίας μέχρι των καθ' ημάς χρόνων*, vol. 3 (Athens 1898), p. 27.

8. Dionysios must have been aware of the Russian intervention; hence his uncompromising attitude. Mavropoulos claims the Patriarch was informed by Mavrogeni Pasha, who had been sent by the Sultan in order to convince Dionysios. Μαυρόπουλος [Mavropoulos], Δ., *Πατριαρχικά Σελίδες, Το Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχείον από 1878 - 1949* (Athens 1960), pp. 15-19.

9. Γριτσόπουλος, Τ., "Διονύσιος Ε'", *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Ε'* (Athens 1965), p. 26.



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	Μαυρόπουλος Δ. , <i>Πατριαρχικά Σελίδες. Το Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχείον από 1878-1949</i> , Αθήνα 1960
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	Γριτσόπουλος Τ. , "Διονύσιος Ε'", <i>Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια, τομ. Ε'</i> , Αθήνα 1965, 25-26

Glossary :

	berat
A sultanic decree that bestowed an office or a set of privileges on an individual or a group of people. They were given not only to all state officials, but also to the members of the high clergy, including patriarchs and metropolitans.	