

THE TOMBSTONE OF AN ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

IN MUSWELL HILL, LONDON

MELETIOS II (1700-1780, r. 1768-1769)

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Abstract

The article examines the tombstone of Meletios II, a native of Tenedos, who was briefly Ecumenical Patriarch in 1768-9. It also offers an account of his troubled patriarchate and sketches events in the rest of his ecclesiastical career. This hitherto unknown tombstone has rested for an indeterminate number of years in the garden of North Bank, a large Victorian mansion on Pages Lane in the North London suburb of Muswell Hill. It appears to have been in the grounds of North Bank before the house became an annexe of Muswell Hill Methodist Church. It is not known where in the Ottoman Empire Meletios's grave was originally situated, nor has it been possible to establish the circumstances in which the tombstone came to North Bank. On the basis of the inscription on the tombstone it is possible to establish Meletios' previously unknown date of death, 5 January 1780. It appears to be one of the earliest known tombstones of an Ecumenical patriarch during the period of the *Tourkokratia*.

In the course of a 'Grand Tour', undertaken between 1794 and 1796 and much of it spent in Greece and Asia Minor, John Bacon Sawrey Morritt of Rokeby, a wealthy country gentleman, member of parliament and knowledgeable classicist, wrote to his mother and sister Anne that in the Greek lands he had already amassed two hundred coins and medals and that he hoped soon to have two thousand. On visiting Pella he employed what he termed a 'town crier' to assist in increasing his collection, a move which resulted in the acquisition of several coins bearing representations of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great.

In Athens in 1795 he negotiated, in the event unsuccessfully, with the Turkish commandant of the Acropolis for the acquisition of one or two of 'the alto-relievs of Phidias which are over the grand colonnade' of the Parthenon. 'Do not you think', he wrote to Anne, 'I shall make a pretty addition to the marbles at Rokeby', his country house on the border

between Durham and Yorkshire. While in Athens, he noted that above almost every door was ‘an antique statue or basso-rilievo’. ‘Some’, he wrote, ‘we steal, some we buy’.¹ It was this mania for collecting (and, if necessary, stealing) on the part of those making the Grand Tour which affords the most likely explanation for the fact that the ornate tombstone of Meletios II, who was Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch for some months in 1768-1769, has lain for an unknown number of years in the extensive grounds of a mansion in Muswell Hill in London.

So far we have found no evidence as to how the tombstone ended up in the garden of North Bank, a large Victorian mansion, with extensive gardens, on Pages Lane in the North London suburb of Muswell Hill, which now houses as an annexe Muswell Hill Methodist Church. Six miles from Charing Cross, Muswell Hill was developed at the turn of the 19th and 20th century by two builders, W.J. Collins and J. Edmondson, and became one of the largest Edwardian suburbs in the country. To acquire land for development they bought a number of the large mansions with extensive grounds in Muswell Hill, for which the area was renowned. These had names such as Norton Lees, Rookfield, Grove Lodge, Leawood, Roseneath, Midhurst and Fortismere. A few had conventional names such as The Firs, The Limes and the Elms. These estates figure prominently in the 1896 Ordnance Survey map of Muswell Hill.²

North Bank was built in circa 1860 and is the last of the large mansions in Muswell Hill to survive. It is a substantial house of sixteen rooms. An indication of the wealth of occupants of the mansion is afforded by 19th century census records. The young family living

¹ G. E. Marindin, ed., *The Letters of John B.S. Morritt of Rokeby descriptive of Journeys in Europe and Asia Minor in the years 1794-1796* (London 1914), 159 ff.. A new edition, with an introduction by P. J. Hogarth, was published in 1985.

² Hillaire Belloc satirised the pretensions of some of the local grandees in his *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907), when he wrote that the obnoxious Charles Augustus Fortescue acquired an immense fortune with which he built ‘the Splendid Mansion which is called the Cedars, Muswell Hill.’

in the house in 1871, for instance, employed a staff of eight (five domestic servants, a gardener, a stable boy and a coachman.) According to the 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 census returns, the house was owned by William Cooke, his wife Clara and their seven children. William Cooke was recorded as being a 'carpet manufacturer.' When one of the Cooke's sons who had lived in Northbank died in 1924, Guy Chester, a wealthy Lloyd's underwriter, purchased the house for the use of the Methodist Church.

While nothing appears to be known about where, when and by whom the tombstone of the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios II was acquired or when it was placed in the grounds of North Bank, it would appear possible that this occurred during the long ownership by the Cooke family who lived at North Bank for half a century, between 1874 and 1924. It could be that William Cooke might, in the course of his business as a 'carpet manufacturer', have travelled in the Near East and come across the tombstone and transported it back to North Bank as a picturesque, if somewhat mysterious, garden ornament; but this can only be speculation.

Richard Clogg, a long-time resident in Muswell Hill, first learned of the existence of the tombstone in 1975 following a query by the Museum of London. Many years later, in October 2007, at the suggestion of Jon Bolter of Rees Bolter Architects and at the invitation of the Methodist minister, the Revd Andrew Dart and the Warden of Chester House, Andrew Parkins, the late Julian Chrysostomides, at the time Director of The Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London, together with her colleague, Dr Charalambos Dendrinis, visited North Bank and examined the tombstone. By this time the tombstone, which was already by 1975 broken into eight pieces, had been scattered through the grounds by vandals. The pieces had been gathered together and re-assembled with great care by Frank Cano, the North Bank gardener and an amateur archaeologist. A report was subsequently submitted by Miss Chrysostomides and Dr Dendrinis to Andrew Parkins. Much of the present article is

based on this report³. Once the historical interest of the tombstone had been recognised it was safely secured on the North Bank premises.

The Greek inscription on the memorial slab, incised on marble in epigraphical majuscule script, is decorated in relief with the insignia of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, namely the double-headed eagle supporting the Byzantine imperial crown, and holding the pastoral staff and the *trikēron* (triple candlestick) representing the Holy Trinity (see fig. 1).

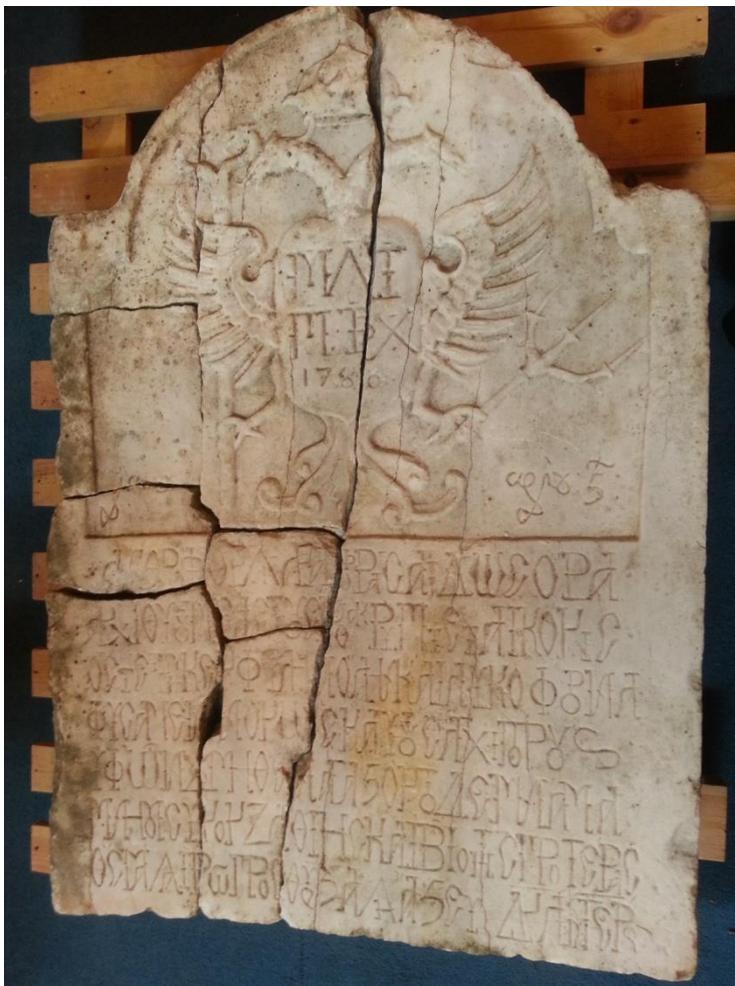


Fig. 1. Tombstone of the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios II.

³ The assistance of Dr Maria Litina, Gill Simpson, Dr Vasileios Tsakiris, Revd Nikolaos Voulmes and the Holy Metropolis of Mytilini is also gratefully acknowledged.

The inscription reads as follows:

Μ<Ε>Λ<ΕΤ>Ι<ΟΣ>

Π<Α>ΤΡ<ΙΑΡ>Χ<ΗΣ>

1780

Ἰανουαρίου 5:

+ ἌΝΘΡΩΦ' ὈΝ ΛᾶΑΝ ἈΦΟΡᾶΣ. ΑἶΔΩΣ. ὈΡΑ ·
ΑΡΧΙΘΥΤΟΥ ΜΕΛΕΤΙΟΥ ἘΝΘΑ ΚΡΥΠΤΕΤΑΙ ΚΟΝΙΣ ·
ὍΣ ΤΕΤΙΜΗΚΕΝ ΦΥΛΗΝ ὈΛΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΛΥΚΟΦΡΟΝΑ ·
ΦΥΣΑΜΕΝ[Η]Ν ὈΝ ΩΣ ΚΑ' ὙΤΟΥΣ ΑΓΧΙΠΟΡΟΥΣ ·
ἽΦ' ἽΩΝΔ' Ὀ ΜΗΘΕΝ ΑΓΑΣΤ' ὈΝ ΤΟΔΕ ΜΝΑΜΑ
ΜΝΗΜΟΣΥΝΟΝ ΖΑΘΙΗΣ ΚΑ' Ι ΒΙΟΤῆΣ ΠΡΟΤΕΡΑΣ ·

ὍΣ ΜᾶΛΛΑ ἽΡῶ ΠΡΟΣ Θ(ΕΟ)Υ ΣΤΑΛΗ ἸΑΣΤΕΥ Δ(ΕΣΠΟΙ)ΝΑ ΜΑΤΕΡῶ

The following is an edition and translation of the text:

Μελέτιος	Meletios
Πατριάρχης	Patriarch
1780	1780
Ἰανουαρίου 5	January 5

+ Ἄνθρωφ' ὄν λᾶαν ἀφορᾶς, αἰδώς, ὄρα + You are looking at a man of rock — shame! See
ἀρχιθύτου Μελετίου ἔνθα κρύπτεται κόνις. where the ashes of the archpriest Meletios lie hidden.

Ἦος τετίμηκεν φυλὴν ὄλην καὶ λυκόφρονα	He fully honoured his wolf-spirited ⁴ race
φουσαμέν[η]ν ὄν ὡς καύτους ἀγχιπόρους,	and also inspired those who were always close <to
ὕφ' ὤνδ' ὃ μηθὲν ἀγαστὸν τόδε μνάμα	him>, and who <dedicated> this humble memorial
μνημόσυνον ζαθίης καὶ βιοτῆς προτέρας.	in remembrance of his former most holy life.
Ἦος μάλα ἱρῶ πρὸς Θεοῦ στάλη ἄς τεῦ	He was sent to a most holy place close to God
Δέσποινα Μάτερ.	as long as he belongs to You, <our> Lady Mother.

Originally, the memorial slab must have been erected to mark the grave of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Meletios II (1768-1769), as the name (ἀρχιθύτου Μελετίου), initials (ΜΑΙ ΠΤΡΧ., i.e. Μ<Ε>Λ<ΕΤ>Ι<ΟΣ> Π<Α>ΤΡ<ΙΑΡΧ>Χ<ΗΣ>) and date of death (5 January 1780) on the inscription indicate. Where he was buried is not known for certain but his grave may have been in his native island, Tenedos.

In his biographical sketch of Meletios, Sergios Makraios remarks on his strong personality, his humble and frugal character, and the quality and extent of his pastoral work, which earned him the respect of both clergy and laity.⁵ Meletios distinguished himself by his love for education. During his brief patriarchate he paid particular attention to the re-organisation and improvement of the Great School of the Nation (Μεγάλη τοῦ Γένους Σχολή), building up its library, securing regular funding and issuing regulations regarding the School's property, teachers' salaries, students' duties and the academic syllabus (comprising philosophy, literature and mathematics).⁶

⁴ In the sense of 'brave': cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* XII, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 988D 2-3.

⁵ S. Makraios, *Υπομνήματα Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Ἱστορίας, 1750-1800*, ed. C. N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 3 (Venice 1872), 273-274.

⁶ See the articles by M. D. Chamoudopoulos, 'Ἡ Πατριαρχικὴ Μεγάλη τοῦ Γένους Σχολή', M. Paranikas, 'Περὶ τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Πατριαρχικῆς Σχολῆς', idem, 'Περὶ τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Πατριαρχικῆς Σχολῆς (1691-1835)', and A. Mazarakes, 'Ἡ Πατριαρχικὴ Μεγάλη τοῦ Γένους Σχολή', reprinted in *Δελτίο Ἐταιρείας Μελέτης τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀνατολῆς* 1 (2004), 531, 582, 639, 659 respectively; T. A. Gritsopoulos, *Πατριαρχικὴ Μεγάλη τοῦ Γένους Σχολή*, 2 vols, Βιβλιοθήκη τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Φιλεκπαιδευτικῆς Ἐταιρείας, 37, 59

Born on the island of Tenedos in the Northern Aegean in 1700, Meletios was tonsured and ordained at an early age by the Metropolitan of Nicomedia Gabriel, who appointed him as his *protosynkellos* (chancellor). The administrative skills and experience that Meletios had acquired were put to good use when, at the age of fifty, he was elected to the Metropolitan See of Larissa, Greece, in June 1750. He succeeded in clearing the enormous debts that he inherited from his deceased predecessor, Metropolitan Iakovos, an achievement which eventually attracted the attention of the Holy Synod in Constantinople, which elected him to succeed Patriarch Samuel I (1763-1768). Despite his initial reservations, Makraios remarks, Meletios accepted the nomination and ascended the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople on 6 November 1768. He remained in office for barely six months. On 16 April 1769 he resigned and was succeeded by Theodosios II (1769-1773).⁷

This short patriarchate was by no mean untypical. During the 18th century the office of Ecumenical Patriarch changed hands with extraordinary frequency. Between 1702 and 1797 there were no fewer than twenty two patriarchs, some of whom held office on more than one occasion. This rapid turnover was occasioned in many cases by bribery and the endemic corruption that characterised the Ottoman system of government. The remark of an Armenian, a banker but who was nonetheless described as an honest man, to Athanasios Komninos Ypsilantis, the well-known chronicler of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Orthodox world in general in the Ottoman Empire after the Fall of Constantinople, that ‘you

(Athens 1966, 1971), vol. I, pp. 377-384, 414, 416, 420, 423-424, 444, 450-452, 464-465, vol. II, pp. 51, 54-55, 59, 378-385 (docs 9-10, Meletios’ Synodal letters dated March 1769). On Meletios’ possible involvement in the founding of a School in Trikke (Trikala) in 1721 or before, see M. K. Paranikas, *Σχεδιάσμα περι της ἐν τῷ Ἑλληνικῷ ἔθνει καταστάσεως τῶν Γραμμάτων ἀπὸ Ἀλώσεως Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1453 μ. Χ.) μέχρι τῶν ἀρχῶν τῆς ἐνεστώσης (1Θ’.) ἑκατονταετηρίδος* (Constantinople 1867), 84 with n. 1.

⁷ See T. A. Gritsopoulos, ‘Μελέτιος ὁ Β΄, Πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (1768-1769)’, in *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 8 (Athens, 1966), col. 959.

[Greeks] change your patriarchs more often than you change your shirts' was uncomfortably near the bone.⁸

A different aspect of Meletios' character and personality was highlighted by Ypsilantis.⁹ It seems that he has nothing good to say about Meletios and especially the powerful Grand Dragoman Nikolaos Soutzos, who is described as a ruthless person and a master of intrigue, whom Ypsilantis held responsible for the forced abdication of the long-suffering (πολύπαθος) Patriarch Samuel on 4 November 1768 and the election and enthronement of Meletios the next day. Ypsilantis' hatred of Soutzos is revealed when he relates the accident 'justly' suffered by one of his sons (he fell from his horse and fractured his skull), ostensibly as a result of his father's breaking of his oath (ἐπιορκία).¹⁰ Ypsilantis describes how Meletios promoted members of his coterie, including Anthimos of Mesembria to the Metropolitan throne of Cyzicus, and the son of the doctor Giannakis and grandson of Militsa by the name of Makarios to the Metropolis of Larissa.¹¹ In the meantime Soutzos' feelings towards Meletios changed from 'friendship to enmity and hatred' as a result of the former's absurd demands.¹² What follows in this section of Ypsilantis' work is a long account of the events that led to the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 during Meletios' patriarchate, highlighting once more Soutzos' sinister role and mentioning the declaration by Prince Nikolai Vasilyevich Repnin, in the treaty of Warsaw (1768), of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great as 'Queen of the Greeks in all provinces in Asia and of

⁸ Athanasios Komninus Ypsilantis, *Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν τῶν εἰς δώδεκα βιβλίων Η', Θ', καὶ Ι', ἤτοι τὰ μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν (1453-1789) ...* (Constantinople 1870: reprint), pp. 519-520.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 419-439.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 422.

the duchy of Courland' (βασιλίσσα τῶν Γραικῶν ὅλων τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τοῦ δουκάτου τῆς Κουρλανδίας).¹³

The last part of Ypsilantis' account gives details of Meletios' arrest and incarceration. Ypsilantis places the blame for this on two unnamed Corfiot doctors who, in order to attract the favour of the Sultan, offered Turkish people their services without payment (θέλουν ἰατρεῦει τοὺς ἀρρώστους Τούρκους ἀμισθί).¹⁴ This gesture actually had the opposite effect as it raised suspicion. The two doctors were accused of being collaborators of the Russians, were arrested and imprisoned. When they were interrogated under torture they at first repeated that they simply wanted to attract the favourable attention of the Sultan through their charitable works, but when the torture continued, in an effort to save themselves, they made up a story (ἔπλασαν) that they had carried a letter from Stephen of Montenegro to the former Metropolitan of Larissa, the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios. The Grand Vizier concluded that Stephen was linked to Meletios and that the latter was hiding him. To make things worse, the Vizier used the fact that the two doctors were carrying with them in a τουλοῦμι¹⁵ (saltpetre) which they used to treat fever, accusing them of intending to poison the water and thus destroy the Ottoman army. So he ordered the army not to drink water from the wells and reported Meletios and the saltpetre to the Sultan. As a result the Ottoman authorities entered the Patriarchate by force on Lazarus Saturday, the day before Palm Sunday, searching for Stephen, and when they did not succeed in finding him they took Meletios and those present, who included the *arkhidiakonos* and *oikonomos* of the Patriarchate, and imprisoned them in the jail of the *bostancıbaşı*, the commander of the Imperial guards who combined supervision of the shores of the Bosphorus with the role of executioner of prominent figures.

¹³ Ibid., p. 434, ad fin.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 439.

¹⁵ Turkish *tulum*, a bag made of the skin of an animal.

The archpriests wrote to the Sultan denying the accusation that they were hiding Stephen, adding that they were ready to pay with their lives if this proved to be true. Subsequently Meletios was exiled to Mitylini on the island of Lesbos, ‘where’, so Ypsilantis claims, ‘soon afterwards he found, by divine providence, the reward (τὰ ἐπίχειρα) of his maltreatment (παροινίας) of Samuel, while the archpriests were ordered to elect a new patriarch’, namely Theodosios II of Thessaloniki, who was elected on Maundy Thursday, 16 April 1769.

The circumstances of Meletios’ resignation, as we have seen, are related to the Russo-Turkish War which was declared on 25 September 1768 and which led to the expansion of Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire with the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca on 21 July 1774. In a short autobiographical note (signed and dated 23 May 1769) Meletios gave a detailed description and the dates of the events leading to his deposition and subsequent persecution,¹⁶ which should be read in parallel with Ypsilantis’ account. Falsely accused of treason, for allegedly siding with the Montenegrins against the Ottoman authorities, an accusation which carried the death penalty, Meletios was incarcerated together with more than thirty other clerics of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and lay members of the Greek community in Constantinople on 8 April 1769.¹⁷ Though they were eventually cleared of the accusation on 18 April, Meletios was nonetheless deposed and exiled to Mitylini on 27 April 1769.¹⁸

¹⁶ [G. Ar.], ‘Ιστορικὸν ἀπομνημόνευμα Μελετίου Πατριάρχου τοῦ Τενεδίου’, *Πανδώρα* 11, no. 263 (1 March 1861), 572-576; S. Lampros, ‘Ἐνθυμήσεων ἤτοι χρονικῶν σημειωμάτων συλλογὴ πρώτη’, *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 7 (1910), 241, no. 463; I. G. Kleombrotos, *Τὰ κατὰ τὴν εὔρεσιν καὶ μετακομιδὴν τῶν ἱερῶν λειψάνων τοῦ ὁσίου Γρηγορίου ἐπισκόπου Ἀσσοῦ πολιούχου Γέρας* (Mytilene 1965), 62.

¹⁷ Cf. A. N. Goudas, *Βίοι Παράλληλοι τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς Αναγεννήσεως τῆς Ἑλλάδος Διαπρεψάντων Ἀνδρῶν*, vol. I: Κλήρος (Athens 1869), 10-14.

¹⁸ This information and Meletios’ subsequent adventures are not mentioned by K. M. Koumas, *Ἱστορίαι τῶν Ἀνθρωπίνων Πράξεων ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχαιοτάτων χρόνων ἕως τῶν ἡμερῶν μας, ἐκ παλαιῶν ἀπανθισθεῖσαι, καὶ τὰ νεότερα ἐξ ἀρίστων Γερμανῶν ἱστοριογράφων ἐλευθέρως μεταφρασθεῖσαι*, vol. 10 (Vienna 1831), 402-403, who erroneously states that after Meletios ‘was found innocent he was only condemned to lose his office, and after five months of his patriarchate he was sent (1769) to Tenedos, where he spent the rest of his life’ (p. 403). This

Following the victorious naval operations of the Russian Baltic fleet in the Mediterranean under the command of Count Aleksey Grigoryevich Orlov and the unsuccessful Greek uprising in the Peloponnese instigated by Orlov (February 1770), the Christian population suffered severe reprisals at the hands of the Ottomans. In a long autograph note (dated 10 January 1774) in the same codex, Meletios gives a detailed and vivid description of the persecution of the Greeks following the departure of the Russian fleet after the total destruction of the Ottoman fleet at the battle of Çeşme off the coast of Asia Minor (7 July 1770). Meletios' residence in Mytilini was looted and he himself was tortured, narrowly escaping death at the hands of irregular Turkish soldiers (14 July 1770).

Meletios was first incarcerated by the Ottomans, together with the Metropolitan of Mytilini Gerasimos, and fifteen other members of the Greek community in a private house, before they were moved to two successive prisons. A year later (31 October 1771) the Russian fleet bombarded Mitylini and landed on the island (2 November). Before leaving the island, the Russians looted not only Turkish but also Christian property in order to forestall Turkish accusations of Christian collaboration with the enemy. Meletios and the other prisoners were freed on 7 November 1771.

Following the death of Sultan Mustafa III (1757-1774) on 10 January 1774, Meletios secured permission (8 July 1775) from his successor Abdülhamid I (1774-1789) to return to Tenedos (24 July 1775). Two years later (26 April 1777), through the mediation of the Ecumenical Patriarch Sophronios II (1774-1780), he was granted permission to travel to Constantinople to attend to private matters, on condition that he would remain in the

is repeated by S. D. Byzantios, *Η Κωνσταντινούπολις, ἡ περιγραφή τοπογραφική, ἀρχαιολογική καὶ ἱστορική τῆς περιουμένου ταύτης μεγαλοπόλεως ...*, vol. 2 (Athens 1862), 543; A. N. Goudas, *Βίοι Παράλληλοι τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς Αναγεννήσεως τῆς Ἑλλάδος Διαπρεψάντων Ἀνδρῶν*, vol. 1: Κλήρος (Athens 1869), 14; and Z. N. Mathas, *Κατάλογος ἱστορικός τῶν πρώτων ἐπισκόπων καὶ τῶν ἐφεξῆς πατριαρχῶν τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ἀγίας καὶ Μεγάλης τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας* (Athens 1884), 157-158. See A. Kerkineoglou, 'Ἡ Τένεδος ὡς τόπος ἐξορίας', *Ἡ Τένεδος* 8 (January-March 2009), accessible online at: <http://users.otenet.gr/~Tened0s/TenedosExoria1.htm> (last accessed: 25 June 2016).

Monastery of St George on the island of Antigone and would not extend his stay beyond 61 days.¹⁹ This is Meletios' last piece of autobiographical information written just before his departure for Constantinople.

Two letters addressed to Meletios II are preserved in the Archive of The Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies in Venice (AEIB, A'. Ὁργάνωση-λειτουργία, 4. Γραμματεία, Κατάστιχο 2, ff. 3-9). These letters are part of a dossier with correspondence (20 October 1768-10 June 1769) between the Greek Community in Venice and officials in Constantinople (including the Venetian bailo Girolamo Ascanio Giustinian, and the dragomans Christophoros Rallis and Antonios Pinis), requesting the transfer of Nikephoros Mormoris Bishop of Cythera to Venice in order to fill the vacant see of the bishop of Philadelphieia, after the death of their Bishop Gregorios.²⁰ Apparently, the first letter (ff. 4-5), dated 26 November 1768, was not answered, and therefore a second, similar letter (ff. 5-6), was dispatched to Meletios a month later (26 December 1768), again receiving no reply. Subsequently, the Greek Community renewed their request on 30 May 1769 with a third letter (ff. 12-13), this time addressed to Patriarch Theodosios II as Meletios had been deposed a month earlier (27 April).

Nothing is known about the last years of Meletios' life. The unpublished inscription on the memorial slab in the garden of North Bank in London is the only evidence we possess of the date of his death (5 January 1780). According to unconfirmed information, Meletios died in extreme poverty on the island of Tenedos, where he had been born.²¹ Unfortunately

¹⁹ [G. Ar.], 'Ἱστορικὸν ἀπομνημόνευμα Μελετίου Πατριάρχου τοῦ Τενεδίου', *Πανδώρα* 11, no. 263 (1 March 1861), 576; S. Lampros, 'Ἐνθυμήσεων ἤτοι χρονικῶν σημειωμάτων συλλογὴ πρώτη', *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 7 (1910), 241, no. 463.

²⁰ We would like to thank the Revd Meliton R. Oakes for drawing our attention to these documents, now accessible online at: <http://eib.xanthi.ilsp.gr/gr/boundmaterials.asp?vmode=vselect&vid=71#selectedAnchor> (doc. 5) (last accessed: 3 July 2016).

²¹ M. I. Gedeon, *Πατριαρχικοὶ Πίνακες. Εἰδήσεις ἱστορικαὶ βιογραφικαὶ περὶ τῶν Πατριαρχῶν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ἀπὸ Ἀνδρέου τοῦ Πρωτοκλήτου μέχρις Ἰωακείμ Γ' τοῦ ἀπὸ Θεσσαλονίκης, 36-1884* (Constantinople, 1885-1890), 661.

there is no reference to the place of his death or his burial on the inscription that would confirm this.

Clearly, Ypsilantis paints a different picture of Meletios' character and personality than other sources which stress his abilities as a financial administrator (first in Larissa and then in Constantinople), his educational work, and his painful experiences following his forced abdication.²² It seems that Ypsilantis was much attached to Samuel and this explains his antipathy towards Meletios and all those whom he considered had taken advantage of Samuel and finally brought about his downfall, above all Nikolaos Soutzos. However this may be, Meletios appears to have been remembered with great affection by his anonymous friends and relatives who commissioned the marble memorial slab. The precise circumstances of his death and burial remain so far unknown as is the question of the how the tombstone ended up in Muswell Hill.

After the death of Julian Chrysostomides' on 18 October 2008, the attention of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain was drawn to the existence of the tombstone. Following discussion with the Methodist authorities the return of the tombstone to Constantinople was agreed.

On 23 May 2013, His Eminence the Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain visited the Muswell Hill Methodist church at North Bank and the adjoining Guy Chester Methodist Centre to receive the tombstone on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in the presence of a small circle of friends from both confessions who gathered on this special occasion.

On his arrival at the church, Archbishop Gregorios was greeted by the director of the Guy Chester Centre, Fraser Mackay, the minister of the Methodist Church at North Bank, the

²² Cf. M. I. Gedeon, ed., *Κυρίλλου Λαυριώτου, Πατριάρχαι μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν (1453-1794)* (Athens 1887), 47.

Revd Mike Long, and the Revd David Gamble, former President of the Methodist Conference and subsequently Chair of the Methodist Council. A ceremony took place in the church, with the tombstone placed before the altar for blessing. After a short welcome by Fraser Mackay, the Revd David Gamble addressed the gathering and read a prayer. The Archbishop Gregorios expressed the gratitude of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Methodists for their willingness to return Meletios's tombstone. Assisted by Bishop Athanasios of Tropaeou, Presbyter Evangelos-Nikolaos Liassis, and Deacon Meliton R. Oakes, he then chanted a memorial service, in Greek and English, for the late Patriarch (fig. 2).

In this moving ecumenical atmosphere the tombstone was transferred to the Archdiocese of Thyateira in London, before it continued on its final journey to Constantinople, as a reminder of the remarkable life of the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios II and as a symbol of Christian unity. It must be right that this tombstone, one of the oldest memorials of an Ecumenical Patriarch, should rest at the heart of the Orthodox world.



(Fig. 2). Memorial Service for Patriarch Meletios II in Muswell Hill Methodist church, London, 23 May 2013.