

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

Phone: +49 4106 804806 • Fax: +49 4106 804807
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“In Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania I have lost a mentor and fatherly friend”

(Bonn, 01.02.2025) “The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, with the deepest of sorrow, announces the falling asleep in the Lord of His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania. His Beatitude fell asleep in the Lord today, January 25, 2025, at 8:30 AM, at the age of 95, at Evangelismos-Hospital in Athens, due to multiple organ failure, following a prolonged hospitalization at ‘Hygeia’ Hospital in Tirana. The indelible Archbishop Anastasios restored and renewed of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, which he raised from its ruins following the fall of the atheistic regime. Through his God-inspired vision and tireless labor, he rebuilt ecclesiastical life from its very foundations, erected hundreds of churches, established educational and philanthropic institutions, and educated and ordained new clergy, offering unceasing sacrificial service for over thirty-three years.”



Thomas Schirmmacher congratulating Archbishop Anastasios to the Hemmerle Prize in the Cathedral of Aachen in 2020 © BQ/Esther Schirmmacher

An obituary by Thomas Paul Schirmmacher

When Archbishop Anastasios received the Hemmerle Prize of the Focolare Movement in 2020 in the Cathedral of Aachen, I called him “one of the most important Missions and Religious Studies Scholars” and “a pioneer in ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue”, but also one of my mentors and “fatherly friend”. The fact that he himself rebuilt the church in Albania from nothing over the course of three decades as a missionary and pastor demonstrates the deep conviction out of which he wrote. I hold Anastasios calling a stroke of good fortune for all of Albania.

Archbishop Yannoulatos – his original name – comes from Greece. He worked as a missionary and peacemaker in Africa. In 1991, he was sent to Albania to rebuild the

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Text & Technology:

Titus Vogt (ViSdP)
Vorderer Kamp 52a, 25479 Ellerau
Tel.: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07
E-Mail: info@bonn-profiles.net



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destroyed Autocephalous Orthodox Church after years of rigid state-sanctioned atheism. In 1992 Yannoulatos was appointed Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, one of the many wise and far-reaching decisions of this giant of God's Church.

One only can agree to the words of Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pill, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches on his death: "Today we remember and

honor not just the intellectual and institutional achievements and ecumenical dedication of Archbishop Anastasios, but also his wonderful, warm spirit, which enabled him perennially to open channels of reconciliation, renewal, and dialogue, even and especially in difficult times and venues. He leaves our worldwide fellowship an inspiring and enviable legacy as a true Christian witness for peace, justice, and reconciliation."

Archbishop Anastasios was an active participant in the planning and convening of the autocephalous Orthodox churches in their Holy and Great Council in June 2016, which I was privileged to attend. A prolific theologian and author of two dozen books in several languages, Anastasios is perhaps best known for tackling interreligious issues and dialogue, as in his 2003 volume *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns* (WCC Publications, 2003). His early experience in Africa led him to re-envision the whole enterprise of mission in his 2007 volume *Mission in Christ's Way* (WCC Publications). In his most recent book, *Coexistence* (published in six languages in 2022), he offered reflections on war, poverty, terrorism, corruption, injustice, globali-



Archbishop Anastasios receives the honour of the Royal Ghassanid Academy in 2017, left of him HRH Prince Gharios of Ghasan © BQ/Martin Wamecke



Archbishop Anastasios and Thomas Schirmacher meeting at the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete in 2016 © BQ/Titus Vogt

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zation, and an alternative vision.

2015 he hosted the Global Christian Forum consultation in Tirana, the close cooperation with him was a joy for all involved, despite the topic of solidarity with churches and Christians experiencing discrimination and persecution in the world today. When listening and later publishing his speech, I was amazed by the evangelical and Biblical spirit of his Bible exposition and theology.



Thomas Schirmmacher congratulating Archbishop Anastasios to the Hemmerle Prize in the Cathedral of Aachen in 2020 © BQ/Esther Schirmmacher

In 2017 we were privileged to bestow the membership of the Royal Ghassan Academy of Arts and Science, the certificate stating: "Presented to His Beatitude Anastasios Yannoulatos ... in recognition and certification of being elected an honorary life member of The Royal Academy for outstanding achievement and promotion of the arts and sciences as a world class professor of missions all of his life, even when heading an autocephalous church, and furthering the ecumenical movement globally."

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1:** Thomas Schirmmacher congratulating Archbishop Anastasios to the Hemmerle Prize in the Cathedral of Aachen in 2020 © BQ/Esther Schirmmacher
- **Photo 2:** Archbishop Anastasios receives the honour of the Royal Ghassanid Academy in 2017, left of him HRH Prince Gharios of Ghassan © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 3:** Archbishop Anastasios and Thomas Schirmmacher in Tirana in 2013 © BQ/Thomas Schirmmacher
- **Photo 4:** Archbishop Anastasios and Thomas Schirmmacher visiting a Protestant worship service in Tirana in 2013 © Gjergji Kollumbi
- **Photo 5:** Archbishop Anastasios, Bishop Angealos and Thomas Schirmmacher in Tirana in 2013 © BQ/Thomas Schirmmacher

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- **Photo 6:** Thomas Schirmmacher talking to the Ecumenical Patriarch and Archbishop Anastasios in Vienna in 2014 discussing the speech for Religions for Peace © BQ/Thomas Schirmmacher
- **Photo 7:** Archbishop Anastasios and Thomas Schirmmacher on stage together in 2015 © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 8:** Archbishop Anastasios, Bishop Efraim Tendero with his wife and Thomas Schirmmacher in 2015 © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 9:** Thomas Schirmmacher listening to the famous speech of Archbishop Anastasios at the Global Christian Forum in Tirana in 2015 © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 10:** Archbishop Anastasios among the Patriarchs of the Orthodox Church at their Great and Holy Council in Crete in 2016 © BQ/Thomas Schirmmacher
- **Photo 11:** Archbishop Anastasios and Thomas Schirmmacher meeting at the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete in 2016 © BQ/Titus Vogt
- **Photo 12:** Archbishop Anastasios and Thomas Schirmmacher meeting in Tirana in 2017 © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 13:** Archbishop Anastasios shows Thomas Schirmmacher the new picture in the Orthodox Cathedral in Tirana in 2018 © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 14:** Thomas Schirmmacher congratulating Archbishop Anastasios to the Hemmerle Prize in the Cathedral of Aachen in 2020 © BQ/Esther Schirmmacher
- Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania: “Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania has fallen asleep in the Lord”:
<https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/en/2025/01/25/archbishop-anastasios-of-tirana-durres-and-all-albania-has-fallen-asleep-in-the-lord/>
- Thomas Schirmmacher: “Archbishop Anastasios is one of the most important Missions and Religious Studies Scholars”:
<https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=16000>
- Thomas Schirmmacher: “Sovereign rights of the Royal House of Ghassan recognised by Muslim leaders”:
<https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=16417>
- Thomas Schirmmacher: “Tirana: Distinguished Friends from the Middle East at the Seat of the Holy Synod”:
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