

Chapter 1

The Pilgrimage of the Orthodox through History



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORTHODOX FROM THE APOSTOLIC ERA TO THE MIDDLE AGES

Perspectives of history

It is a basic premise of Orthodox theology that the history of Orthodoxy is synonymous with the history of the church. Historians may puzzle over that, thinking of all the concerns, developments, and controversies that constitute church history that seem to have no bearing on the history of the Orthodox (the Avignon Papacy, the Inquisition, the Reformation, the Oxford Movement, the ordination of women, to name only a few), but Orthodox generally regard the church world-wide up to the Middle Ages as 'their church', with divisions and separations only becoming a chronic and permanent state of affairs as the high medieval West introduced more and more patterns of behaviour that were in conflict with the ancient procedures, and doctrines, established in patristic times. The Orthodox, at large, see the Latin church of the first millennium to be substantially in harmony with the Orthodox tradition, so that there was one church only in its validly distinct Eastern and Western forms. Accordingly, the Orthodox to this day in countries such as England, Italy, or France honour the ancient saints of the local churches there as entirely Orthodox. The Orthodox, when they find Anglican or Catholic churches in Europe that contain the relics of the ancient saints, will usually make a point of going to venerate them (sometimes having some confusion when they find the holy reliquaries of fathers and martyrs set up in glass museum-cases in sacristies rather than upon the altars).

Ordinary readers may also find this understanding of the church's history a strange perspective because in so many of the commonly available church histories that one reads, the Orthodox Church hardly features. If it does make an appearance, for the period of the first 500 years, it mysteriously tails off into invisibility as the story of the rise of the medieval West is undertaken, something that tends to push away all else to the side. Most English-language church histories, if they were properly labelled, should admit that they are largely the history of the Western Church as it developed after the great shock wave of the Reformation. Because of this, Reformation apologetics still heavily condition the way the story of the church is told. Until the latter part of

the twentieth century the same attitude of neglect (and often scorn) attached itself to secular history of the eastern Roman empire. Byzantine studies, though now enjoying a revival, were traditionally looked down upon. Historians such as Gibbon and others following him had caricatured the history of the Greek Christian East as a long and dismal chronicle of barbarism and autocracy.

Both from the Roman Catholic viewpoint and from Protestant perspectives, Eastern Orthodox history was not something to linger over. For Roman Catholicism the Greek Orthodox (and all other Orthodox churches in communion with them) were stubborn schismatics who had always resisted the eirenic advances of Rome, and had thrown off Roman order and clarity. To Protestant critics the Orthodox were often seen as stranger versions of all that they hated in medieval Catholicism: relic veneration, icons, devotion to the saints and the Virgin Mary, sacraments, and priesthood. Each side of the Western Reformation divide saw the Orthodox through a distorting lens of its own concerns. From the viewpoint of the Orthodox, both forms of Western Christianity, Catholic and Reformed, seemed very much alike: two similar but variant forms of development of the same premises with the same styles of theologizing and closely related patterns of worship. Studies of the Orthodox Church by external commentators tended to resonate with those aspects of Orthodoxy that 'conformed' to their Western Catholic, or Protestant, expectations, depending on the ecclesial starting point, and allegiance, of the various authors.

This relative neglect, however, was not simply due to the vagaries of the European press. History had something to do with it too. As the story of the Western Church grew to the 'interesting point' of its early medieval ascendancy (the time princes of the church started to become real power-brokers in Western politics), so the history of the Christian East started a long twilight time, pressed and harried by the relentless westward advance of Islam. The Byzantine and Slavic Christian worlds, along with their own histories and perspectives on the Christian Church, simply did not fit the common picture, and so were easily ignored or fitted into the more dominant Western archetypes of historiography. Nevertheless, it is still something of a shock for Orthodox readers to find, in many religious education books in western European schools, phrases describing the Orthodox Church as a schismatic branch of Christendom that broke off union with the pope in the medieval period. Such a view may be part and parcel of a particular Roman ideology of church history, but it is, obviously, not a perspective that is acceptable to the Orthodox, either in terms of theology of the church, or in terms of simple accuracy in the historical record.

Orthodoxy does not give up the title 'catholic'. It regards itself as the catholic church (the marks of the church are to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) and catholicity in this sense demands that any Orthodox church cannot be Greek, Russian, Romanian, American, or English in its fundamental 'character', but on the contrary is fundamentally catholic and universal in its being and its spiritual ethos. Its national characteristics are legitimate variations of its catholicity, but must not obscure it. Orthodoxy in some parts began to call itself 'Greek Catholic'¹ in reaction to the way in which 'Roman Catholic' started to appear as a designation of the larger part of the Western Church; but these terms are not ancient, and not part of the original deposit of Christianity. Instead they show signs of the 'denominational' mentality that had grown up as part of post-Reformation apologetics in western Europe. When they speak of themselves the Orthodox never evoke denominationalism as a legitimate mark of

church identity. For the Orthodox ‘denominationalism’ is the heart of ecclesiological heresy, and rises only out of the ruin of ecclesial order.

For many centuries the lack of regard for Orthodox history in the West did not much matter. The universities and schools of the Orthodox had been progressively reduced to rubble all over the Eastern world, where centres of the ancient Christian ascendancy such as Damascus, Alexandria, or Constantinople were overwhelmed by Islamic armies, and where oppressive rulers restricted Christian rights in a severe and often bloody manner. The few books of Orthodox-focused history that were still produced in the remaining free territories of the Orthodox world such as Russia were, as far as Protestant and Catholic European readers were concerned, in ‘obscure languages’ that never made it into translation. It is only when Orthodox accounts began to appear in European languages in modern times that the clash of values became apparent more widely to the Western churches.

So much for history as an ideological battle ground for apologetics. What would it be for the Orthodox to tell the tale of the rise of Christianity from their perspective? It is a hopeless expectation to imagine such a short chapter as this could ever hope to do justice to the complexity of the Christian story. The only merit of this rapid survey will be to signal some of the ‘turning points’ that the Orthodox think are seminal. It may be surprising to Western readers to see how many of the familiar episodes of their own history are not part of that story, and what a difference to the overall topography that might make in reimagining Christian origins.

Earliest Christian foundations

When the Orthodox think about the Church, they instinctively understand that it is the living communion which contains the angelic orders, as well as the prophets and saints before the historical advent of the Lord who were liberated to become the heavenly church as a grace of the Resurrection,² and also the countless generations who have gone before us, and those which may possibly come after us. Thus, when we speak of the ‘beginning’ of the church in this chapter, it is taken to mean the earthly church after the Incarnation. Orthodox Christianity begins at several sacred ‘moments’ within history, that have been prepared by the great pre-history of the scriptural revelation, and are rooted in the great plan of God’s creation ordinance.³ Within that nexus of moments, however, there are certain key events that constitute the beginning of the Church historically speaking. Orthodoxy would place the first great epiphany in the Incarnation of the Holy Word. The icon of the Nativity of the Saviour features, prominently, the arrival of the Magi as symbols of the enlightened nations. More narrowly, the earthly church is said to have been brought together with Jesus’ commissioning of his apostles and, ultimately, with their consecration as his witnesses to the world at the great experience of Pentecost.⁴ It is the pentecostal descent of the Spirit that leads the apostles into the fullness of the truth of Jesus, and energizes their mission to evangelize others and draw them consciously into a life-giving relation with God, through his Christ. The pentecostal Spirit energizes the ‘Great Commission’ to evangelize the world,⁵ a grace that itself is part of the Resurrection life poured out over history, to sanctify it. The church, from that time onwards, has had the duty of preserving fidelity to the Lord’s Gospel commission, and it has always been propagated

in the same 'pneumatic' way: namely, by the charismatic grace of the Lord passing through generations, embodied in the pentecostal proclamation of the Gospels and the celebration of the sacramental mysteries, under the care of the apostles and their successors.

Orthodoxy regards the episcopal ranks, the senior order of priesthood in the church, as the chief example of the successors to the original apostolic order. All those, however, who share the vitality of the faith with others, especially those who lead others deeper into the experience of Jesus, are seen to be endowed with an apostolic charism in a missionary sense. Some great saints of the past, such as Thekla the Megalomartyr, Nina of Georgia, or Vladimir of Kiev, are called apostles figuratively in the Orthodox liturgical tradition, because of the great effect they have had in evangelizing nations and regions. Even on a lesser scale, parents and grandparents who transmit the faith with loving care to their children serve in the apostolic role as propagators of the faith, under God. This 'lesser' role is the standard way whole generations of believers are born, passing from their natural birth to a new spiritual consecration as disciples in a baptismal experience mediated to them by their parents, who have treasured the faith and wish to hand it down their family. Of course, because it is a charism, passing on the faith cannot be guaranteed, or mechanically presumed, even across a family that has been steeped in the life of the church for centuries past. All men and women must make their choice freely, and personally, each in their own lifetime. The gift cannot be presumed (though it will always be offered), and faith only shines in true brightness when it is freely affirmed and voluntarily embraced. It is the basic task of the church to ensure that in each generation the call of the Gospel can be heard clearly, and purely, and that the church communion itself is an accurate, living, and gracious icon of Christ, acting to attract men and women to the Lord of Love.

The apostles served the Lord while he lived, and after his resurrection, so church traditions recount, travelled far and wide preaching the Good News that he had entrusted to them. The form of the apostolic *kerygma* is impressed at several instances on the scriptural record. Acts 2.14–40 gives a stylized example of the shape of one of the earliest apostolic *kerygmata*, and it was with sermons and appeals such as this that the first missionaries of the church made their way through the ancient agoras, synagogues, and odea of the Graeco-Roman world in late antiquity. In the generation after them the apostolic preachers, and the itinerant prophets we hear about in ancient texts such as the *Didache*, left behind churches, that is, communities of committed believers, which they had established by their kerygmatic proclamation, and already before the end of the second century we have records of how those earliest communities began to organize themselves for the times ahead, when they would be without the authorities of the great leaders of the first generation. The pastoral epistles of the New Testament give an account of how the communities were settling down, and learning to regulate themselves and organize their patterns of worship.

One major factor in this the earliest period of the apostolic and immediate post-apostolic generation was the organization of worship. The Christian *cultus* centred around the celebration of Jesus' salvific life and death and resurrection, as the fulfilment of the scriptural hope (the 'Old Testament' as they soon began to call the ancient prophetic narratives) and as the promise of new life in the present moment. The Eucharist served to gather Christians together regularly for the shared 'recounting' of the Lord's saving death and resurrection that was epitomized by the eucharistic meal.

In the course of the Eucharist, the concept of the New Testament as a body of apostolic writings that served to explain and orientate the prophetic writings first arose.⁶ The canon is merely the formalized recognition of what was, and ought to be, read in the course of worship. Along with the formal readings of sacred texts, the role of the eucharistic president expanded significantly. These, the earliest bishops, were heirs of the apostles, not least because they continued the prophetic office in the church of 'interpreting' and explaining the Scriptures, how they related to Jesus and to contemporary life, to their congregations. It would be several centuries before the task of preaching extended also to the bench of presbyters. At first the 'breaking of the word of God' to the people was quintessentially an episcopal function, and thus it synopsized their status as heirs of the apostles.

The first Christian communities often began as offshoots, or minority groups, attached to the Jewish synagogues in the Mediterranean world, but tensions rising with the majority groups following from the exalted praise the Christians gave to Jesus as Son and Wisdom of God, led soon enough to regular schisms among the Judaeo-Christian settlements, and already by the time of the Gospel of John (which reflects the tension in its text⁷), that is, towards the end of the first century, Christians were finding themselves increasingly 'separate' and learning to affirm their distinct identity with a growing sense of wonder and expectation. This separation into a distinctly organized existence was accompanied by much apologetical conflict. The records of the New Testament and the earliest Christian writings are charged with the sense of conflict between the nascent Christian movement and groups variously described, but which we might sum up as: Judaism, the many varieties of pagan cult, and the more frightening encounters with mob violence and official state sanctions against illicit religions in the empire. By the time that the wider world realized the separate existence of the Christians, now distinct from the Jews, who had enjoyed the status of a protected religion under the Roman system, punitive measures were being taken against them. This particularly began to happen at the end of the second century and into the fourth. We now look back on this early period of the church as the 'age of persecutions', often forgetting that even today an estimated 175,000 Christians are assassinated each year for their faith (greater numbers than ever suffered in the past).⁸

By the mid second century, therefore, the churches across the Mediterranean world were 'growing up'. They had a good degree of unity, provided by their common faith in Jesus and their shared interest in attaching themselves to the great teachers of the first generations. It is for this reason that the canon of the New Testament had more or less already established itself as 'good practice' for worshipping Christian communities far and wide, long before it had ever attracted to itself a theory of why it should be adopted. The Gospels were given pride of place, and, despite their differences of perspective, each of the four canonical texts shows a substantial reliance on the structure of the ancient apostolic preaching: the kerygmatic proclamation that Jesus' life and saving death were the liberating forces that had redeemed the world under God. For this reason the Orthodox regarded the New Testament as the quintessential record of the apostolic tradition. To this day the concept 'apostolic faith' means primarily an accordance with the apostolic doctrine of the sacred Scriptures. The details of each and every apostle, and his historical ministry, might not be available to the record of ecclesiastical history, just as everything that Jesus himself said and did is not recorded. What matters is that in the New Testament texts we have a substantive

and faithful account of the ‘song of the apostles’ that they raised in honour of Jesus: interpreting him to the generations that would follow, and doing so with careful regard to allow the Master himself to speak as much as, if not more than, themselves. In all Orthodox thought, the apostolic tradition gives pride of place to John, Paul, and Peter’s doctrine, but sees all the apostolic utterance as collectively synopsized in the canon of New Testament writings, whether or not these were actually written by the hand of an apostle or transmitted through a disciple of an apostle.

The idea of the canon of the New Testament has been a notion over which recent generations of scholars have fought, arguing that it does not fully represent the diversity of the early Christian experience as lived throughout the first 300 years. Of course it does not. It was meant to represent the apostolic tradition that was to be held on to as authentic and faithful to Jesus as he was portrayed through the first apostolic preaching, and to rule out of consideration among the mainstream churches that burgeoning library of texts, and weltering array of religious speculations, that were being produced by other thinkers (history tends to sum them up as Gnostics or the like). Many of these heterodox texts depicted a Jesus who was not fully embodied (ancient religious philosophers tended to regard embodiment as equivalent to defilement, and so several teachers thought that by projecting a docetic, non-corporeal, Jesus they were defending his honour). The acknowledgement of a universally recognized canon of Scripture was a decisive reaction to close out books that did not fit into the ‘diverse harmony’ that is represented by the church’s present canon of New Testament writings. All of the canonical Scriptures represent different perspectives, but together they make a many-veined harmony of voice that fills out and rounds off the earliest picture of the experience of Jesus in the church. Certain doctrines and claims about Jesus, however, clash with this harmony, and many (in the past, just as today) are incompatible with it. It is obvious that the canon is not a ‘representative cross-section’ of all the voices that could be heard in the ancient communities. It is the pure distillation of what was offered by the Spirit-led, as the essence of the apostolic tradition. The tradition, and the sum total of voices, are not the same at all. Orthodoxy is interested in the former, not in being an archival record of things antiquarian.

It was the early generation of bishops in the larger churches – generally men who were educated in the wider perspective of how other Mediterranean churches were conducting themselves – that first began to call for some system of common governance: to preserve doctrinal orthodoxy and rule out extreme heterodox movements. The bishops of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome feature prominently in this part of the story. Important bishops, such as St Ignatius, Dionysios, or Pope Clement, have left behind them a body of literature that is afforded great respect in the Orthodox tradition, as giving evidence of some of the earliest post-apostolic models of governance. The writings of St Ignatius the God-Bearer (of Antioch), dating to approximately AD 107, show that already the principle of the single presiding episcopate is spreading through the churches as the preferred model for good order. Ignatius speaks of the bishop as the icon of Christ governing the church. ‘No one is permitted’, Ignatius writes, ‘to do anything that concerns the church, without the bishop.’ Ignatius describes the bishop as the focal point of unity, because around him the church is enabled to gather eucharistically: and Christ himself is the unity of the communion.⁹

What Christians did in these great and early churches, which were the capital cities of the Roman empire of the time, determined what other communities wanted to do

as well. Good practice was always a dominating factor in how the wider community of churches in the ancient world emulated, and learned from, one another. Eventually this system of common awareness and respect became enshrined in the important principle of mutual episcopal recognition. Bishops who were ordained were acknowledged by 'letters of peace' as they introduced themselves to neighbouring bishops and gave an account of their standard of Christian teaching. By the late second century it is clear that the bishops had also begun to organize the churches by reliance on province-wide meetings of bishops. These meetings, known as synods (a Greek word meaning 'coming together'), were arranged to discuss common affairs and decide on common policy in the face of perceived threats to Christian coherence. It is in one of the very earliest of synods in Asia Minor that the enthusiast movement of Montanism was first censured as a threat to church order. So it was by practical methods achieving results of elevating the best practice, and local bishops ensuring heterodox texts were ruled out from local church worship, that by the end of the second century a system of guarding orthodoxy was practically elaborated. Its chief elements were threefold: the upholding of a canon of Scripture to serve as an authoritative paradigm of the apostolic teaching; the putting forward of the senior priests (the bishops) as the successors of the apostles, and affording them the authority to govern the churches according to this apostolic standard; the setting up of a system of synods of bishops (at first province-wide, then growing in a wider international remit) to ensure common teaching and harmonious traditions among all the local churches.¹⁰

Early episcopal theologians such as St Irenaeus reflected on the problems occurring in the local community with heterodox groups who were producing a veritable outpouring of 'alternative' Gospel literature. These, the so-called apocryphal Gospels, were refused admittance to the worship services of the early Orthodox communities. When one reads examples of these texts today, alongside the sober and inspiring message of the canonical Gospels, the Orthodox do not regard the early bishops as having been 'oppressors' at all, but saviours of the purity of the faith. The apocryphal Gospels, in the main, are trivializations of the solemnity of the apostolic teaching, or they lead it out into elitist metaphysical speculations that have little bearing on Jesus and his heavenly message that was so deeply rooted in the soil of reality. This clash with speculative heterodoxy marks the last pages of the New Testament record¹¹ just as much as it does the writings of the second-century Fathers. Irenaeus, and other theologians of this early period, articulated more details as time went on about how to recognize and protect the system of Orthodoxy and avoid heterodox opinions that falsified the authentic Gospel. In addition to the canon of the Scripture, the concept of apostolic succession of the bishops, and the concept of synodical harmony, Irenaeus also pointed to the manner in which practices of worship enshrined the true belief of the people. This process was described in the Latin text of Irenaeus as the principle of the *Regula Fidei* (Rule of Faith). What it soon came to be summed up by was the manner in which candidates for baptism presented their 'confession of faith' before the sacrament. The confession was generally taught to them by the local bishop, and so this 'Creed' was an active summation of the whole belief of that church. Creeds, and the theological attitudes manifested by the practice of the rituals of prayer and worship (the hymns, the liturgical prayers, and details of the sacramental rites) all accumulated, in Irenaeus' view, to presenting a veritable dossier of authentic Christianity that was not dependent on the intelligentsia to articulate it. It was a lived

theology of the whole church, not a theoretical religion for the highly educated. From ancient times to the present day, therefore, Orthodoxy has held to that principle, and it is the people as a whole in the Orthodox Church who hold to the tradition of belief they have received from earlier times. Orthodoxy is much less susceptible than are many Western churches to the theological writings of contemporary theologians among it. The wider church, the ordinary faithful as well as monks and bishops, expect modern theologians to conform their doctrine to the writings of the apostles and Fathers, and to the liturgical tradition they themselves received at baptism. An Orthodox theologian who departs from fundamentals of the Rule of Faith is, *de facto*, no longer an Orthodox theologian at all.

The development of ecclesiastical centres

The patterns laid out in the New Testament literature and the earliest of the patristic writings were records of the church in its infancy. They are informative, even determinative of some things, but not prescriptively unalterable as methods of church governance. Orthodoxy does not agree with, and strongly resists the reductionism of, some forms of Protestantism that argue that unless something is to be found in the explicit writings of the New Testament it cannot be a constitutive part of authentic church life. Orthodox understanding of Christian tradition is much wider and deeper than this. By the third century the great spread of Christianity around the Mediterranean basin, and in the vast heartland of Asia Minor, led to pressing needs to organize the local churches on more formal models. From this period many forms of governance that are still used today in churches were elaborated in Christian public life.¹² At this stage the great capital cities, such as Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, began to serve as models of emulation for Christian communities world-wide. Later in the fourth century we can see this process of 'great centre imitation' working clearly as liturgical ideas that were first tried out in Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, or Rome (focal points for pilgrim interest) made their way all over wider Christendom. In the great capital cities of Roman late antiquity the bishops of these large centres were assisted by a cohort of elders, and the pattern of establishing a single presiding bishop with a larger circle of presbyters became a standard mode of governance. Deacons were, historically, always seen as the helpers of the bishops, and remained an order more attached to the episcopate than the presbyterate. By the later third century when the very size of the Christian communities led to the need to establish several churches in each diocese¹³ (it had been an old ideal to have one church, one bishop, and one eucharistic celebration, for each town before that), it was the presbyters who went out to form separate churches. These were still under the presidency of the presiding diocesan bishop (the Orthodox now speak about a 'ruling' bishop), but the pattern that would endure was coming into force: an episcopal cathedral church,¹⁴ and a variety of parish churches served by presbyters, with the possible assistance of a smaller number of deacons and deaconesses.

The imperial authorities at this time were frequently hostile to the church, and often the bishops became the target for focused attack. Many of the ancient martyrs were victims of persecutions from this period in the third and early fourth centuries. It is also clear, however, from the more extensive writings that the early bishops began to

leave behind them, that 'good order' in doctrine and practice was something that was powerfully moving them. In the third century the system of international correspondence between bishops is developed extensively. The great churches tended to keep an eye on the smaller and more provincial communities, ensuring that Christian life developed in a harmonious commonality (allowing for cultural differences in many regions) and that serious doctrinal divergences, or liturgical differences, were smoothed out as best as possible. The Asia Minor churches which observed Pascha on the fourteenth of the month of Nisan (an equivalent to April) regardless of the day of the week on which it fell, were publicly censured from Pope Victor's Rome for not observing the common tradition of observing Pascha on a Sunday (as an all-night Saturday vigil).¹⁵ There were many differences, of course, and some scholars have compared the church of this period to a 'quarrelsome kind of union', but by virtue of the authority of larger sees, the appeal to good practice, and the use of synodical meetings of bishops, the older ideas established in the preceding centuries were faithfully developed in the new circumstances of the growing church. Episcopal governance was, at this period, a very strong force for ensuring the concept of ecclesial 'communion'. On the wider front this was done by each local bishop keeping an eye on neighbouring bishops' teachings and conduct, and, on the local scene, by the bishop keeping a close eye on the good order of the diocesan eucharistic celebrations, where faith was lived and taught on a weekly basis. At the end of the third century, monasticism also began to make a strong appearance in the church.

The monastic life had a real flowering in the early fourth century, in both Syria and Egypt, before spreading to Rome, Constantinople, Armenia, and Cappadocia, and eventually all over the Christian world. The early monks, known also as 'zealots' or 'ascetes' (athletes) were dedicated to the living out of Christian values in an uncompromising way. They too became zealous defenders of the tradition of theology they held up as the ancestral faith. At times the monks' stubbornness was problematical for the Orthodox bishops, as for example when they attached themselves to dissident positions (such as the anti-Chalcedonian ascetics in Egypt, or Palestine), but generally they were so popularly venerated as defenders of the faith against encroachments by imperial compromisers that by the end of the fifth century almost all the bishops were selected exclusively from the ranks of monastics. It is a practice which Orthodoxy adheres to even in the present, though the very early bishops in the Scriptures were meant to be married before they could be chosen,¹⁶ and some of the great Fathers (such as Gregory of Nyssa) were married men. From the later fourth century, the Orthodox Church developed as a single structure with double pillars of support: the diocesan level of churches administered from the cathedral church and bishop's chancery, and also the ringing of monasteries constituting the ascetical life of a province. At the best times of the church's life, the two systems have been in close harmony, one refreshing the other.

The fourth century is often seen as a sea-change for the affairs of the church. With the vision of the Emperor Constantine (now revered by Orthodoxy as Constantine Among the Saints and Equal to the Apostles) in the prelude to his battle¹⁷ with the pagan Emperor Maxentius for control of the western empire, Constantine was convinced that the God of the Christians had enabled his rise to power. He was, accordingly, a defender and patron of the Christian movement (also enjoying its support for his administration) and eventually was baptized on his deathbed by Bishop Eusebios of Nicomedia. For the church, emerging from generations of bloody

persecution, his patronage seemed like a dream come true. Soon local bishops were given administrative powers within the empire, and to them was handed over the role of local judgement of matters concerning Christians. Many of the provincial bishops became virtually synonymous with Roman imperial administration (other than that regarding tax returns and military defence), as they were frequently the most educated people of the region. By the end of the fifth century a working relationship had been established, that the church would recognize the 'God-loving Christian emperor' as having a sacred right to rule, and the emperor would guard the peace of the church. The ritual of the anointing of the Christian emperors¹⁸ underlined their sacramental office, and envisaged it as something along the lines of a New David, set over the New Israel.

The relation between the Christian imperium and church affairs was described in the patristic writings (not without perennial struggle breaking out in times of stress and conflict) as ideally being a 'symphony' of relations of powers. The political affairs of the empire were God-blessed, as long as they followed the Gospel dictates; but the spheres of religion and politics were separate.¹⁹ The emperor could look over the good order of the churches, but he was not to intervene in matters of doctrine or conduct, which were part of the sacred tradition of the church, and were to be supervised by the priesthood. Often this ideal 'symphonic balance' was tipped too far one way (usually by imperial pressure on the church) but generally it worked throughout the long ages of the Byzantine empire (up until the mid fifteenth century). Monastics were always at the front of dissent from imperialist over-control. Many examples of this abound in church history, such as the manner in which the emperor's policy of iconoclasm was rejected by popular dissent, or the way in which the Paleologan state's attempts to impose unity with Rome were decisively rejected.

After the fall of Byzantium to Islam, the imperial model of governance of the state was exported to Russia, where the tsars saw themselves as continuing the office as church protectors. Even where it was resisted, as in the medieval West, where separate nationalist dreams were always more alluring than the concept of a trans-national imperium of the Christians, it was often followed in default.

The age of the Fathers

The final victory of the Emperor Constantine, and his assumption of sole monarchical control over the Roman empire in 323, coincided with his decision to bring healing and order back into the affairs of a Christian East that had been so disrupted by the brunt of the fourth-century persecutions. He paid the church compensation for much of the property it had lost, gave several buildings for its use (the Lateran basilica in Rome for example), and commanded several new churches to be built (such as Bethlehem, the old St Peter's basilica, and the church of the Anastasis, or Holy Sepulchre). He also commanded the bishops of the Eastern Church to come together and end the dissensions that had compromised their unity. This they did, at his own palace at Nicaea in Asia Minor in the year 325. This large synod of bishops was to become a great moment in church history, featuring as the first of the ecumenical (world-wide) synods that the church has looked back on as being of monumental importance in settling universal matters of the Orthodox faith. There are now seven ecumenical councils which the Orthodox regard as the supreme legislative assembly of

the church on earth. Roman Catholicism continued the process of holding universal councils (the last being Vatican II in the 1960s) but the Orthodox have only regarded the first seven as authentically ecumenical, when all the ancient 'popes'²⁰ were represented. The decisions of an ecumenical council are seen by the Orthodox as having the authoritative blessing of the Holy Spirit, affirming the judgement of all the assembled bishops as to substantial matters of faith and discipline. This is why the vote of the bishops at ecumenical councils was not taken as a 'majority' prospectus. If a matter of faith was at stake, it was presumed that all the assembled bishops, as vessels of the Spirit who had been formed in the Orthodox faith, would be able to 'recognize' it without difficulty, not search for it laboriously among a welter of possibilities. The apostolic teaching was (and is) taken with utmost seriousness: 'We have the mind of Christ.'²¹ If a bishop dissented from the unanimous vote of an ecumenical council, therefore, or resisted it once it had been proclaimed, he was inevitably regarded as resisting the Spirit, and was always deposed from his office as bishop by the vote of the assembly.

The decrees of the Council of Nicaea strongly proclaimed the divinity of the Word of God, and laid the foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity. Nicaea, and the creed of faith it issued, has always been regarded by the Orthodox as the foundation stone of theological truth after the Scriptures, and an example of how the Orthodox tradition (almost in every generation) has to recognize the challenges that present themselves (Arianism in the time of Nicaea) and defend the truth in harmony with the received tradition of the past. This ministry of harmonious consensus in faith, and vigorous defence of truth, still remains the quintessential role of the Orthodox bishop. In this period of the church the writings of numerous episcopal theologians became widely accepted as authoritative, either because they formed part of the significant context of an ecumenical council (such as the writings of SS Athanasios, or Gregory the Theologian, or Cyril of Alexandria) or because their spiritual wisdom carried a large weight and reputation with it (such as the writings of the monastic saints and ascetics²²).

The pastoral works of such theologians as Basil of Caesarea, or the historical works of such writers as Eusebios of Caesarea, or the liturgical instructions of Cyril of Jerusalem, all accumulated to form a very rich and extensive body of literature on exegesis, doctrine, liturgy, and spirituality, which is still read to this day in the Orthodox communion. These writers, especially those of unquestioned authority and ancient status, are given the title of the 'Fathers of the Church'. The phrase primarily signified the ancient office of bishop-theologian. There were 'Mothers of the Church' too (*Ammas*): such great saints and teachers as Macrina of Cappadocia, Olympias of Constantinople, Melania of Rome, Syncletica the Ascetic, and many others. They did not have an ordained role as teacher, as the Fathers who were bishops did, (though some of them were deaconesses) but the stature of their lives and the quality of their ascetic witness has given them a pre-eminent status as early Christian women theologians. Orthodoxy affords deep respect to the writings of the Fathers and Mothers, as an example of the Spirit-filled (*pneumatophoroi*) who can teach the church the authentic message of the Spirit of God in any given age or era. For this reason Orthodoxy does not restrict the age of the Fathers and Mothers to a dead past. Those who are Spirit-bearers in the present age are also the authentic theologians of God, even though not all of them may have the duty of public teaching in the church, and many of them may not have academic qualifications. The writings of each Father



Figure 1 St Cyril of Alexandria, fifth-century archbishop and major patristic theologian. The icon is in the style of Athonite wall frescoes of the eighteenth century, its vigorous rendering suggesting the energy and sense of elan that Cyril himself brought to his church life in the defence of Orthodoxy against Nestorianism. As one of the traditional 'liturgical doctors' of Orthodoxy (saints who traditionally composed eucharistic liturgies), Cyril's icon often features in the apse of churches in the company of the other doctors. Each bears a phrase from the liturgy typically associated with their work. Here, St Cyril carries a scroll relating to his defence of the Theotokos (Mother of God) title as this was enshrined in an exclamation of the Eastern liturgy after the consecration. It reads: 'We remember especially our all holy, most blessed Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary.'

Modern icon by Eileen McGuckin

individually considered, however, are not afforded any level of infallibility. It is how the patristic writings merge with the harmony of the great tradition that affords them their apostolic quality of truth. Some of the individual Fathers were great men of faith, but raised theories and ideas that the church, in relation to its wider tradition, rejected and discountenanced. Orthodoxy venerates St Augustine, for example, but

regards much of his work as seriously flawed, and as a source of much disunity that would follow after him, between the respective Latin and Orthodox readings of the church's tradition on important issues. Origen of Alexandria is a writer whose biblical exegesis, and much of his thought, has inspired generations of saints, but whose 'overall system' was severely censured by the Orthodox ecumenical tradition, and he has been denied patristic status accordingly.

In the fourth and fifth centuries there were so many great writers, defending the tradition and establishing the tenor of the conciliar teachings, that it has ever afterwards been regarded as 'the Golden Age of the Fathers'. For the fourth century, SS Athanasios, Gregory the Theologian, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Ephrem the Syrian stand out as the great defenders of the Nicene faith. For the fifth century there were such giants as Cyril of Alexandria, Pope Leo I, and St Augustine. There has hardly been a century since, in all the long annals of Orthodoxy, where great spiritual teachers and theologians have not appeared. The whole Orthodox tradition is marked by these luminaries: writers of patristic status reaching out of the classical ages of the church and into the medieval period and beyond. Notable among them are St Maximos the Confessor, St John of Damascus, St Symeon the New Theologian, St Gregory Palamas, and St Gregory of Sinai. In every instance their teaching has formed a seamless union with the quality of their lives. In doctrine the saint-theologians of Orthodoxy are faithful to the apostolic tradition, and in their life they represent the charism of the Spirit-filled. Without both characteristics visibly present, Orthodoxy does not afford such high recognition to any teacher; when both are present it recognizes them as manifesting the 'mind of Christ'. It is an enduring ecumenical sadness that their lives and works are so little known in Western Christianity.

Creeds and councils

After Nicaea in 325, there was a series of great councils that received ecumenical status in retrospect. A council can often be called together, intending to be of ecumenical significance, but may be rejected by the general sentiment of the faithful over the course of time. In such cases the Orthodox regard those councils as never having had the spiritual charism to assume the role of authoritatively binding the church at large and, as such, not deserving the title 'ecumenical'. One clear example of that failure was the attempt at church reunion initiated by the Byzantine emperors in the fifteenth century. The Council of Florence (1438–9) is regarded by the Latin Church as having ecumenical significance; but when the Orthodox delegates returned home to Byzantium the general sentiment of the people rejected their proclamation of union with Rome, and so this council is not listed as authentic in the annals of Orthodoxy. What is at issue here is the very important concept of the conscience of the church at large; what is known in the West as *sensus fidelium*. There is no doubt that it is the Council of Nicaea and its credal exposition of Orthodox faith that holds pride of place in Orthodoxy.²³ The council declared for the full and coequal deity of the Word of God, personally incarnate in the Lord Jesus. It stood against the arch-heretic Arius, who had argued that Jesus was a creature, and the Word of God merely an elevated angelic being, not possessed of deity except in a nominal way. Nicene faith is the

affirmation that, in Christ, God himself came to save us. It is the pillar that holds up the roof of the holy Orthodox tradition. St Alexander of Alexandria and his deacon (then successor) St Athanasios of Alexandria, along with Bishop Hosius of Cordoba were the Orthodox (Greek and Latin) leaders of the Nicene cause. The council's extensive canons also set out patterns of church governance in terms of the arrangement of sees,²⁴ provincial meetings of synods, and the precedence to be held in matters of appeal by the larger capital sees.

The Council of Nicaea ending in 325 did not bring peace to the church for a long time. The entire generation after it was filled with synods and counter-synods, where the Arians continued to fight long and hard against the Nicene theologians. It was a bitter period of international Christian division and disunity, but one in which the leading Orthodox Fathers never ceased to argue single-mindedly for the preservation of the faith defined by the Orthodox Fathers of Nicaea. In doing this they resisted every attempt at political 'compromise', a path that was advocated by the sons of Constantine who then occupied the imperial throne.

Nicaea was followed by the second ecumenical council, which took place at Constantinople in 381, and which served as a 'capstone' to the council of 325. It brought an end to a long period of Arian ascendancy, coinciding with the death of the last emperor (Valens) who had protected and advanced Arian theologians in the court. With the removal of state patronage the Arian movement soon lost ground (though some have called it a perennial Christian heresy). The Council of Constantinople declared the full deity of the Holy Spirit, and thus set out a more explicit theology of the Holy Trinity. Its doctrine is enshrined in the Creed which is today recited at all Orthodox eucharistic liturgies. This Creed is often called the 'Nicene', but it is in fact the Constantinopolitan. They are synonymous in all respects, except that the clauses on the Holy Spirit are more extensive in the latter. The Spirit of God is divine, the Creed teaches, and his worship alongside the Father and the Son, which has always been part of the ancient faith of Christians, demonstrates this truth sufficiently.

The third ecumenical council was gathered at Ephesus in 431 under the presidency of St Cyril of Alexandria.²⁵ It taught the necessity of recognizing the inner unity of Christ the Lord, despite the recognition of his two natures (divine and human). The Divine Word of God was not mediated to the world through a man called Jesus of Nazareth. On the contrary, Jesus was the Eternal Word of God, now made manifest incarnated within history. The Incarnation is the great and life-giving paradox of the Word made flesh. To fix this in the common imagination in the simplest way possible, the conciliar Fathers at Ephesus insisted that the Blessed Virgin Mary should rightly be celebrated and called the 'Mother of God' (Theotokos). Their opponents, who in various forms wished to create some form of 'baffle' so as to avoid the implication of the immediate immanency of God within the flesh, argued that Mary should only be called the 'Mother of Jesus'. The Christology of the council, with its profound sense of joy that Jesus is none other, and no less, than God made flesh among us, has always been at the heart of Orthodox thought and spirituality ever since.

The fourth and fifth ecumenical councils were more precise elaborations of the Christology set out at the third, making a clearer exposition of its terms. The fourth was held at Chalcedon (a suburb of Constantinople) in 451, the fifth at the capital itself in 553. Both meetings were held in the cause of unity because of extensive arguments over the person and work of the Saviour. In the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon,

which declared the rightfulness of asserting two natures (divine and human) inhabited by the single divine person (hypostasis) of the Word, and Lord, Jesus, the Divine Son of God, several sections of the Eastern Church left the unity of the Greek and Latin communion of the church. These communities endure to this day and are commonly known as the Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox. Among them are the Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian, and Assyrian churches. Their tradition of life and spirituality is both immensely venerable and very close to the Orthodox, but because of the theological divisions, and the difference in admitting the decrees of the councils after Ephesus 431, they do not share in the eucharistic communion of the Orthodox.²⁶

The sixth ecumenical council was held in Constantinople in 681. Its immediate cause was another Christological heresy of the period, teaching that Christ only had one will, and that a divine one. In each instance of Christological dissent, the conciliar Fathers from Ephesus 431 to Constantinople (III) 681 doctrinally insisted that Christ was at one and the same moment fully and authentically human, and wholly divine: God from God, and man among us. All attempts to fudge the issue of Jesus' person, or to blur the impact of his real humanity in the cause of diminishing it in the face of his deity, were consistently rejected by the Orthodox councils of the church. In 692 another synod was held in Constantinople, and is now known as the Quinisext Council. It was designed to serve as reformist synod, tightening the discipline of the church with extensive canons, or rules, for good behaviour. It added these canons retrospectively to the fifth and sixth ecumenical councils, but did not want to stand independently apart from them, and so has been 'included in' the numbering of seven councils.

The latest, seventh ecumenical council was held at Nicaea in 787, to teach the importance for correct faith of the veneration of icons. Many non-Orthodox have regarded this as a decline in the significance of the matter dealt with by the general councils, but the Orthodox tradition has insisted that the discernible trend in parts of the wider Christian experience, to turn away from imagery and concreteness in the spiritual life, or to resist the principle of God's encounter with his people through sacramental material forms, is a perennial heresy that weakens the true spiritual life. Those in the medieval Greek Church who argued that images and icons and relics ought to be destroyed violently, on the pretext that they separated believers from Christ rather than drawing people nearer to the Lord in devotion and piety, were resisted by the conciliar Fathers. Their iconoclasm was exposed as a form of Platonism, or abstract spiritualism that resisted the path of incarnation that God took towards his people. Many Orthodox thinkers have since argued that iconoclasm, in the many forms in which it still exists within Western Christianity (the rejection of a full range of sacraments, or a distaste for the veneration of the saints, or a refusal to honour the icons of the Lord, the Virgin, or the saints) signals a serious matter of theological divergence, a different conception of what the communion of Christ is, and is not something that is peripheral or an incidental difference in the faith.

The whole teaching of the seven ecumenical councils is a very significant, and substantial part of the Orthodox tradition of faith. Orthodoxy clings to the Bible, the writings of the Fathers, and the decrees and creeds of the councils as some of its foundational and most important articulations of Christian truth. It regards the doctrine of the seven councils as an organic whole; a coherent mindset that is in harmony with the scriptural revelation, and with the living springs of spiritual life today. The harmony of the councils is one example (and a major one at that) of the

harmony of the Orthodox tradition as a whole. Orthodox saints who have taught after the age of the councils, such as St Photios (810–95) or the Hesychast Fathers such as St Gregory of Sinai or St Gregory Palamas, in the fourteenth century, have been very careful to guide all of their writing and reflection on the apostolic standards of the Scriptures, the patristic consensus, and the conciliar tradition. In this way they have secured their Orthodoxy in line with that of the saints from times past. It remains a mark of authentic Orthodox theologization.

St Photios, known as ‘the Great’ in Orthodox tradition, is an important theologian who stands as a bridge between the ancient and medieval ages of the church. In the course of a council, held at Constantinople in 867 when he was patriarch of the capital city, Photios’ arguments against papal supremacy (the first time the Orthodox world had faced up to the issue, although it had long been uneasy about the development) and the untraditional nature of the Latin *Filioque* theology,²⁷ resulted in the synodical condemnation of the pope. The ultimate alienation of the Byzantine and Roman churches has often been posited as happening in 1054, but the work of Photios marked the first time (there had been many prior incidental divisions and would be several others after) that the Eastern and Western churches officially and instinctively drew apart on profoundly significant theological issues, especially those related to the manner in which papal authority was felt by the Easterners to have changed the ancient pattern of the Christian ecumene.²⁸ The rift that yawned open at that time between the Latins and the Orthodox, on the understanding of the Trinity, was not a separate ‘doctrinal’ matter distinct from the ecclesiological tensions then in evidence; rather it was something, Photios argued, that was part of a general tendency of the medieval West, the ongoing alteration of the ancient tradition in the name of ‘development’. His treatise *On the Holy Spirit* became a foundational study for later Eastern Orthodox theology, and one that for centuries to come focused the mind of the Byzantine world on why it held Latin Catholicism in suspicion, both in terms of ecclesiastical organization and in relation to its understanding of Christian doctrine.

East and West: the parting of ways

After the last council in 787, the political affairs of the Byzantine empire went into a long decline, largely because of the pressure of the advance of Islam in the form of the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks. The emperor’s role in the gathering together of the synodical bishops, and his supervision of the proclamation of their decrees as part of Christian law for the Eastern churches, was progressively hindered by the political reality that saw more and more parts of the ancient Christian lands now under the control of Islamic rulers, the caliphs, and then the sultans. The weakened position of the Eastern Christians was exacerbated even more as a result of the Crusades. From the late eleventh century onwards western armies, inspired by the appeal of the pope for Christian soldiers to liberate the holy sites in Palestine, were regarded as a mixed blessing by the Christian emperors in Constantinople. Only forty years before the beginning of the First Crusade there had been a particularly bitter ‘falling out’ between the Papacy and the Constantinopolitan patriarchate. Pope Leo IX had, with the emperor’s support, sent legates, among them Cardinal Humbertus, to resolve the

several differences between the Latin and Greek churches that were currently causing friction. The list of problems included the *Filioque* clause, and the extent to which the pope was entitled to a jurisdiction of power over churches outside his immediate territory, but also included the sense of the widening gap that had grown up between Greek and Latin liturgical life and spiritual customs.

Far from being resolved, the argument between Humbertus and patriarch Michael Caerularios flared to new heights. It ended with the cardinal leaving a decree of excommunication against the patriarch on the altar of Hagia Sophia, in July 1054, and the Holy Synod of Constantinople, in return, excommunicating the papal legates. This was not an exchange of excommunications between the churches in any sense, but it had the effect of being a public severance of unity, and it is often cited as a significant 'moment' in the story of what was to become the long separation of the Orthodox and Latin catholic churches. Increasingly from that time onwards, the Papacy regarded the Greeks as having become 'schismatic' by having refused the rights of papal jurisdiction, and the Orthodox regarded the Western Church as having lapsed into heresy for elevating the Papacy to such extraordinary heights, while tampering with the ancient deposit of the faith in such matters as adding the *Filioque* to the Creed, and using unleavened bread in the Eucharist. Mutual respect, by the high Middle Ages, was at a low ebb. By 1190, the sense among the Orthodox that the long alienation had actually become a schism becomes apparent in the great Orthodox canonist Theodore Balsamon, the patriarch of Antioch, who wrote:

For many years now, the western church has been divided in spiritual communion from the other four patriarchates and has become alien to the Orthodox...so no Latin should be given communion unless he first declares that he will abstain from the doctrines and customs that separate him from us, and that he will be subject to the canons of the church in union with the Orthodox.²⁹

The sense of separation, even at this late date, however, was such that it could be 'repaired' by a simple statement of assent. Today there is a sense that things have gone further astray; and a simple individual statement of faith is not generally felt to be sufficient remedy to initiate intercommunion.

The worst fears of the Byzantines, in regard to the crusading movement, however, were realized in 1204, during the infamous Fourth Crusade, when the crusading fleet turned aside from their goal of Jerusalem, and settled into several days of looting after their involvement in the toppling of the incumbent Byzantine emperor. The behaviour of the Crusaders, who looted the Orthodox churches of their relics,³⁰ suggested to the Orthodox observers that not only were the Latins more hostile to them than their Islamic foes, but they clearly had little respect for them as fellow Christians. The invading force desecrated the altars and monasteries of the Byzantine capital, and even though the behaviour of the Crusaders was censured by the pope, it left an abiding sense among the Greeks that Latin Christianity had changed, substantively, had adopted a new attitude to fundamental matters of religion that, to them, now appeared alien and hostile to the churches of the East. From the time of the Fourth Crusade onwards there is clearly a sharp frost in the air in relation to all issues of Orthodox dialogue with the Western Church. There is in addition a pervasive sense (still discernible among many Orthodox in eastern Europe to whom one might talk to

this day) that the hostility of the Western Church, and its designs against Orthodoxy, were part of the reason why the Orthodox Church fell so heavily before the might of the Ottoman armies in 1453.

From that time onwards, most of the Orthodox world was to know subjection for centuries to come. It carried on its Christian life, for the most part, under sufferance of non-Christian powers. From this time to the nineteenth century the Orthodox Church lists a massive list of neo-martyrs and confessors among its ranks. There were attempts to broker reunion, and these were especially led by the Byzantine emperors of the day who were desperate to secure the political support of the Western Christian states (and thus needing the pope's blessing) as Islam advanced more and more aggressively against the East-Roman Christian empire. The first reunion council was that of Lyons in 1274. The Orthodox delegates then present agreed (though in as vague a way as they could) to recognize papal claims to supremacy, and also to recite the Creed with the *Filioque* added. Their 'acceptance' of these ideas led to their wholesale repudiation among the Orthodox at large. The emperor's sister is reputed to have replied to the news of Lyons with the words: 'Better my brother's empire should perish, than the unity of the Orthodox faith.'³¹ When the empire was once more in critical need of military aid, Emperor John VIII made a passage to the west, and personally attended the unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–9). The discussions at Florence were much more substantial than anything that had occurred since the time of the patriarch Photios in the ninth century.

The Orthodox delegates at Florence all signed the Act of Union, with the exception of Markos Eugenikos, the archbishop of Ephesus, who has since gained the title of 'Pillar of Orthodoxy'. But the terms of the union were never accepted by the Orthodox back in the home countries, and remained a policy adopted by a tiny minority of court clerics in the capital city. John, and his successor Emperor Constantine IX, the last of the Byzantine emperors, tried to act as if it were an accomplished fact, but it was indicative that the imperial court did not even proclaim publicly that the Act of Union had been signed until 1452, one year before the city's conquest. Many of the Orthodox signatories revoked their names as soon as they left Florence. In the West, by contrast the decree of union was widely announced as a 'return of the schismatic Greeks', and the subsequent evidence of the ineffectiveness of the union was equally widely interpreted as a sign of Orthodox perfidy. At this time, and having little hope that any promised military assistance would ever be forthcoming anyway, the Constantinopolitan Grand Duke Loukas Notaras is reported to have said: 'I would rather see the Muslim turban in the heart of the city, than to see the Latin mitre here.'³² The political end came quickly for the eastern Roman empire. The forces of Mehmet II, Ottoman sultan, attacked the capital on 7 April 1453, and despite a courageous defence of the Great Walls, broke through on 29 May. At dawn on that day, the last Christian Eucharist was celebrated in the great cathedral of Hagia Sophia. Faced with the prospect of death or enslavement, Latins and Greek Orthodox alike stood together to receive the holy gifts.

In the same period that Constantinople suffered her long decline, Russia rose to political eminence and, along with other eastern European states that retained some degree of free action (such as Wallachia and Moldavia, the precursors of modern Romania), they gave princely help to the wider Orthodox world, and acted as the patrons of Orthodoxy. One of the greatest casualties of the long decline was the

great diminution of the schools of the Orthodox at the very time the Renaissance was starting to take effect with the boom of knowledge and literacy in the West. Orthodoxy still suffers from the destruction of its schools to the present, and only in the late twentieth century did the signs change, promising a revival, and good new things for the future, as theological studies once more flourish in Russia and eastern Europe after decades of suppression.

The Slavic mission

When Byzantium was at its zenith, it expanded its sphere of influence by a vast system of federation and alliances with outlying states and peoples.³³ To be adopted by the emperor or to be married into the imperial family was a way in which a political web of treaty and interdependence was extended far and wide as a form of kinship relation of princes all looking to the Byzantine emperor as the centre. This inevitably involved the transmission of Christianity itself into the new regions with which Byzantium came into contact. With the exportation of books and literacy came Christianization of eastern European tribes, and their incorporation into the federation of the Christian imperium. One mission that would have a far-reaching effect was the evangelization of the pagan Slavs, who lay to the north and north-west of the Byzantine borders: the tribes of the Moravians, the Bulgars, Serbs, and Rus, all precursors of great Christian nations to come. Patriarch Photios of Constantinople inspired the Slavic mission and blessed two Greeks from Thessalonica to organize it: Constantine (826–69) and his brother Methodios (c.815–85). They are more commonly known as SS Cyril and Methodios.³⁴ As children they had already encountered Slavic tribes around their city and had gained familiarity with their language. Inventing a script, based upon Greek letters but with extra sound-signs added, Cyril and Methodios prepared extensive translations of church service books and Gospel translations into this dialect. It would have a vast transmission as ‘Church Slavonic’ and is still the common ecclesiastical language of Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia.

When the two brothers left Constantinople they disseminated the literature, the language, and the spiritual culture of Orthodoxy wherever they went. Their mission was hampered by a conflict with the German missionaries who were also at work Latinizing Moravia and Bulgaria. Issues of divergence between the two Christian traditions soon led to acrimony, and the brothers appealed to the Papacy to limit the range of the hostile German preachers, and to allow them to use their vernacular method of spreading the Gospel. Pope Hadrian II gave them his support, but Cyril died in Rome, and when Methodios returned he found papal support actually counted for little on the missionary field. His work was hindered at every turn by German ecclesiastics in Moravia, and after his death his followers were expelled. However, the dramatic failure of the Byzantine-Slav mission in Moravia was not the case elsewhere. The work took root in Bulgaria, Serbia, and among the Rus, the ancestors of Russia. At the very end of the reign of Tsar Simeon (893–927) Bulgaria was recognized as an autonomous patriarchal church, the first national Christian church of the Slavs. Serbia became progressively Christianized in the later ninth century. The multi-patterned picture of the rise of Slavic Christian Orthodoxy is told below, under the rubric of the later ‘organization’ of the Orthodox churches.

Whether or not the general view of the ‘fall’ of the Christian East as partly caused, or at least hastened, by the abandonment of the Christian West is correct, it became a deep part of how the Orthodox in the late Middle Ages and into the present had the story of their decline recounted to them. But, as they declined, the Western Church grew in power and status, until the extraordinary events of the multiple scissions among it that are known to us today in the West as the Reformation. Orthodoxy was not able to repair the breach with the West before that extensive fragmentation happened. Even in the present day, its dialogues with Western Christianity are haunted by the suspicion that Western Christians have ‘ulterior motives’, and even now the relations between the patriarchate of Moscow and the Roman Papacy have been troubled by this ongoing issue, in the form of why the Vatican, after the end of communist control, restored an independent catholic hierarchy within the territory of Russia, at the same time as the pope called for restoration of communion between Western Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Issues that are for many Western Christians things long forgotten, or mere dim memories, are often to the fore of the collective memory and sense of identity of the Orthodox, most of them rooted in a church history which European textbooks still tend to neglect as too obscure for general issue. It will take a long time and much mutual honesty before dialogue can really flower into mutual understanding and reconciliation. The relations of the Orthodox with the Roman Catholic and Protestant worlds, in the meantime, are often badly served by the rhetoric and ceremonial of an ecumenics that sometimes tries to dispense with the laborious task of hearing one another clearly.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES FROM MEDIEVAL TO MODERN TIMES

The extension of the Orthodox Church

In the course of the twentieth century Christianity, demographically speaking, became the most extensive and universal religion known to human history.³⁵ At the beginning of the third millennium there were a total of 2,000 million Christians on earth – one-third of the entire world’s population. Among that number the Orthodox are present as 210 million souls bearing witness to the history of the Church, its active present, its anticipated future. One of the important aspects of that witness is the complete unanimity in the faith of all of the Orthodox believers, and their common allegiance to the self-same spiritual ethos of their theological tradition. It is this unanimous bonding and spiritual unity which constitutes their very identity as those who possess the *phronema Christou* (mind of Christ), and share the ancient faith of the apostles and martyrs, who handed it on to them authoritatively and charismatically.

The term ‘Orthodox’ originally came into popular usage in the Eastern Christian world as a descriptor of the church communities in the sixth century, to distinguish those who accepted the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon (451) from those who refused them.³⁶ It grew up as a party term, therefore, meant to distinguish the Byzantine Christians (and the Latins along with them) from those dissenting from the Christological settlement of Chalcedon. In subsequent times the anti-Chalcedonian churches of the East have also adopted the epithet, applying it in its wider patristic

sense of 'true to the correct opinion' or 'proper in faith'. Thus most of the churches of the East have the word 'Orthodox' in their descriptive title. In the sense of the normal understanding of the 'Orthodox Church', however, the word can be taken here in its original intent, to signify those churches that are in communion with one another because they share the same faith, in which is included the acceptance of the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, within the totality of the seven ecumenical councils from the first Council of Nicaea in 325 to the second of the same name in 787. The churches which rejected Chalcedon, were historically separated from the communion of the Roman and Byzantine churches from the end of the fifth century onwards and, accordingly, were also not part of the settlement of any of the three subsequently recognized ecumenical councils following Chalcedon (Constantinople II in 553, Constantinople III in 681, and Nicaea II in 787).

The liturgical and spiritual life of these other separated churches of the East³⁷ is very close to that of the Orthodox Church. The ethos and style of thinking, the attitude to prayer and sacraments, the overall 'ecclesiastical mentality' is also immensely close, since the separation took place at a time so early in the patristic age. By the grace of God a union may once more be a thing that can be accomplished, if more ways can be opened up for a renewal of mutual love and respect. Historically so much of the division was the result of political tensions and nationalist rivalry, and misunderstood intellectual initiatives. In the present century, where the political environment is so different, and the chances for a truer and deeper mutual understanding are so much better, the ecumenical 'dialogue of love' between Orthodoxy and the non-Chalcedonian Eastern churches may indeed be coming to a new era of hope and fruitfulness, based on a deeper understanding that the *Mia physis*³⁸ of St Cyril of Alexandria's early theology (which the non-Chalcedonians prioritize) is not intrinsically opposed at all, to the Christology of 'one hypostasis and two natures' presented by the Chalcedonian Fathers, who were also prioritizing (and nuancing) St Cyril.³⁹ Formerly designated the 'Monophysite' churches, and now more eirenically the 'Miaphysite' or non-Chalcedonian Eastern churches,⁴⁰ these are the Syrian,⁴¹ Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Malabar Indian churches. There is also the so-called 'Nestorian' Church of Syria, which is more properly known as the Assyrian Church. This took a line of resistance quite different to the anti-Chalcedonian Miaphysites, and stressed the distinction of the natures of the Incarnate Lord in a way that held Cyril of Alexandria to be anathema (thus also rejecting the legitimacy of the generally accepted Council of Ephesus in 431).

In addition to this, there is also a local presence of the hierarchs in the communion of the Orthodox Church in most of these Eastern countries (Orthodox clergy of the patriarchate of Alexandria in Egypt, for example, along with the Coptic hierarchy; Syrian Orthodox clergy of the patriarchate of Antioch in Syria along with the Syrian anti-Chalcedonians, and so on). In many places there are also representative clergy in communion with Rome. In Jerusalem, for example, there is now the Orthodox patriarch, and a 'Latin' patriarch. In Syria there have been at one time seven senior ecclesiastics all designated as 'patriarchs of Antioch'. In most cases, if not all, the churches all have the word 'Orthodox' in their title. The simplest clarifying issue, in the view of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition, and the one followed in this book is that the term 'Orthodox Church' refers to those churches in communion with one another who accept the statement of faith as established by the seven ecumenical

councils, as the sum total of the great councils. The patriarchs whom we recognize, and there can only be one in each instance in accordance with the strictest principles of Orthodox ecclesiology,⁴² are those senior members of the hierarchy who lead the Orthodox communities of those places. This will not reduce or resolve the confusion Western Christians will have, on encountering representatives of the different Eastern communions, but it should serve to explain that, for Orthodoxy, there is no confusion at all. Belonging and self-identity are, as always, determined by the issue of communion. The church, in essence, is a reality, indeed an ontology, of communion. Outside of the family of the communion, there is no Orthodox Church, because Orthodoxy is the communion.

The members of this historic community of the Orthodox faithful are still today in communion with one another, joined by the strongest of spiritual bonds in oneness of faith and practice, though distinguished by legitimate distinctions of national characteristic and organization. This Orthodox Church in the present world order knows much about national character (perhaps too much, for such 'new' things as national spirit sometimes militate against the ancient and God-given concept of the universal union of catholicity) but still the use of different national titles for Orthodoxy (such as the Greek Orthodox Church, or the Russian Orthodox Church, or the Romanian, Serbian, and so on) simply means the Orthodox Church as it concretely exists in Russia, Greece, Romania, or any of the other countries. The Orthodox canons⁴³ have, from antiquity, recognized the principle of the organizational division of the church on the basis of territorial separateness, that is the operative civic divisions. It is this dynamic principle of conformity to political realities, without capitulating to them, that has allowed Orthodoxy to develop and reorganize for so many centuries, whether under political rulers who favoured the Church or persecuted it.

This principle of the division of church jurisdiction by civic boundaries must not, however, be equated with division by ethnic border (with which it can be mistakenly identified). The Church of Christ unites races, it does not divide them or celebrate the mere fact of racial distinction.⁴⁴ The notion that each race or nation (modern conceptions overlaid superficially onto the bedrock of the apostolic faith) 'ought to be' a separate church, distinct to itself, has rightly been recognized as a heretical tendency of the modern era, and condemned as such by the patriarchate of Constantinople in 1872, who named it 'phyletism'.⁴⁵ It is proper for a nation to be a church organized on its own autonomous basis; it is not appropriate to argue that the church should be organized along tribal lines, towards which many aspects of modern 'nationalism' now run (especially in the diaspora).

This disease of phyletism has nevertheless gained a hold on some parts of the contemporary Orthodox mentality, encouraged by secular attitudes of governments in times past and present. It can be particularly seen in the desires of ancient churches located within the territorial comprehensiveness of a modern nation, to sustain 'missions' in other countries where the Orthodox have now been established for many centuries. Such is the situation applying to many parts of America and Oceania where the Orthodox are split up into many different 'jurisdictions', giving allegiance to bishops appointed by various 'home synods' as if they were temporary missions in colonial provinces. Such a situation (certainly as the initial reality of mission dwindles away across generations of establishment) is wholly against the spirit of Orthodox ecclesiology, and must one day be settled with the establishment of new autocephalous churches in those new continents.

This is not at issue, substantively, among the Orthodox. The only question of argument is how long is it suitable for a church to be established and rooted in a new land before it can take on its own identity canonically speaking. There is also the related question of who has the authority to initiate this and organize it. This is perhaps already long overdue in Australia and America. But movement towards the declaration of a real national presence of the Orthodox in a new church will require, of course, the eirenical co-operation of the existing major patriarchates, especially Constantinople and Russia, so that it can be canonically effected. In the meantime the 'on-the-ground' situation of the Orthodox Church in places such as America and Oceania presents to the observer (and to the faithful who look that far) a bewildering diversity of 'jurisdictions' that most of the laity walk through as if they were annoying jungle creepers, but which actually prevent the hierarchy and clergy of those countries from organizing their mission for the best allocation of church resources. The days are now long past when the 'Eastern' Church existed only in a geographical 'orient'. There are now far more Greeks spread across the world than there are in the Greek homelands, and the situation has been like this for several generations.

Just as it would be ridiculous to go on indefinitely imagining that the American Irish after 150 years were still Irish citizens who simply happened accidentally to be living a long way from home, so it is with the Greek diaspora situation. The same truth applies to those of Slavic origin who have also entered the New World and become absorbed into it, with their children no longer speaking any of the original languages. The issue of multi-jurisdictions of Orthodox in the same country, envisaged on a permanent basis as a normal form of ecclesiastical life is, needless to say, an aberration. But it cannot be resolved until there is the will to face the issue, the inspiration to assume a common identity as Orthodox in a new world environment, and the sense of catholicity that overcomes residual nationalisms that do not form a true perspective on the mind of the church.

Some believe that western Europe should also be declared no longer a 'mission' for the Orthodox who happen to live there, but this is a different situation, for this 'territory' is historically that of the ancient Roman patriarchate, and to establish a national Orthodox Church there would be a serious matter hindering the return to unity. In the other cases the canons of the ancient councils (especially Chalcedon 451) already directed that 'new worlds' would fall initially under the care of the ecumenical patriarchate (implying that it would arrange their admission into the communion of churches). Western Europe, however, is not 'New World', and most of the Orthodox churches are there, deliberately without erecting a parallel hierarchy to that existing from ancient times. This silence, and inaction, in relation to the establishment of a canonical fully 'local' church,⁴⁶ is a very basic form of expression of the spirit of Eastern ecclesiology. It is also an important, if implicit, statement of ecumenical eirenicity to the ancient churches of the West who pre-exist there. Christian proselytism in Russia or other parts of Orthodox eastern Europe, from Protestant sects, for example, is regarded there as a sign that an 'ecclesial mentality' has been lost among them. But the establishment of churches subject to bishops of the Roman patriarchate within Russia or other Orthodox countries (the so-called 'Uniate' problem) is at the root of much contemporary strife. It has currently turned away the face of the local Orthodox hierarchies from the otherwise laudatory ecumenical initiatives of the Roman patriarchate, as the desire to affirm a right to intervene in eastern Europe

is taken as a sure 'give-away' of deeper principles of Roman ecclesiology which are regarded by the Orthodox as objectionable – not least the principle of jurisdictional superiority as it is expressed in the Roman Catholic theology of the Papacy.

The Orthodox Church at present consists of the four ancient patriarchates which remain in communion, out of the five ancient, patristic, exemplars of the pentarchy of patriarchates⁴⁷ that once established the largest-scale (what we would now call the 'international') form of the canonical structure of early Christianity: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. To these four patriarchates are now added the other churches that have been formed as the Church of Christ expanded in the world, and new nations and peoples were added to the family of Christ in the course of history, or as older parts of the whole reached a stage of legitimate self-determination and organized themselves more independently from the ancient centres of the empire. They can be briefly listed: first, those that were once part (or allies) of the ancient Byzantine empire but emerged into separate nationhood as that vast system began to fragment; Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, Georgia, Romania, Greece, Poland, Hungary, Albania, Latvia, Moldavia, and Macedonia. Secondly, those also that were historically never part of the eastern Roman empire but came into their Christian maturity at a later date: Finland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Estonia, China, Japan, sub-Saharan Africa,⁴⁸ Australia, America, and many parts of western Europe (as missions and exarchates).

Some of these newer churches have subsequently, and more recently, been lifted to the designation of 'patriarchates' signifying their large extent, historical importance, and general venerability. There is a precedence operating in the Orthodox understanding of the 'order' of the churches, but it is not one that can be understood in the sense of a jurisdictional order, such as a hierarchical line of authority that runs down, in the manner of army authority working in a simple linear fashion, or suchlike. Orthodox ecclesiology is adamant on one central point: that each local church under its single bishop is the full and entire Church of Christ. Each Orthodox bishop is, therefore, coequal with all his other brother bishops throughout the world. There may be a 'ranking of honour' in the sense that a metropolitan of a city (an archbishop, for example) has a supervisory role over a number of the other bishops of his local province, or in the way that a patriarch has a significant degree of precedence in the synod of all the bishops of his country, and sometimes (in accordance with the canons) in relation to appeals sent to him from other parts of the church over which he has the right to adjudicate;⁴⁹ but all of this does not contravene the more fundamental principle that each bishop in his own diocese is entirely equal in apostolic status to all other bishops in the world.⁵⁰

For this reason Orthodoxy has no pope, among its patriarchs.⁵¹ The outside world, especially the media, may simplify their reports of Orthodox organization, so as to describe the patriarch of Constantinople as the 'Leader of the Orthodox World', but in fact this is an erroneous representation of the inner life of the church. The patriarch of Constantinople is certainly 'first among equals' among all Orthodox bishops; but the issue of who leads the church, who speaks for it, can not be answered in this simplistic linear sense of monarchical governance (except to point to Christ, the undying Lord of his church in heaven as well as on earth). In terms of authority within the church polity, however, the patriarch of Constantinople has a prestigious office, and often 'speaks for' Orthodox interests on a broad world platform. But the

patriarch of Moscow is the senior hierarch of the single largest Orthodox Church in the world. For generations past his office has been stifled, and censored. Today it is learning to speak out again in freedom. Its future will be immensely significant, for world-wide Christianity just as it once was before the disaster of the Soviet oppression of the early twentieth century overwhelmed it. But who leads the church? No single earthly voice, but Christ, and Christ's inspired people in their various offices and duties (bishops, priest, deacons, ascetics, married couples, prophets, martyrs among them). Who speaks for it? Christ and his saints (in the Gospels and Scriptures) as well as the whole body of the faithful, formed in his mind, in all their historic embodiment (including the utterances of the faithful from the past, epitomized in the symbolical sources, and those who may come from the future too). Bishops, among all these inspired offices which are represented across the great body of the faithful, have the special and particular office of teaching and guiding the flock; but this teaching charism does not exhaust, let alone supersede, that charism as it exists in many other places too: the multiform teaching ministry of parents, grandparents, catechism and school teachers, saints and martyrs, who all sing the song of Christ's glory through and across the generations, and pass on the charge and flame of faith like the flickering of a lighted candle from soul to soul, and from heart to heart; the only way Christ's love can be communicated truly.

This is not, in any sense, a 'confusion of order' among the Orthodox, though it may seem to be such to those catholic Christians of the West who are used to a more linear and bureaucratic way of organizing the exercise of power within the church; or to those who from their different Protestant traditions have exalted the principle of individual apprehension of the truth to a degree that Orthodoxy does not accept. Nor is it a hopelessly romantic way of understanding church order and discipline. Because Orthodoxy, for all it has a broadly diffused and essentially charismatic understanding of the mystery of authority within the church, is not thereby rendered 'paralysed' in the concrete historical instance. The authority of bishops is seen, and accepted, as the focused voice of the Lord's authority in his earthly Church. It is a great power that is cared for, and balanced, within the system of synodical oversight. But even so, Orthodoxy will never say that the bishop is the 'only' source of authority within Christ's Church.

Accordingly it is not the bishops or the priests who alone are the 'voice' of the church. (Certainly not the theologian or the historian among us acting as some 'super-consciousness'.) None of the clergy can claim to be the conscience of the church either, or at least if they do so, they of necessity make such an extraordinary claim in the light of speaking out the faith prophetically in times of stress, in the awareness that they are in harmony with the whole body of the faithful from time immemorial – not that their personal or official authority entitles them to make such statements as a matter of course. Orthodoxy, then, is deeply collegial in character as regards its understanding of authority and principles of guidance. The hierarchy plays an immensely important part, but even in doing so its members are not 'set apart' from the whole consciousness, the *sobornost*, of the Church of Christ, whose sacred tradition forms and governs each member in a direct and concrete way. The clergy are never, simply, 'the church'. The whole body, what the blessed Augustine designated as the *totus Christus* (Christ in all his fullness, complete with his mystical body), alone claims that dignity.

Synopsis of the organization of the Orthodox churches

The jurisdictional organization of the Orthodox Church, then, flows out of the principle of the local churches gathered under their bishops, arranged in larger metropolitan provincial synods, and this as eventually culminating in the expression of the ancient pentarchy of patriarchates which were felt to express an 'international' sense of different Christian cultures in harmony with the whole. The ancient pentarchy was: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. To the latter four of this number, which remain in Orthodox communion, there are now included several other autocephalous Orthodox⁵² churches, and other autonomous Orthodox churches which are still attached to their supervisory 'sponsor churches' by closer organizational ties. These autonomous churches are an extension of the 'international character' of world Orthodoxy that prevailed in antiquity within the pentarchy of patriarchates that constituted the Christian Roman empire. The pattern is now as follows:

The four ancient patriarchates

Constantinople

Alexandria

Antioch

Jerusalem

The eleven autocephalous churches⁵³

Cyprus (431)

Sinai⁵⁴ (1575)

Russia (1589)

Greece (1850)

Bulgaria (1870)

Serbia (1879)

Romania (1885)

Georgia (1919)

Poland (1924)

Albania (1937)

the Czech lands and Slovakia (1951)

The Orthodox Church in America is 'in process' of belonging to this group (in the sense that it is still in the process of gaining world-wide Orthodox recognition). It assumed autocephalous ecclesiastical status in 1970 with the blessing of the patriarchate of Moscow. The autonomy has not been acknowledged by the patriarchate of Constantinople.

The three autonomous churches

Finland (1923; patriarchate of Constantinople)

Japan (1970; patriarchate of Moscow)

China (1957; patriarchate of Moscow)

(See also Estonia and Ukraine, below)

Various 'diaspora' churches

The so-called diaspora churches are the Orthodox of different ethnic groupings who for historical reasons, such as immigration or trade over past generations, have been removed from their original homelands and now reside in what were formerly seen as 'Western' countries. Orthodoxy is now deeply rooted in most parts of western Europe and America, as the old geographical simplicities have increasingly been blurred by global mobility. There are, for example, incomparably more Orthodox belonging to the patriarchate of Constantinople living in North America than there are in the old heartlands of Thrace, Asia Minor, or Greece. There are more Orthodox living in Britain today than there are Baptists.

The old religious maps are changing. Diaspora churches began as a pastoral concern for mission. They were set up by the authority of the home synods of the various churches (above) who had faithful resident in foreign parts, and their organization was complex or simple, extensive or merely local, depending on the size of the original immigrant communities in different language groups.⁵⁵ As time went on, throughout the late nineteenth century to the present, the long-term nature of these communities tended to 'establish' them in ways that had not originally been foreseen. Moreover, the political problems of eastern Europe (particularly as they affected the countries which fell under the Soviet yoke) led to significant problems of unity and coherence both within these communities (which resisted the communist yoke from the vantage point of their freedom) and in terms of their relation to the home synod. In most cases the fundamental issue of an extension of the home synod's authority for a mission in a foreign country did not come into dispute. In most of the instances, Orthodox 'presences' were simply being set up within the historically defined territory of the ancient Western patriarchate, where a national Orthodox hierarchy had never been in existence, and for which there was no intention to newly constitute a resident one (which would be an act of proselytizing that disregarded all the rights of the Western Church).

But there was a problem that was destined to grow in the new millennium, and that was in relation to countries which could not be regarded as once having been constituent parts of the Western Church (Oceania, America, Asia, for example). There the Orthodox could claim the right to establish the national church of the country on the basis of the canon of the Council of Chalcedon attributing care of newly discovered lands to the patriarch of Constantinople. This question we can discuss shortly. Although the planting of the church historically tends to follow national trade missions, in the main, and the Chalcedonian canon is not entirely relevant to the actual global situation, nevertheless the question of long resident Orthodox 'mission' communities in Oceania, Asia, and America becomes acute when it is obvious to all that the original 'mission' has now grown into the status of a new potentially indigenous Orthodox church. Today this does not apply, in practice, except perhaps in relation to Oceania and North America, instances we shall also discuss.

The ancient patriarchates

1 *The patriarchate of Constantinople*

The patriarch of Constantinople⁵⁶ now has a primacy of honour within Orthodoxy. There is enduring historical controversy among scholars (as was the case in ancient

church history too) over whether the twenty-eighth canon of the Council of Chalcedon (451) which gave it primacy, intended to make it first after Rome, that is 'second' in rank and precedence, which was more or less the import of the third canon of Constantinople I (381), or whether it was meant to make it into the new first see of Christendom, the 'next' of that rank, succeeding to the privileges of the old first see which itself had enjoyed its erstwhile primacy by virtue of being the former capital of the empire.⁵⁷ The wording and intention of the Chalcedonian canon remain the subject of historical exegesis, as it is not simply the case that Constantinople is made 'second in rank after Rome' as most Western church writers have presumed. The range of privileges granted to it as court of appeal, especially in canon 9 of the same Council of Chalcedon, far exceeded those which Old Rome had commanded up to that time. The issue of canon 28 would be a constant friction in East-West church relations afterwards, until the Great Schism of the eleventh century made it, practically speaking, irrelevant. It continues to have controversial status as to its exact sense of application in contemporary church law, not merely with regard to ecumenical relations between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, but also internally (especially in a lively tension between the patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow) as to the extent of canon 28's applicability in terms of executive 'superintendence'.

The patriarch, known as His All-Holiness the archbishop of Constantinople, the New Rome, and ecumenical patriarch, is now still resident in Istanbul, the ancient Constantinople. This capital of 'New Rome' was founded by Constantine the Great in the early fourth century to be the military and political centre of the Roman empire. From this time onwards, and it remained the case until the ninth century, the fortunes of the older Western capital at Rome went into serious decline. Even late into the fourth century, however, Constantinople's ecclesiastical significance was very modest, reflecting its origins (as the colonial port of Byzantium) as a subordinate part of the diocese of Thrace (now Bulgaria). Byzantium had been a thoroughly insignificant city before Constantine's re-foundation, and the new capital took some time to establish itself as a powerful magnet of ecclesiastical affairs, just as it did to establish itself as the veritable centre of all political power in the Roman world. The rise to pre-eminence was rapid enough when it did happen, of course. And by the late fourth and early fifth centuries the bishops of Constantinople had become in effect archbishops by gathering together a whole ecclesiastical territory that looked to them for supervision and guidance. The institution of the home synod was encouraged by the archbishop of Constantinople. Because so many bishops came to the capital so regularly, to pursue political and other business there, they were invited to share in the deliberations of the local church. The home synod still functions in a more limited way as the governing body of patriarchal affairs. It is now made up of the ecclesiastical eparchies which are still immediately subject to the patriarch (Derkos, Chalcedon, Prinkipo, and Imbros), along with other titular archbishops who, as senior hierarchs, govern the diaspora churches as exarchs on behalf of the patriarch.

This ever-increasing and effective functioning as an international clearing house in the heart of the capital set Constantinople on a path of collision with the more ancient patriarchates, particularly Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. Their grumbling and friction mark the pages of almost every ecclesiastical argument of antiquity. Rome, by the universal agreement of all until the time of the Council of Chalcedon, was regarded as the primary court of appeal for the Christian world. Even though the city

had lost much of its effective political power after the fourth century, it was still afforded the 'right' to be considered as the last ecclesiastical court of appeal. This right was effectively undercut in practice by the simple reason that travel in antiquity was immensely difficult, so only the most critical of any issues from the Eastern, Greek-speaking, churches would ever be heard as an appeal in Rome anyway. To complicate matters, language difficulties also stood in the way, and this too was reflected in the ancient canons of the church. For most practical affairs, then, the see of Alexandria at first held the precedence in the Eastern Church, mirroring what Rome did in practical terms for all the Western churches, where it was the sole patriarchal and apostolic see. The rise to political pre-eminence of Constantinople changed this system of ecclesiastical governance. Constantinople's expansion not only 'put out' Alexandria; it also began to overshadow the patriarchate of Antioch and the Syrian hierarchs, whose territory it was very close to. There were moments of tension between Constantinople and Antioch, also reflected in the decisions of the early councils, but many of the most important of the early Constantinopolitan archbishops were drawn from the ambit of the Syrians and Cappadocians who adjoined that region.

The second ecumenical council, which took place at Constantinople in 381, and the Council of Chalcedon in 451, gave the precedence of Constantinople greater clarity and force. It has always been seen as a matter of 'normalcy' among the Orthodox that a city's ecclesiastical importance should reflect its role in the structure of the civic governance.⁵⁸ By this period the position of the imperial capital was unarguably central in church affairs just as it was in political affairs, and from this time on the patriarchate of Constantinople was established as the centre of precedence among the Eastern churches. The Roman patriarchate continued to resist the implication that a see's precedence should be tied to its geopolitical importance.⁵⁹ Nevertheless the canonical position of the patriarchate of Constantinople was universally accepted in the East, and Rome itself came to admit it, long before the time of the Great Schism of the Middle Ages. After the rise of Arab power in the seventh century, the once great Christian communities of Antioch and Alexandria fell into disastrous decline, which further elevated the prestige and importance of Constantinople as a Christian nucleus. The decree of the sultan set the patriarch of Constantinople as the political superior of the other patriarchs for the first time ever. This immense temptation to follow the path to political domination over the other churches was largely resisted. The potential of the patriarchate under Islamic power to lord it over the other sees was also undermined by a certain degree of corruption of the Phanar, which closeness to the seat of the sultanate brought with it; for in the late fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the patriarchate was massively unsettled by the extent of bribery the sultans encouraged for elevation to that sacred office.

After the first cabal of Greek merchants from Trebizond offered the sultan a bribe of 1,000 florins to depose the incumbent patriarch Mark II (1466–7) and replace him with a candidate of their own choice, the sultan's eyes were opened to the possibilities. By 1572 the standard 'investiture fee' for the patriarch was the substantial 'gift' of 2,000 florins, and an annual payment of 4,000 more, gathered from taxation of the Christian 'Rum' people who were placed under the patriarch's supreme charge throughout the Ottoman empire. There were always more than enough Christian factions lining up to pay the highest premium to ensure the election of their candidate after that point. Accordingly the tenure of the patriarchs under Turkish rule was usually very

short. Sometimes the same candidate acceded to the office, was deposed, and re-elected to it five or six times (each time paying the necessary fees). Between the sixteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century 159 patriarchs held office. Of this number the Turks drove out of office 105. Several were forced to abdicate, and six were judicially assassinated. The cadre of Greeks who sailed this stormy sea, trying to keep the prestige of the patriarchate intact and effective (sometimes using it for unworthy ambitions), tended to live in what was then the wealthy suburb called the Phanar; and were thus known as Phanariots. Many of the higher offices of the church were subsequently put into their hands when a new patriarch acceded, and this in turn led to the Phanariot Greek clergy becoming a kind of colonial superior race directing churches in distant lands, using the mandate of the sultan and the decree of the patriarch to justify it. They in turn, as local archbishops, levied taxes on their new people. As a result the Turkish 'yoke' cast a long pall over Orthodox relations with the patriarchate. The British historian Kidd acerbically described the situation in the following terms:

Thus the patriarchate, degraded by simony and made the sport of intrigue by its own people, has come to be regarded by many of the Orthodox as an agent of the Turkish government, and identified with its oppression. But the patriarchate has also come to be identified by such of the Orthodox as are non-Greek, with the cause of Hellenic nationalism. . . . A widespread hostility has thus pursued the Phanariot clergy among the non-Greek Orthodox; and the revolts which the Phanar puts down to Phyletism⁶⁰ have issued in the enforced recognition of national churches, as a refuge from Phanariot oppression.⁶¹

His view explains why some of the newer national Orthodox churches sprang into being after the collapse of the power of the sultanate in the nineteenth century, although it does not give the whole picture: how in most instances this return to independence was a return to more venerable ecclesiastical situations that had pre-dated the Turkish yoke. One other note, we might add (as Kidd himself does later), is a necessary reference to the way that the patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox world also shone with the glory of new martyrdoms throughout this dreadful period. Hostile critics of the Orthodox scene have sometimes been too ready to cry 'collaboration' and 'simoniacal conformism' when they have seen Orthodoxy under the foot of either Turkish or Soviet oppressions. But they have generally done so from the comfort and safety of their armchairs, and the financial security of ecclesiastical establishment. But the blood that has been spilled in the Orthodox Church over the last three centuries is incomparably greater than the amount of the blood of the martyrs that was shed in the first three centuries of what we now call the period of the 'Great Persecutions'.⁶² It is all too often forgotten, and martyrdom is sometimes all too easily draped with the clothes of romanticism, by those who do not have to bear its impact. But the effects on a martyred church are truly felt for generations, even centuries, after. The appalling suffering often leaves generations of traumatic reactions in its aftermath.

One continuing effect is the relative paucity of establishments of higher learning in the Orthodox world at large. Another is the way in which communities learn to be suspicious and mutually distrustful of one another in dark times, and need to unlearn these pathologies that were once understandable, but never blessed. For Orthodoxy across the world, the dark ages are now passing. What was done, in all its splendour,

and in all its defects, in those hard times, now leads into a new dawn. In this new day it is our general hope that the patriarchates of Constantinople, Moscow, Romania (and the other great centres) will shine ever more brightly, in new-found freedoms, and so in a deepening spirit of collegiality with all the other Orthodox churches. But, as in the aftermath of every sustained time of oppression, the church's most pressing task is for internal reconciliation. It is always the destiny and vocation of the church to be the sign and sacrament of unity in the world. Its own fragmentation, whether as a result of human passions or the wickedness of external oppressors and the wide trail of misery this leaves behind it, can never deflect it from its overwhelming task of unity and reconciliation. This is a command which Christ himself has laid upon it. He never said that reconciliation would be easy. He simply commanded his church to 'be one'.⁶³ The primary impetus for such union is the evangelical love of the Lord himself. His path is difficult, for Christ's love is sacrificial, and (hardest for human hearts of all things) profoundly humble and merciful.

The end of political coherence within the sprawling Ottoman empire, which was becoming more and more obvious at the end of the nineteenth century, certainly witnessed the breaking up of the immediate jurisdictional sphere of Constantinople. Russia had already detached from its orbit in the fifteenth century following the controversy concomitant on the Council of Florence. It declared itself a new patriarchate in 1589. Greece (while remaining in the closest of all ties of affection and loyalty to the patriarchate) declared its independence from the Phanar organizationally in 1850, Bulgaria in 1870, Serbia in 1879, and Romania in 1885. Georgia and Ukraine did the same in regard to the Moscow patriarchate, which had formerly supervised them, in 1919 but these would be brought back under control through the enforced Sovietization of their nations later, and would again seek independence when those powers of political control were once more loosened from the Russian centre.

In the tenth century, however, when it was in its glory, Constantinople had supervisory rank over no fewer than 624 dioceses. In its heyday its ecclesiastical territory of influence embraced all the Balkans, all Thrace, all of Russia from the White Sea to the Caucasus, and the whole of Asia Minor. Today, five and a half centuries after the fall of the city to the power of Islam, it is in a state of very sad decline 'on the ground', though it remains a brightly shining beacon and example to Orthodox the world over, by virtue of its spiritual fidelity and the enduring ecclesiastical role of the patriarch as *primus inter pares*.⁶⁴ Many of the patriarchs of Constantinople, throughout its long history, have been Christian leaders of the highest calibre, and the historical record of the throne is (overall) a vastly prestigious one. It continues this office in straitened circumstances, under difficult political and religious constraints. Today there are hardly any resident Greeks left of the thousands of Greeks, Armenians, and other Christian nationals who once made Istanbul a truly universal and cosmopolitan centre of world affairs.

Since the bitter Graeco-Turkish war of 1922 the massive exchange of populations that took place meant that Asia Minor was more or less denuded of its Greek inhabitants⁶⁵ for the first time in recorded history. Turkish law only permits the residence of Greeks in Istanbul itself, but after 1922 it became more and more impossible for most Christian families to feel secure, and so the mass exodus began. Current Turkish law forbids nuns or priests to wear clerical dress in public (with the single exception of the patriarch), and there is much popular hostility to the idea of a Greek Christian leader living in the heart of this Islamic city. On 6 September

1955 a large anti-Greek riot, sparked by the Cyprus problem, led to the burning or sacking of sixty out of the eighty Orthodox churches remaining in Istanbul, and most of the surviving Christian community lost heart at that point. Damage to Christian property was then estimated at more than £50 million. The Turkish government subsequently paid £4 million in compensation. With deportations and voluntary emigration following, the resident Greek population continued over the remainder of the latter half of the twentieth century to dwindle to demographic insignificance.

Those entering the Phanar today are swept with electronic searching devices to discourage hidden weapons, or the leaving of bombs in church (incidents which are, alas, not imaginary). The Orthodox theological school of Halki, on one of the adjoining islands of the city, founded in 1844, was once a centre of the advancement of the clergy. In the middle of the century it had begun to acquire an international reputation among the Orthodox churches as a centre of learning. In 1971 the Turkish government forcibly suppressed the admission of new students, on the grounds of preventing 'propaganda and anti-Turkish sentiment' (a reference to the Cyprus crisis) and despite many efforts since to reopen it, its enforced closure remains a stain on that government's record of religious toleration. The modern post-war patriarchs Athenagoras, Dimitrios, and Bartholomew have brought great dignity and honour to their office, enduring these difficulties, and by their personal gifts restoring an internationally luminous reputation to their throne, far beyond the formal extent of Orthodox circles. Relations with the Turkish secular powers have tended to improve, and the prospect of Turkey's entrance into the European community of nations has also acted as a spur to better relations between the Phanar and its political overlords. The Treaty of Lausanne (1923) formally governs relations between the Phanar and the Turkish state. It currently requires the patriarch always to be a Turkish citizen. It also restricts his role to 'only spiritual' matters, preventing him from being involved in politics.

The present territorial extent of Constantinople's ecclesiastical jurisdiction is comprised by Turkey, the ancient parts of Thrace that are not in present-day Bulgaria, Crete, some Greek islands in the Aegean,⁶⁶ the monasteries of Mount Athos, all Greeks of the diaspora (large numbers in Europe, America, and Oceania), and a jurisdictional oversight over the Church of Finland (since 1923), and some parts of the Russian diaspora communities who have sought the Phanar's guidance for historical reasons related to the Russian Revolution. The total number of faithful directly belonging to the jurisdiction of the patriarchate is today in the region of 7 million. The vast majority of them are in the diaspora. The category of the diaspora at first initiated as a mission to Greeks who came to the West has now been extended, in some places over many generations, to cover the very large Greek Christian communities of America and Australia, and also the smaller exarchate of Great Britain and Ireland, which can no longer be considered missionary territories. Much more than half the lay members of the patriarchate, for example, now reside in North America, and many of the Greek Orthodox there are so thoroughly Americanized that some of them have forgotten their ancestral language. The Phanar continues to exercise jurisdictional oversight over several Slavonic rite dioceses in 'exile', Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Albanian, which put themselves under the patriarchal protection in the difficult times following the large flight westwards from communist oppression in the early part of the twentieth century. The question of the continuing need for 'exile' is a current point of inter-Orthodox tension.

The monasteries of Mount Athos

The famous Athonite monasteries fall directly under the administration of the patriarch of Constantinople for all religious matters. The twenty ruling houses, and other smaller dependencies, exist under special protocol as an autonomous region within the sovereignty of the Greek state.

Mount Athos, on the Halkidiki peninsula in Greece, is a remarkable survival of Byzantine religious life, over a thousand years old, a jewel of Orthodox monasticism, which once could boast of several such 'holy mountains', whole areas of wilderness that been colonized by hermits and cenobitic ascetics. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Athos was able to negotiate its own continuance by paying taxes to its new Islamic masters, and by fighting off as best it could the regular depredations of Mediterranean pirates. Its increasing impoverishment and obscurity took it far away from its former glory in the times of the Byzantine empire when it was a veritable centre of intellectual scholarship and political influence (one of the great centres of imperial patronage and influence), but this also managed to ensure its survival. It is not only a great living museum of Byzantine heritage⁶⁷ whose architectural and natural beauties are world-renowned,⁶⁸ but it still continues with its most important function in the Orthodox world: the quiet living out of the monastic life. Athos in its heyday had an estimated monastic population of 40,000. By 1913 the years of decline had taken their toll. Its population then was just under 8,000. In a few years the large flow of Russian monks and pilgrims to the holy mountain would dry up. By 1954 the population of resident monks had fallen to 3,000. The decline seemed irreversible in the mid twentieth century. In 1969 there were only 1,350 monks, and in 1971, not more than 1,145. Since the 1980s there have been signs of a dramatic reversing of the tide, and the present state of the holy mountain is one of promising material and intellectual revival, though on certain issues (such as the patriarchate of Constantinople's involvement in the ecumenical movement) they take a very negative and hostile stand.

Athos is a renowned centre for the strict observance of the monastic Typikon, and also for the advanced eremitical life of its solitaries and small groups of hermits. Its excellence in liturgical style, and matters of church music is well known across the Orthodox world. Many of its elders are household names among the Orthodox of Greece, and many Orthodox from all over the world regularly make a pilgrimage to the holy mountain to visit the different monasteries and to consult the spiritual fathers on a variety of matters. Some of the Athonite elders have also had a wider impact, with monks having trained there and then coming out to other countries to reinvigorate the monastic life. One example is the patriarchal monastery of St John the Forerunner, at Tolleshunt Knights in Essex, England, which was founded by Archimandrite Sophrony, the spiritual disciple of St Silouan of Athos. At the present moment there are twenty 'ruling' monasteries comprising Mount Athos, and these also have smaller dependencies, known as *sketes* (isolated houses where small communities live together) or *kellia* (even smaller cottages and chapels, and sometimes comprised of remote hermitages with an isolated monk living the solitary life). In former times, its intellectual life set a standard for the world. For centuries after the fall of Byzantium, however, its intellectual life dwindled, and the monks were more often drawn from the peasant classes.

The administrative centre of the mountain is at Karyes, and representatives of the ruling monasteries take turns to sit on the central council, presided over by the representative of the Great Lavra monastery, the first-ranking foundation on the mountain. The current administrative protocol largely follows the Typikon drawn up by the Constantinopolitan patriarch Gabriel IV in 1783. The Greek government administers the holy mountain under a protocol which allows it an autonomous governance. The readmission of Slav and east European ascetics (once the Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Serbian monks had an extensive presence on the holy mountain, and the patronage of the Romanian princes sustained Athos in difficult times) is still heavily restricted. Only when this situation is remedied will Athos be able once again to be a true centre of Orthodox monasticism, a role which it aspires to. The patriarch has had the right to supervise all the monasteries of Athos since the time of Emperor Alexios Comnenos (1081–1118). The bishop of Ierissos is appointed as his representative to the holy mountain.

The monks, while following his spiritual leadership, are generally less ready to follow the ecumenical example, or the openness, which the ecumenical throne offers the wider world. Recent legal, emotional, and physical struggles on the mountain between exclusivist rigorists and those who advocated a more open attitude, (televised world-wide as monks fought with each other and pulled one another's beards) did little to give wider society an edifying image of how the solitary life can assuage the passions. The pressure of tourism (motivated both by religious and secular curiosity) has in recent times threatened to overwhelm the tiny colony, which has rightly acted to preserve its fundamental *raison d'être*, which is the serious pursuit of the ascetic contemplative life. Athos' role in the future of Orthodoxy will be secured more fully only when it rises to the challenges posed by the changed conditions of the modern world, and when it renews its intellectual life to the extent that it can take a powerful lead in Orthodox dogmatic and pastoral theology once more, as it did in times past. It also needs to make statements about the faith, and the condition of the churches which are not solely seen to be motivated by antiquarianism and fearful hostility to the world. When these conditions can be met, Athos may once again be a lighthouse to the whole Orthodox world. Its life of faithful prayer and worship, nevertheless, continues, quietly sustaining a world in the blessings of God, unknown to the multitudes outside who are busy in their own affairs.

2 *The patriarchate of Alexandria*

Second after Constantinople in the order of precedence of the Orthodox world is the patriarch of Alexandria. This church was once the glory of the Christian world. The city was founded by the Ptolemies around the tomb of Alexander, in whose honour it was built. After the fall of the last of the Ptolemies, Cleopatra, it became one of the richest and most important of the Roman imperial provinces. From two centuries before the time of Christ the city was active as the real centre of world Judaism, and several of the later parts of the Old Testament were written here, as well as the massively influential Greek translation of the scriptures known as the Septuagint (LXX) which has always been the bible used in the services of the Greek Christians. In the third century the famous Alexandrian Academy, with the Museion that attempted to gather together all the greatest literature of the world, served as an

inspiration to the Christian school located there that had among its earliest and brightest luminaries the theologians Clement, Origen,⁶⁹ Heraclas, and Dionysios. In the fourth century the Church of Alexandria was racked by the Arian crisis. Arius was one of its city priests who defied his bishop, Alexander, to teach the doctrine of the temporal origination (and creaturely status) of the Divine Logos. St Athanasios, Alexander's deacon in attendance at the Council of Nicaea, who became his successor and one of the church's greatest defenders of the Nicene faith, stands out as one of the most significant theologians in the history of Christianity. The same can be said of St Cyril, the fifth-century archbishop of Alexandria, the intellectual disciple of Athanasios who brought his work to a perfection in Christology.⁷⁰

At the time of Cyril in the mid fifth century, Alexandria was probably the most important city in the Christian world. Its intellectual and cultural record were outstanding. It was the patriarchate that nurtured the phenomenal rise to glory of the early desert monasteries that gave to the church so many saints. But after that point its fortunes as a church have suffered constant decline. The first major setback was the Christological controversy of the later fifth century. After the death of Cyril of Alexandria in 444 the synodical settlement he had agreed to (under Constantinopolitan guidance) with the Church of Antioch, was set aside by his successor Dioscorus. This precipitated a reopening of the Christological crisis that had been thought to have been resolved at the Council of Ephesus in 431. As a result the Council of Chalcedon in 451 censured Dioscorus for his actions and deposed him from office. At that juncture the entire Egyptian episcopate disconnected itself from affairs on the grounds that it was 'headless' and could not take further part. The discontent caused by this, as well as the continuing protests in Egypt against the settlement of the Council of Chalcedon, led to a period of many generations when pro-Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian bishops revolved on the episcopal throne of the Alexandrian Church; deeply dividing it, and weakening its cohesion and prestige.

The second great fissure happened in the seventh century when Islamic armies under the caliph conquered Jerusalem, then Alexandria in 639, and severed them from Byzantine imperial control. From that time onwards the Christian life of the city moved further and further away from the Byzantine orbit. Opposition to the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon eventually caused the radical separation of the Christians of Egypt into the Melkites⁷¹ and the Copts.⁷² The political impotence of the Byzantine rulers in Islamic Egypt meant that neither by compulsive means nor by cultural or intellectual influence could the schism be effectively addressed, or healed. It was, in fact, one of the first great schisms to scar Christianity in such a long-lasting manner, and no one at the time probably ever felt that it would endure so extensively. That it did (and of course because of the political isolation imposed on it by the Islamic conquest) is one of the reasons the once great patriarchate of Alexandria fell into a long and deep-seated decline.

The Orthodox patriarchs of Alexandria, in times past, used to spend many years of exile in Constantinople. The majority of the local Christians having become adherents of the anti-Chalcedonian settlement, the appointment of the patriarch came to be largely a matter of election from among the select cadre of senior Phanariot clergy, not any longer from the indigenous clergy of the province. By the

end of the thirteenth century the specifically Alexandrian Christian Orthodox culture, and its liturgical practices, were more or less entirely supplanted by Byzantine norms, and Alexandrian Orthodoxy (once so fiercely independent of the imperial capital) became an outpost of Constantinople. Today this is still the case, and the patriarch and almost all of the serving Orthodox clergy are Greek, introducing the peculiar modern position of the division of the Orthodox from the Copts, in Egypt, along ethnic lines, whereas in the past the genius of Alexandria in the culture of the Byzantine empire, had made a distinct and powerful synthesis of the Egyptian and Greek cultures, at least among the Christians.

The patriarch himself is known as His All Holiness the Ecumenical Judge, the Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria, of Libya, the Pentapolis, Ethiopia, all Egypt and all Africa. From antiquity he had precedence over Egypt, Libya, Arabia and Nubia (Sudan). Now all of the African continent falls under his jurisdiction with the exception of the tiny church at Sinai. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the patriarch removed his residence to Cairo, but the chancery subsequently returned to Alexandria, where the monastery of St Sabas became the residence.⁷³ While there are approximately 5.5 million Copts there are fewer than 15,000 Orthodox Christians in the whole of Egypt (four times that number at the turn of the twentieth century), and perhaps 300,000 in the rest of Africa. Alexandria, like Constantinople itself, was a truly cosmopolitan city at the end of the nineteenth century. The active Greek population in both places served as its leaven. Since then there has been a constant leaching away of Greeks and the other Christian merchant classes. Nasser's process of Arabization only served to hasten the end of Alexandria's ancient identity as a 'city of the world', though the decline in Christian fortunes has served to draw the Orthodox communities closer to the Copts than was the case in times prior to the mid twentieth century. There were, however, a growing number of African Orthodox missions in the course of the latter part of the last century, and in sub-Saharan Africa parish life is now taking root in a small but lively growth of indigenous Orthodox faithful and clergy, especially centred around Uganda and Kenya.⁷⁴ This infant church has been taken under the Alexandrian patriarch's Omophorion and has excited much interest and enthusiasm in other parts of the Orthodox world, where missionary activity had for so long seemed to have lain dormant.

3 *The patriarchate of Antioch*

Antioch shares with Alexandria a glorious Christian past, but the advances of Islam from the seventh century onwards left its Christian civilization in a state of slow suffocation. Several of its greatest theologians have left their mark on the patristic tradition: writers such as Mar Theodore the Interpreter (of Mopsuestia), and St John Chrysostom, Mar John of Antioch, and numerous ascetics and saints. The cultural and theological sphere of influence exercised by the Syrian Church in its time of glory was much greater than the (very large) extent of its ancient territories. The Syrian ritual gave the substructure to the Byzantine liturgical rite, for example. It was also the Syrians who perfected the art of setting poetic synopses of Scripture to sung melodies. The church's greatest poets, such as Ephrem and Romanos the Melodist, were Syrians who taught this theological style to Byzantium and prepared the way for the glories of the medieval Orthodox liturgical chant. The Syrian Church generously organized missions to Ethiopia, Persia, India, and China. Its presence in China was historically

covered up by the deliberate burning of Syriac Christian literature by the later Renaissance missionaries who claimed the origination of Christianity in that continent. It influenced the whole of ancient Cappadocia in its time, men such as the Great Basil and Gregory the Theologian were mentored by Syrian hierarchs such as Meletios, or Paul of Samosata, the great defenders of the Nicene faith at the time of the second council, that of Constantinople in 381.

In its time of glory, the Christian orators of Syria spoke and wrote the finest Greek in the Roman world. The schools of Antioch were renowned for the purity of their Greek eloquence. Writers such as Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom have left behind a memorial of work that reaches to the standards of the greatest of all Greek rhetoric. Gregory, for example, has been favourably compared to Demosthenes himself. John gained his epithet 'Golden Mouth' because of the limpid quality of his Greek; but he was a Syrian by birth. This outpost of pure Greek culture on the banks of the Orontes was a bubble that broke before the advance of Islam, and since the seventh century the flourishing of Christianity in the Antiochene patriarchate has given way to a long and slow twilight. As the patriarchate of Constantinople flourished in the ambit of the Byzantine empire, so Antioch declined in prestige and influence.

The first major land mass to go was Asia Minor, which was assigned to the purview of Constantinople in the early fifth century. Then the Church of Cyprus successfully asserted its independence from Antioch between 431 and 488. The vast territory of Persia asserted its independence in 424, after which point it refused its assent to the Council of Ephesus of 431 and fell away from communion with the Orthodox. Its continuing energy, for many centuries afterwards, drew away the allegiance of many Assyrian Christians from the patriarchate of Antioch. The continuing prevalence of the Miaphysite resistance to the Council of Chalcedon after the sixth century also drew away many other Syrians from the communion of the patriarch. Jerusalem became a separate patriarchate in 451 and took with it the territory of Palestine. In later times the scattered state of the Christian communities and their appalling vulnerability to the forces of an increasingly hostile Islamic majority led to large numbers of the Syrian Christian communities fleeing for protection to the arms of a strong and missionary active Rome.⁷⁵ The result is that there are now large communities of the so-called Uniates.⁷⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century there were no fewer than seven distinct Uniate communities in the Syrian Church all representing another historic fragmentation of the ancient patriarchate of Antioch, and seven senior clergy all claiming the right to be, and be designated as, the Antiochene 'patriarch'.⁷⁷

The Orthodox recognize only one patriarch, who is in communion with the other ancient patriarchates of the Orthodox Church, and resides at Damascus.⁷⁸ The remaining jurisdictional territory for the Orthodox patriarch is Syria, and the Asiatic Roman provinces of Cilicia, Mesopotamia, and Isauria. Most of his faithful today are Arabic-speaking Christians. From 1724 to 1899 the Orthodox patriarch of Antioch was always a Phanariot Greek. Since that time Arabs have occupied the office. Today there are just over a million Syriac-speaking Christians in the world and half a million Arabic speakers, who belong to the Antiochene patriarchate. The Orthodox patriarch's flock currently consists of fewer than half a million faithful, centred largely in Syria, the Lebanon, and Iraq, with the rest, a considerable diaspora, largely in America. The

patriarch's title is His Blessedness the Patriarch of Antioch the City of God, of Cilicia, Iberia, Syria, Arabia and All the East.⁷⁹

In America, the hierarchs of the Antiochene patriarchate have proved to be immensely creative and open to the new situations presented by life in the New World. The Antiochene Orthodox there have a large degree of autonomy afforded to them by the patriarch, and are particularly ready to engage in evangelical mission. As well as being important pillars of support for their suffering church in the homelands, they have sponsored several highly valuable translations of the liturgical texts and prayer books in English, and in recent times have encouraged numbers of evangelical Christians who have made their way into the Orthodox Church, both in America and England, and established them within their jurisdictional care.

4 *The patriarchate of Jerusalem*

The patriarchate of Jerusalem ranks fourth in the precedence of honour of the Orthodox churches. Even in antiquity Jerusalem was never a large church with a significant sphere of political influence. In the third century it was politically in the saddest state of decline, and ecclesiastically was the minor partner of Caesarea Maritima, itself the seat of a most important Christian university school.⁸⁰ Jerusalem had a different kind of symbolic influence, and importance, however, chiefly as the site of the holy places where the Lord taught, and suffered, and rose again. In its most important patristic phase it was the centre of an internationally influential liturgical revival, that followed after Constantine's building of the church of the Anastasis (Resurrection)⁸¹ and other places of pilgrimage. The story of Helena's discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem, was added to by several other major discoveries of the relics of New Testament saints such as John the Forerunner or Stephen the Protomartyr, stories that electrified Christian Constantinople and led to a massive movement of the building of pilgrimage churches in the Holy Land. From the late fourth to the sixth centuries Roman Palestine, with Jerusalem at its centre, was renowned throughout the Christian world as a thriving church based around pilgrim traffic.

Pilgrimage continued throughout ancient times. Its moment of glory came at the time of the Council of Chalcedon when the city's bishop, Juvenal, managed to secure from the conciliar fathers the admission of its right to be regarded as the primary see of Palestine (by virtue of its ancient status and contemporary importance), and they also gave to it then the status and title of a patriarchate (though without extending its territorial jurisdiction). The bloody wars of the Crusades often suggest to observers that passage to the holy places was cut off by the Islamic occupation of the holy city after the seventh century, but in fact there were many times when the Byzantine emperors regained control of the land routes, and even when they did not have the military upper hand, they easily negotiated pilgrim access by means of treaty. So it was that until the massive disruptions of the first three Crusades, the church in what was formerly Roman Palestine, centred round Jerusalem, continued as a fairly lively nexus of pilgrim sites, sustained by the city church and by numerous monasteries in the desert regions of Judaea and modern Jordan, reaching down to Gaza and Sinai. The fame of these Judaeon monasteries rivalled that of the earlier settlements of Christian Egypt, which by this stage had themselves fallen into a degree of obscurity following barbarian devastations of the desert settlements. In the fifth century the instability of

the churches, following in the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon 451, was acutely felt in Jerusalem.

The seventh century, however, was definitely to throw a curtain over any further expansion of the patriarchate, as it soon found itself thereafter in the unenviable position of a city that was not only sacred to the Jews, but had also become a holy site for the new politically ascendant religion of Islam. Even so, with a few exceptions⁸² the Christian holy places were allowed to operate in reduced numbers for most of the time. Pilgrimage has always been one of the *raisons d'être* for the patriarchate of Jerusalem therefore, and continues to be so. But in saying this it is extremely important not to overlook the profound significance of the increasingly dwindling local population of about 35,000 Arab Christians who have been suffering politically for so long, in a form of silent martyrdom. These have long felt themselves pinned between a rock and a hard place.

On the one side was the old Ottoman government, representing the massive Islamic majority of the region (successively replaced by the British Administration, and then by the state of Israel) which had little intrinsic care for resident Christian Arabs (to put it euphemistically), and on the other side was the higher Orthodox clergy who occupied all the offices of the patriarchate, and were almost entirely Phanariot Greeks. The church of the Anastasis, with the patriarch at its centre, continues to be governed by the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, which still makes up a powerful and focused Greek clerical community. The monks are known as Hagiotaphites (brothers of the holy tomb), and the patriarch is *ex officio* the head of its affairs. His title is His Beatitude the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and of All the Promised Land. All bishops of the local synod (two eparchies at Akka (Ptolemais), and Nazareth, and several other titular archbishops such as Mount Thabor, Jordan, and Kerak) whose complement does not exceed eighteen, must be members of the Brotherhood. The senior hierarchs are all predominantly occupied with the administration of one of the chief shrines of the Holy Land.

The local faithful are almost entirely Arabs (the resident Greek Christians number in the low hundreds) with predominantly Arabic parish priests. The latter are mostly married, and the celibates among them are rarely admitted to the higher offices of the church so that the synod of the Jerusalem patriarchate will never lose its Greek operative majority. Since 1958 there has been a new constitution partly influenced by the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, that gave the Christian Arabs more voice. Since then (from 1960) there has been a reluctant admission that there should always be a small number of Arab bishops in the local synod. Meanwhile, in the midst of all this, the local Christian population shrinks day by day, as a result of some assimilation, but largely the desire of local Arab Christians to emigrate to an easier life elsewhere.⁸³ There are currently about 156,000 Orthodox faithful belonging to the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem patriarchate, living in the Palestinian territories, Israel, and Jordan. Throughout the twentieth century there have been regular occasions of disruption and unrest in the patriarchate's affairs. Most recently the incumbent patriarch was deposed on the grounds of uncanonical collaboration with Israeli governmental interests in buying out Christian land in Jerusalem. At the time of writing he remains in Jerusalem refusing to admit the legitimacy of his rejection by his own synod, with the Israeli government refusing to admit the legitimacy of his canonically elected successor. As a result all the legal and administrative activities of the patriarchate are in a limbo of paralysis.

The structure of the governance of the patriarchate cries out for a root-and-branch reconsideration, not only because of the tension between the Greek leaders (with their power vested in the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross) and the local Arab Christians, but also because of the role Jerusalem should (or could) play in the whole Christian world. The Brotherhood's record of administrative care and charitable works is historically impressive, but its desire to retain intact the church and its properties as the last glimmer of a once prestigious outpost of Byzantine Hellenism is one that hardly corresponds with contemporary reality, and one which is party to threatening the very Christian heritage it so earnestly seeks to protect. The terrible strains that mark this patriarchate have largely been caused by the historically chaotic government of its affairs over many ages past, as presided over by the Ottomans, with massive interventions (and subventions) by the Latins, the tsars, and then the British, who let loose a whirlwind before they stepped back from it.

Today, under the suffocating policies of a beleaguered and increasingly paranoid state apparatus, and the ever-present pressures to 'buy out' and segregate land in Israel, the outlook for Christian affairs in general in the Holy Land is very bleak indeed. If the ancient patriarchate of Jerusalem sinks back into being simply a colonial outpost of Greek monks it will be a tragedy for all of Christianity, not simply for the Orthodox world. Its small size, and the manner in which (like Alexandria) it is so intimately linked to the ecclesiastical life of the Church of Greece and the patriarch of Constantinople, point the way towards where the call for *ressourciement* might fruitfully come. But the ideas and inspiration for change surely can be provided not only by the monks of the church, but also by the suffering Arab Christians whose Gospel path has been profoundly ascetic on their own terms, and has earned them a right to the admiration and empathy of the Christian ecumene. It is also not beyond imagination to think that in future years a modest revival of the once massive amount of pilgrimage to Jerusalem that came from the Slavic Orthodox lands (now once more liberated from their own oppressions) might revive and regenerate the Christian holy places, and bring a sense of profound relief to their beleaguered local communities, who are now pressed very threateningly between the Scylla and Charybdis of nationalist Arabic Islam and militant Zionism.

The Orthodox Church of Cyprus

The Church of Cyprus has been autonomous from ancient times, headed by its own archbishop and local synod. Even though it was founded by the apostle Barnabas in the first century, it was at first organized as a smaller dependency of the Antiochene patriarchate, to which it was geographically proximate. During a long period in the late fourth century when the incumbents of the local Roman capital at Antioch were Arians, or of dubious theological persuasion, Cyprus withdrew its allegiance of communion, defending (in the process) the Orthodox Nicene cause. One way it showed this separation was by refusing to allow the hierarchs of the Antiochene patriarchate to have a say in the election and consecration of its archbishop. It petitioned for its independence from that patriarchate at the seventh session of the Council of Ephesus in July 431.

At that time Patriarch John of Antioch was protesting at the irregularity of their independence continuing any longer, since the Arian crisis was long past, and he

asked for the reimposition of Antiochene control over the island, as had been agreed in the earlier canons of the church. The conciliar fathers gathered at the Council of Ephesus nevertheless sympathetically heard the appeal of the Church of Cyprus,⁸⁴ and decreed that its independence could continue, having endured for sufficiently long time as to become a *de facto* reality. This independence was again confirmed under the Emperor Zeno, by a synod of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate in the later fifth century. Since that time the autocephalous status of the Cypriot Church has been accepted in all the Orthodox world. The long medieval period of Latin domination was a hard one for the Orthodox of Cyprus, and during the 'Reunion' of Florence, it showed the Cypriots that the Latin overlords continued to despise the Byzantine Church, despite the alleged proclamation of ecclesiastical union, and sought always to eradicate it if they could in favour of Latin rite and practice. The even longer shadow of the Ottomans was also a time of suffocation. At the time of the Greek War of Independence the Turks assassinated the Cypriot archbishop (Cyprianos) and all his synod. Only in 1878, with the British occupation of the island, did the church enter a period of peace and (relative) political stability, although the British (between 1930 and 1947) interfered greatly in the election of the hierarchs, in order to put a brake on the move to 'self-annexation' to Greece. In 1960 Cyprus' independence was effected as a sovereign republic, with Archbishop Makarios becoming the first head of state. The movement (which he himself tempered throughout his life) to effect *henosis* (union with Greece) asserted itself powerfully in his old age, despite his counsel, and in its aftermath Turkey invaded the island illegally claiming justification from the need to protect its nationals. From that time onwards the situation has not been resolved. The northern territories remain under Turkish occupation, and have been heavily colonized by Turkish immigration.

The archbishop of Cyprus is known as His Beatitude, and still exercises the (once very refined and exalted) privilege given to him by the emperor, to sign all his documents in scarlet ink, and to wear vestments of silk and purple. He himself is the archbishop of Constantia (Famagusta) and is resident at Nicosia. He has suffragan eparchs whose sees are at Paphos, Larnaka, and Kyrenia. Together they comprise the Holy Synod. There are currently 552,000 faithful in this church, representing almost the entire Christian population, and three-quarters of the entire population, of Cyprus. There are also numerous Cypriots in the diaspora, especially England, which for many years exercised a protectorate over the island. The Greek Cypriot Orthodox of the diaspora, however, belong to the oversight of the patriarch of Constantinople, although many of the parishes in the patriarchate's British exarchate are comprised entirely of Orthodox who are of Cypriot origin, with clergy who are also mainly Cypriot. The Church of Cyprus has eleven active monasteries, some dating back to Byzantine times, and renowned throughout the Greek-speaking Orthodox world as pilgrimage centres, such as the Kykko monastery in the Troodos mountains. There are also a total of sixty-seven other monasteries, many of which contain historically important frescoes, which are either currently unused or presently in ruins, and which date back to many different periods of the island's rich and venerable Christian history. Its resourceful and generous people have in recent times been blessed with an abundance of priests who, in turn, have often volunteered for missionary work in Orthodox communities overseas.

The Church of Sinai

The monastery of St Catherine's at Sinai is one of the most venerable monasteries in the Orthodox world. It is located dramatically at the foot of Mount Sinai, in Egypt, and from ancient times it was a major pilgrim site for Christians. It is mentioned in the *Voyages of Egeria*, a travelogue from the late fourth century. Today it is unique among all Orthodox monasteries for having a small Fatimid mosque within its grounds (now unused). The local Bedouin attached to the monastery (especially the Jelabiya tribe⁸⁵) themselves worship in their own mosque not far away from Jebel Musa.⁸⁶ By the late fifth century the desert monasteries of Egypt were suffering massive depredations from tribal raiders, as the Byzantine hold on the territories was increasingly relaxed. Mount Sinai itself was threatened on several occasions with complete extinction as a Christian settlement, but the Emperor Justinian, with an eye to the venerability of the site, as well as its strategic advantage as a military post, massively fortified the buildings in the sixth century, and stationed a garrison there, settling several villages of Christians nearby for the service of the monks and the garrison (those who remain as the tiny lay membership of this church often claim to be the descendants of those settlers, though the majority of the Bedouin are now Islamic). The architecture today is still largely from this period, with some medieval and modern additions. It is now one of the last surviving monasteries of a once flourishing circle of Greek-speaking ascetic sites across the Middle East. The archbishop of Sinai also presides over the two churches of Pharan and Raithu (by the Red Sea shore) which were once monasteries of great repute.

Sinai is justifiably a world heritage centre, a veritable jewel box of ancient and wonderful things in terms of art, manuscripts, and relics; but the monks who still live there point also, with a deep sense of satisfaction, to something they hold as even more precious than their treasures, namely their fidelity to the ascetical evangelical life after so many unbroken centuries of witness in the wilderness, which is the *raison d'être* of Sinai as an Orthodox holy place.⁸⁷ From the beginning, the monks of Sinai kept up livelier relations with the Jerusalem patriarchate than with Alexandria, and eventually this was reflected in the ecclesiastical organization, for Sinai became a monastery under the care of the Jerusalem Church. At the height of its flourishing it had Metochia, or dependent monasteries and estates, in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Crete, Cyprus, and Constantinople, which supported it and ensured its effective independence during the long years when it had to buy the patronage of its Islamic overlords. It was also extensively patronized by the voivodes of Wallachia (later Romania) and the tsars of Russia.

All these important supports eventually eroded, but not before Sinai had more or less asserted its importance and its claims for autonomous governance over and against the patriarchate of Jerusalem, which itself had fallen on hard times. Its independence (against the initial grumbling of Jerusalem) was affirmed by Constantinople in 1575, and again confirmed in 1782. Today the monks of the community (only a few dozen are still resident there) elect one of their own number as the abbot and also as the prospective archbishop of Sinai. The patriarch of Jerusalem always has the right to perform the consecration (which fact – along with its peculiar smallness – limits its complete claim to autocephaly). After that point, however, the archbishop, with his

synaxis, entirely governs the affairs of the monastery-church. It is the smallest independent church of the entire Orthodox world: a unique and special instance, poised between autocephalous and autonomous condition.

The Russian Orthodox Church (patriarchate of Moscow)

The Russian Orthodox Church, which holds rank as fifth in the precedence of honour among the patriarchal churches, is a complete contrast to this, with 27,942 parishes, and 80,451,000 faithful. There are wider estimates than this which speak of the world total of Russian Orthodox (meaning those who would regard themselves of the Slavic Orthodox tradition) approaching 160 million, but this takes in Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Baltic as well as the central Asian countries and the diaspora. Even in its smaller, national configuration, the Russian Orthodox is a massive church, and indisputably one of the most important voices in contemporary global Orthodoxy. This the case not only because of its size, but more so because of its profoundly Christian culture, with its rich historical manifestations for almost a thousand years past, as well as the immense depth of its variegated spiritual tradition, not to mention the recent experience of martyrdom that its members have shared along with many of the eastern European lands that fell under the Soviet communist oppression.

The Russians hold up 988 as the date of the foundation of their church. At this time Prince Vladimir was baptized (at Chersonesus) and commanded the turning of his people, the Rus, to the Gospel. Mass baptisms were held in the then capital of the land, Kiev (now in the Ukraine). It had from the beginning the closest relations with the patriarchate of Constantinople, and the whole liturgical and spiritual culture of Russian Orthodoxy was fostered by Constantinopolitan missionaries for many generations. The rise of the people of ancient Rus to nationhood went hand in hand with the emergence of the Muscovite princes as the most powerful ruling families in the vast land. The capital transferred with the princes from Kiev to Moscow (many other Russian cities, of course – Vladimir, Novgorod, and Kazan among them – played an important part in the foundation of the Christian culture) and after the overcoming of internal disunity, as well as external threats from the Golden Horde, Russia was well aware of its political and military might, and had a developed national consciousness by the late sixteenth century. In 1453 the Byzantine emperors themselves fell to the might of the Crescent. Christian Byzantium was a political reality no more, and the affairs of the Christians passed, in the Greek-speaking East, to the condition of subjugated slaves under the administration of the Constantinopolitan patriarch acting as agent of the sultans.

The Russian tsar (whose government had progressed hand in hand with the metropolitan archbishops of Moscow who were largely drawn from the aristocracy and always had a primary concern in the affairs of state) then declared that he and his own people had entered a stage of new destiny for the Russian and Christian peoples. Two Romes had fallen, was the famous utterance of the monk Philotheos,⁸⁸ a third had now arisen. The grand dukes of Moscow had entered into their heritage as the successors to the Caesars. The new 'tsars'⁸⁹ would continue the duties (with the concomitant privileges over the world-wide church) of the former Byzantine emperors,

as the last defenders of Christianity. Russia saw its recent overthrowing of Tartar power as a providential sign that God had intended it to remain free for the protection and supervision of all Christendom, now that the Byzantine empire had come to so disastrous a conclusion.

Its ecclesiastical independence went quickly hand in hand. Up until the fifteenth century the patriarch of Constantinople had always appointed the senior hierarch of the Russian Church, the metropolitan of Moscow. With his synod he then ruled with a large degree of autonomy. In 1441 the metropolitan of Moscow was Isidore, a Greek who was closely related to the policies of the church in Constantinople. As a legate at the Council of Florence he strongly supported the concept of the reunion with Rome, which the Byzantine emperor desperately desired (under the sad illusion that it would secure Western military help to stave off the Ottomans). After the Council of Florence was over, Isidore returned to Russia, and attempted to convince the grand duke to introduce the unionist policy. But as was the case with the faithful in Constantinople, there was a widespread reaction against the Union of Florence, and the grand duke imprisoned Isidore. He was eventually allowed to escape, and made his way into exile in Italy. The emperor at Constantinople, however, was still insisting on the policy of union which Florence represented, and so for a time the Russian synod broke off communion and did not proceed with the election of a new metropolitan, refusing to accept any nomination that the imperial city would be likely to send it.

In 1448 the Russian synod decided to go ahead with its own consecration of a metropolitan without Constantinople's involvement. After the fall of the imperial city in 1453, and the subsequent installation of Gennadios Scholarios as the new patriarch, the former imperial church abandoned the unionist policy, and communion between it and Russia was restored. But from that time onwards the Russian synod elected and consecrated its own senior hierarch, and had effectively established autocephaly. In 1589, with the consent of the patriarchate in Constantinople, the metropolitan of Moscow was given the status of patriarch, and the right to have the precedence of honour after Jerusalem (above that of the patriarchate of Serbia which had pre-dated its own rise to patriarchal status, but not higher than any of the ancient patriarchates, which was a blow to its aspirations to take over the governance of global Orthodox affairs under the tsar's political patronage).

Relations between the Moscow patriarchs and the tsars were always extremely close. Between 1613 and 1633 Philaret was patriarch and his son, Michael, ruled as the first in the dynastic line of the Romanov tsars, a line that would last until the twentieth century, with the abdication of Nicholas II. In Peter the Great's time, however, Patriarch Adrian resisted many of the reformist and Europeanizing strategies of the tsar, and as a result, following Adrian's death in 1700, Peter abolished the office of patriarch, restoring the Russian Church to a synodical form of government. The 'Holy Governing Synod' was constituted so as to have complete and total authority over the life of the Church. This was established under the guidance of the tsar (functioning as the supposed heir of the Byzantine emperors), and led by the metropolitans of Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev, along with six other hierarchs (who were nominees of the tsar and removable at his will), the imperial and military chaplains, and the lay procurator. Its membership of twelve was later reduced to six. The lay procurator was the real power behind this synod which had, in fact, degenerated to the level of a civil service committee, wholly under the thumb of the monarchy. Throughout Russia the

bishops and local clergy had to act not only as pastors but as state officials representing various state departments.

Peter's overall aim was to modernize and secularize Russia. His church policy was dictated by the simple aim of bringing the church into complete submission to the royal power, a travesty of the imperial Byzantine model, which Russia had symbolically adopted though without much comprehension of its deeper roots and historical actualities. His policy needed more and more repressive force to effect it, and this turned many of the Orthodox against it. The monks were looked to as the real defenders of the people. In the eighteenth century there was a strong revival of monastic spirituality in Russia, and a growth of the influence of the *starets*, the leading monastic elder of the region, who served as a focal point for a wide geographical area, offering counsel and prophetic leadership. SS Paisy Velichovsky (d. 1794) and Tikhon of Zadonsk (d. 1783) were outstanding figures of this time.

Peter's successors Catherine the Great (d. 1796), Nicholas I (d. 1855), and Alexander III (d. 1894) were all highly active in continuing Peter's policy of ensuring the church never moved far away from the side of the monarchy. After the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, the monarchy became deeply suspicious of its people and set up a massively extended secret service that had a similar effect on the church to that it had on all ranks of society. Everyone had a sense that someone was looking over their shoulder, ready to pen a report. It was a suspicion that had solid grounds. In church affairs, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Machiavellian figure of Constantine Pobiedonostsev seemed to sum up the spirit of the time. He was the lay procurator of the Holy Governing Synod, and his rule was founded upon a vast network of intelligence about the lives and behaviours of the clergy of every level. Described by Norman Douglas, the novelist, as: 'A silent bloodless all powerful creature, a Torquemada', his rule lasted into the reign of Nicholas II, last of the Romanovs, who, in 1905, voided his office, permitting a new constitution, guaranteeing general religious freedom outside the state's prescriptive intervention. This lifting of the oppressive weight of oversight led, even within the Orthodox mainstream, to an excitement and a new ferment that began to hope for some more deeply considered reforms. Plans were set in hand for a large national synod, but political events in the next decade would overwhelm Russia in ways it could never imagine.

After Nicholas II's abdication in March 1917, the formal relation of church and state in Russia was also voided, and the long years of difficulty began. During the provisional government, in August 1917, a Russian church council was convoked, which restored the patriarchate. While it was in session the Bolsheviks were shelling the walls of the Kremlin. Tikhon Belavin, archbishop of Moscow, was the first incumbent of the restored patriarchate, but after his death in 1925 no one was allowed to hold the office until 1944, when Stalin began to make some concessions to the church in return for its co-operation in building national unity in the war. Tikhon was a man of deep spirituality and is now widely revered as a saint both in and outside Russia. In his first year as patriarch he spoke out boldly against the 'godlessness' of the Bolsheviks. When they assumed power they played a waiting game with him while they set about wrecking the Orthodox Church around him.

The church *sobor* of 1917 had established a synod of twelve bishops along with an assembly of fifteen clergy and laymen, to serve along with the patriarch in the governance of the Russian Church. The communist powers quickly disrupted this

THE ORTHODOX THROUGH HISTORY



Figure 2 Image of St Tikhon, an energetic missionary bishop who came from America to be the first patriarch of Moscow after the restoration of the Russian patriarchate in the early decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately the end of the heavy tsarist oversight of Russian church affairs was soon followed by the long nightmare of communist oppression, and Tikhon himself suffered much at the hands of Lenin and Stalin. It is widely suspected that his alleged natural death may have been one of the many ‘secret murders’ ordered by Stalin. The decades of state persecution and suppression following Tikhon’s death caused much disruption in the national and international organization of Russian Orthodoxy.

Photograph: © TopFoto

and isolated Tikhon. In 1922 he was imprisoned in a monastery while moves were made to initiate the systematic breaking up of the ecclesiastical organization. The government launched its massive programme of confiscating church goods (icons and chalices and so on) under the heading of ‘relief for the poor’, the victims of the state-induced famine of 1921–2. Simultaneously it sponsored the formation of the ‘Higher Church Administration’ (HCA) which, using pro-communist clergy, declared that Tikhon had resigned his office and thenceforth the patriarchate was abolished, leaving the HCA as the supreme governing body of the Russian Church. Agathangel, the archbishop of Yaroslavl, who had been nominated by Tikhon as one of those who might lead the church if he himself was liquidated by the communists, immediately denounced the HCA and was exiled to Siberia. Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd

then courageously took up the challenge and excommunicated the cleric Vvedensky who was then spokesman for the HCA. In return the HCA decreed that all Russian bishops and priests who did not recognize its authority were immediately to be considered deposed from office. There followed a Bolshevik purge on them, and there were widespread arrests that had the general effect of dampening down opposition. Benjamin of Petrograd and three other leading bishops were shot by the security police, and all the chief hierarchs who supported the patriarchate were sent into exile. Large numbers of the lower clergy started to accede to the governance of the HCA, which began a series of 'reforms' of church life in the spirit of 'proletarian openness'.

The HCA quickly began to fragment into separate movements: the Living Church, the Union of the Old Apostolic Church, the Union of Church Rebirth, and so on, all of which have come to be collectively known as 'The Living Church Movement'. In 1923 it met in a council and declared itself to be a 'genuine proletarian and revolutionary force', and designated itself as the Church of Renewal, declaring all other ecclesiastical groups to be forthwith abolished. But just as quickly its fortunes waned. The Bolsheviks' interest ebbed away. They had turned their attentions back on Tikhon. Just what pressures they applied to him in his time of incarceration are not known, but it is certain that they did not simply offer him tea and polite chat. In 1923 he issued a statement expressing regret for 'mistakes' which the church had made, and especially for acts of disloyalty to the revolutionary government. He promised renewed loyalty to the regime. The reason the Bolsheviks wanted this statement so much was to offset the rapid moves of the Russian bishops outside the boundaries of the country (most of whom were monarchists and formed a network of resistance in Europe and America) to organize the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) in defiance of the Bolshevik subversions.

The ROCOR hierarchs had faith in Tikhon, who had actually encouraged them early on to make their move for independence. Now, in 1923, he was set free to resume his governance of the internal affairs of the Russian Church, the HCA was abandoned (and, losing its political force for terrorizing its opponents, quickly lost ground), but the cost was to rein in the ROCOR bishops who comprised the Karlovtsy synod. Their subsequent history is discussed later in terms of the Russian diaspora. Suffice it to say here that, as time went on after Tikhon's release, the bishops in exile progressively lost confidence in the hierarchy of the church in the homeland, and gave little credence to their claim to be able to speak freely, or act honestly for the greater benefit of Russian Orthodoxy, while all the time being under the eye (and the fist) of such totalitarian atheists who were bent on manipulating them. Tikhon died in 1925. He has been thought by many to have been liquidated as one of Stalin's many clandestine political murders. Of the three potential 'successors' he had nominated before his incarceration (a strategy he conceived in the early 1920s on the grounds that he might not always have freedom to act) only one hierarch was still alive at that time, Sergius Starogrodsky, the metropolitan of Nizhni-Novgorod. He raised few expectations among any of the bishops, and enjoyed no confidence among the exiles comprising the Karlovtsy synod. As a result the synod and the Russian mother church parted ways acerbically.

After an educational period of imprisonment in 1927 Sergius was himself a broken man, ever after very anxious to affirm that all was well in the Russian Church, and persuade all who would listen how benevolent the government was. He was rewarded in 1943 with Stalin's permission to restore the patriarchate, to which he was duly

elected. He died only six months afterwards in May 1944. The majority of the Orthodox churches outside Russia acknowledged the legitimacy of the leadership of Sergius, and his successor Alexis Simansky, the former metropolitan of Leningrad. But from this time onwards elements in the ROCOR began to argue the point that a synod which is not free cannot issue canonically binding results. Accordingly the division between the Russian Orthodox in the country, under the Soviet regime, and those outside the country grew more and more tendentious as the twentieth century progressed.

The communist yoke caused great damage to the church. In 1900 there were 56 million faithful, amounting to 75 per cent of the population. By 1970 this number had fallen to 39 million, representing 29 per cent of the population (though there were many more crypto-Orthodox than this figure suggests). In 1914 Russia had 550 monasteries for men and 474 monasteries for women. Most of them were state-subsidized or had powerful endowments to undergird their life and work. There were, at that time, 21,000 monks and 74,000 nuns. The greatest monasteries were those of 'The Caves' (Pechersky Lavra) at Kiev on the banks of the Dnieper, founded by SS Antony and Theodosius between 1032 and 1062; the Trinity Monastery (Troitsky) near Moscow (Sergeyev Posad) founded by St Sergius of Radonezh; and the Alexander Nevsky monastery, founded at St Petersburg in 1724. There were numerous others whose spiritual and intellectual life was remarkable: the Donskoy monastery at Moscow, the Simonov, Novospassky, St George's at Novgorod, Novodievichy, the Ascension monastery at Tver, Solovky in the White Sea (which as a Gulag would be the place of martyrdom for so many under Stalin), Sarov (which gave the world the shining saint Seraphim), Rostov, Yaroslav, Uglich, Valaam (in Finland), the Optina hermitages, and the Pochaevskaya Lavra in Volhynia (Poland). The destruction of the monastic life was among the first achievements of the Bolsheviks. Its rebuilding will bring with it an immense reflowering of the spiritual power of the Russian Church.

Under communism all expression of Christian freedom was dangerous. All formal evangelistic and catechetical work was forbidden to the church. Even so the religious life of Russian Orthodoxy was irrepressible. Even in the dark times of communist persecution the Orthodox attendance at the divine liturgy was far higher than European church attendance. The Bolshevik government rapidly passed anti-religious legislation even before it had secured a totalitarian grasp on the state. It confiscated all private and all ecclesiastical property in December 1917, and in January 1918 withdrew any state subsidy for ecclesiastical institutions, separating church and state, and outlawing any form of religious instruction of the state's citizens. Between 1917 and 1923, when the Bolshevik zeal was hot, twenty-eight Russian bishops and 1,400 priests were executed. After the revolution, the newly elected pope, Pius XI, made powerful intercessions on behalf of suffering Russia, at the International Conference of Genoa, but the British imperial representative, David Lloyd George, strongly opposed him, and carried the day for no 'interference' in Russian religious affairs; a policy adhered to on wider fronts that would also abandon the last tsar and his family to a bloody death after England shamefully refused them asylum.

Thousands of the leading clergy and laity of Russia were sent to labour camps, and many of them never returned. Churches were turned into museums or cinemas; the sacred relics, ikons, and vestments were burned or defaced. If anything could gain

a price, it was sold off. The Western churches slowly began to gain a taste in iconic art by its appearance on the markets there at bargain-basement prices. The sacrilege and suffering behind the phenomenon took longer to reach a more universal consciousness. In 1926 the law explicitly forbade the continuing exercise of communal monastic life in the fewer than half the monasteries which had somehow managed to carry on in spite of the persecutions, a measure that accelerated the monastic decline, but still could not quench monasticism completely. The measures against the church were conducted by the 'League of Militant Atheism' with cells in every village. In 1927 the Council of People's Commissars tried to initiate a Five Year Plan, whose aim was to 'eradicate the very concept of God from the minds of the people, and to leave not a single house of prayer standing in the whole territory of the USSR'.

By God's grace their anti-religious measures proved as effective as their economic policies; shambolic, ignorant, but none the less damaging for that. By the mid 1930s the stories of the persecution against the Russian Church were becoming more widely known in Europe and America (in fact this persecution has been the greatest in extent, savagery, and duration of the whole history of the church) and there was a certain slowing down of the sufferings. In 1936 a new Russian constitution reaffirmed the 'freedom for the conduct of religious worship', though it left intact the law of 1929 that forbade the churches to conduct any catechesis or sponsor any social or charitable efforts. The penalization of clergy was relaxed at this time, subject to Stalin's express caveat: 'As long as they are not hostile to Soviet power.' It was a let-out that afforded him much room for manoeuvre in the unimaginably vast programme of the annihilation of so many luminous lives over which he sat enthroned throughout his wretched life.

Later in 1937 the state once more desired to show its hand, and twenty bishops were arrested on charges of espionage, sabotage, or fascism. The clergy were forbidden to minister in state hospitals, and churches that showed much vitality were closed on the grounds of non-payment of taxes. Stalin decided to allow the Orthodox Church more breathing space in 1944 when he was desperately gathering every resource he could to fight the German armies. In 1954 under Khrushchev, it was thought that a certain level of thaw might be setting in, in relation to the church. A decree was issued admitting certain 'mistakes' had been made in relation to the over-zealous suppression of religious freedom (a very euphemistic gloss on the astounding amount of martyrdoms the communists had inflicted). After that point the anti-religious propaganda was conducted on the less bloody level of innuendo, career restrictions, and bigoted propaganda in the press. The campaign of denunciation of 'parasitic' clergy led to an actual stepping up of state hostility towards the church. Gangs of hooligans were organized to disrupt church services (often containing many hundreds of worshippers each Sunday, much to the frustration of the authorities who could generally command little love for themselves or their programmes).

The eight seminaries that had been allowed to reopen after Stalin's thaw, beginning in 1945, began to be closed once more. By 1966 only three were operating. Similarly, of the eighty monasteries functioning in 1947 (such a small fraction of those which flourished under the tsars) only sixteen remained open in the entire country by 1971, rising to eighteen in 1980. Many monks and nuns were once again brutally treated, and numbers were sent to imprisonment in Gulags and mental hospitals for their allegiance to Christ; giving a new twist, full of pathos, to the ancient witness (the word,

of course, means 'martyrdom') of the 'fool for Christ' (Iurodivy), and the deep Russian tradition of the 'passion-bearers'.⁹⁰ At the end of Stalin's political career (1924–53) the number of functioning priests in Russia could be counted only in hundreds. As Vera Bouteneff has expressed it: 'The scale of this martyrdom is unprecedented in the history of the Christian church.'⁹¹ The whole Soviet persecution is estimated to have killed 600 bishops, 40,000 priests, and 120,000 monks and nuns.

Between 1960 and 1963 many of the village parish churches (which had a more flourishing attendance than the city churches and were generally felt by the people to be less scrutinized by the authorities) began to be targeted, and large numbers were abruptly closed. In 1947 there were an estimated 22,000 churches serving the liturgy on Sundays; by the late 1970s fewer than 7,000 remained open. Today, in the restructuring of Russian society in the aftermath of its long night of communism the Orthodox Church is in a relatively favoured position. It is widely looked to in Russian society as a sign of hope for the making of a new future, with a deeper cultural and historical memory than the banalities of the old regime. There is much restructuring going on in the wider society, as well as in the church itself, and a general spirit of good will has affirmed itself between the hierarchy and the new political leaders from Gorbachev's time onwards. Churches are being restored and rebuilt, the numbers of the faithful are again increasing, and the Russian Church is busily repairing decades of profound structural and psychological damage. The 80 million who have currently affirmed themselves as Orthodox believers, represent 54 per cent of the nation's population.

Today there are 219 functioning monasteries of men and 240 of women, all busy with renewal. The Russian synod has 193 bishops and 142 dioceses, 26,540 priests, and 3,301 deacons. The educational establishment now is starting to flourish again with five theological academies, and twenty-one seminaries, as well as two Orthodox universities and a Theological Institute. The central Moscow diocese comprises 298 parishes, 182 metochias, and sixty-eight monastery churches. Thirty-three churches are still being requested to be returned to ecclesiastical use, and ninety churches and chapels are in process of construction. There are 820 priests and 297 deacons. In addition the monastic priests comprise 400 clergy and there are 125 monastic deacons. There are thirty-seven senior and thirty-eight junior seminaries functioning. After generations of trauma the Russian patriarchate is now for the first time coming to terms with the need to re-establish unity and trust among its scattered diaspora. How it approaches that task will be something that the Orthodox world watches with careful attention. It will require immense tact and sensitivity, on both sides: that of a mother church reasserting its vast reservoirs of energy and new hope for the future; and that of the scattered communities who once looked with dismay on a hierarchy under the thumb of atheistic tyrants, and which sometimes seemed both supine and neo-imperialist in its attitudes to other churches that themselves had fallen under the Soviet yoke. The rapprochement may be a thorny one in the immediate future; but it is one that is undeniably important. It is an exercise in what the church represents at its very core and essence: the power and possibility of reconciliation. It is more likely to succeed if the temptations to neo-imperialism and self-assertive authority are set aside (on both sides) in favour of the gentle spirit of the humble Christ, who knew that his role was 'to serve and not to be served'.⁹²

The wider Russian heritage

1 *The Ukrainian Orthodox*

The Ukraine now has a total of 3,100 Orthodox parishes, with 27,400,000 faithful, representing more than half the entire country. There are eighty-seven functioning monasteries of men, and eighty-one of women. Many Ukrainian Orthodox are also found in the diaspora, especially America and Britain, as a result of the large displacements of the Second World War and the communist oppression. Ukraine declared its political independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, but still has profound links socially and economically with that great power. These continue to mark, and to a certain extent problematize, its current ecclesial experience. Ukraine, so long a part of the Russian patriarchate, was once the originating mission ground for the foundation of the Russian Church. The recorded history of Christianity in Ukraine stretches back over a thousand years, when Kiev, still the Ukrainian capital, was also the historic capital of the whole Rus people, and the initiating point of the country's evangelization. Church traditions describe also how the apostle Andrew came up to Crimea through the Black Sea and preached the Gospel in the city of Chersonesus (Sevastopol). Afterwards, it is told, he sailed up the river Dnieper, prophesying that a great city would one day flourish on its banks. The baptism of Vladimir the prince of the Rus, at Chersonesus in 988, is taken as the official beginning of Christianity among the Slavs. The indigenous Slav gods were proscribed by the prince, and the new religion took root and flourished under the care of Byzantine missionaries and advisers.

A metropolitan archbishop was appointed at Kiev by the patriarch of Constantinople, to lead and organize the church throughout the region. Byzantium profoundly supported, and deeply influenced, the development of the church of the Rus,⁹³ and Vladimir's son, Prince Yaroslav, developed the first Slavic law-code, built many churches, and arranged for the translation of Byzantine religious texts into Church Slavonic, the language which had been founded as the medium of the evangelization. Yaroslav began the great cathedral of Sancta Sophia⁹⁴ which is still the glory of the city of Kiev. By the eleventh century the Slavic Church was strongly established, and monasticism had also taken root in a way that would deeply mark the nature of Slavic Orthodoxy with a distinctive ascetic spirit of its own.⁹⁵ Pechersky Lavra, built over and into the banks of the river Dnieper at Kiev, was a major centre of Slavic ascetical and mystical life. It has been recently reopened as an active monastery, and the catacombs under it, holding the tombs of many saints and teachers, are once again becoming a site of pilgrimage.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, the Mongol invasions of the land profoundly disrupted the political stability of the region, and Kiev was overshadowed, as the rise to dominance of the princes of Moscow began. Ukraine eventually fell under the power of the grand duchy of Lithuania. In 1299 the metropolitan of Kiev moved north to settle in Moscow and claimed the title of 'Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus', which caused a large degree of protest in the church at the time, much of it fomented by the Lithuanian rulers of Ukraine. These agitated for a separate metropolitan to come back to reside in Kiev. In 1448 the hierarchy split, in a movement which we have already recounted, and the Moscow metropolitanate leading

the largest section of the bishops, declared its independence from Constantinople, initiating the birth of the autonomous Russian Orthodox Church.

One hundred and fifty years later, in 1589, the metropolitanate of Moscow was reorganized as an independent patriarchate, with its seat at Moscow. Present-day Ukraine has since then been part of that ecclesiastical world focused around Moscow. The power of the tsars made that a natural political as well as ecclesiastical state of affairs. But the centre always started to give in times when the political force of Moscow was disrupted. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was one such instance, and the Second World War another. Only recently has the heavy hand of the communist autocrats started to lift, allowing Ukraine to make its progress, somewhat slowly, towards genuine democratic government.⁹⁶ The long Soviet political oppression, and its frequently bitter treatment of the Ukrainian people, has left extensive hostility there towards the very idea of lingering Russian control, and some of the same spirit has unfortunately leached in some quarters into the ecclesiastical relations with Moscow. Ukraine has been much marked in recent times by its desire to form a wholly new basis of the historic relationship with the adjacent Russian empire that so overshadows it. The declaration of political independence in 1991 was one mark of that. But the continuing massive dependence of the state of Ukraine on Russian oil and gas is another side of the same problem.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union there has been considerable ecclesial unrest in Ukraine, which now has some of the Orthodox there looking back to its foundational role in the history of the country's Christianity, and wishing to press for church autocephaly to match the political independence, or radical autonomy under the presidency of Constantinople. Currently two ecclesiastical divisions upset the harmony of the Orthodox experience in this region, leading to the condition of no less than two claimant 'patriarchs of Kiev' and a considerable struggle for legitimate 'possession' of church properties.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the continuing hierarchy who are faithful to the presidency of the Moscow patriarchate, and under the leadership of the metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine they lead the majority of the Orthodox faithful in the country. This is the ecclesiastical *status quo ante* 1991. After the declaration of independence, the new political rulers of the country withdrew their financial and political support, pressing for the hierarchs to declare ecclesiastical independence from Moscow. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church was the resultant majority body after its claim for autocephalous status in 1921 (acknowledged by the Phanar in 1924) was dissolved in the years after the Second World War, and Ukraine came back politically under the control of the Moscow Soviet empire, and was ecclesiastically reabsorbed into the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarchate. Ukraine's independence in the last years of the twentieth century reopened the question of national self-determination. The metropolitan of Kiev and his synod now have considerable autonomy from the patriarchate of Moscow, and have not wished to declare a revival of the autocephalous status. Smaller dissident groups have, however, but they have not received the support of either Moscow or the Kievan metropolitanate. They are described below.

The Ukrainian autocephalous Church

The Ukrainian autocephalous Orthodox Church is a division from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate, and is a group with a history related to the problems following the Russian Revolution. It possesses approximately 1,200 parishes. It is the heir of a church which originally came into being from a synod of the Ukrainian hierarchs in 1921 which declared their church's independence from Muscovite control, following on the communist takeover in Russia. It was dismissed as uncanonical by the Moscow patriarchate, but in 1924 it received an acknowledgement of its autocephalous status from the Phanar under Patriarch Gregory VII. Even so, politically the country came under the ever more powerful sway of the communist regime emanating from Moscow. In 1942 the German army occupied Ukraine and cut off the power of the Soviet government.

The independent Ukrainian churches were encouraged by the German authorities at that time, who saw in their desire to break free from years of Soviet domination a bridgehead into the destabilization of Soviet power. After the collapse of the Nazis, the independent Ukrainian churches were regarded with great suspicion by the Soviet powers and were repressed. The communist government then only acknowledged the legitimacy of Orthodox churches in the canonical jurisdiction of Moscow, and most of the clergy assented to the reunion. Many dissenting Ukrainian clergy at this time emigrated to the west. There are now large diasporas in America and Canada, and parts of Europe. Those in America and Canada subsequently separated from all Ukrainian control and declared themselves independent. In the late 1980s the Ukrainian state once more gave its acknowledgement, and some limited support, to the church in the home country and encouraged its renewed claims to independence. It is presently mainly based in the western Galician province of the Ukraine. In 1993 it decided to declare its autocephalous status once more, but it has not been able to attract the majority of the Orthodox clergy of the country, who have stayed in the jurisdiction of the Moscow patriarchate. The senior hierarch of this body also claims the title of Patriarch of Kiev and All Ukraine, but neither the status of independence nor the title is acknowledged by a wide range of the other Orthodox churches.

The Kievan patriarchal Church

In 1992 a small separate group of the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church also declared independence from Russian influence and jurisdiction (following on from the political independence of Ukraine) and declared the reconstitution of the independent Kievan Church with its own patriarchate. Its first leader, Filaret of Kiev and All Ukraine, was excommunicated by the Moscow patriarchal synod. It is not recognized among the Orthodox at large, though it argues that it is the rightfully independent Orthodox Church in Ukraine. Its senior hierarch also claims the title of Patriarch of Kiev and All Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Orthodox diaspora

Several parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox in the western diaspora, in aversion to the communist oppression of their church during the Soviet period, put themselves under the protective Omophorion of the patriarch of Constantinople. These Orthodox

also remain in the wider communion, but the ecclesiastical arrangement reflected the times when the diaspora could not trust a hierarchy that was widely believed to be controlled by Soviet communist masters. This situation is increasingly non-relevant. In America and Canada there were once large diaspora congregations of the Ukrainian autocephalous Church (above). These have recently declared their own independence.

2 *Belorussia*

Belorussia has been an independent republic since 1991. Ecclesiastically its history derives from its existence as part of ancient Kievan Rus, from which centre Christianity was first delivered to the Slavs. Its has in times past belonged to the patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow. In the late nineteenth century the Muscovite tsars applied a heavy programme of Russification to the area, forbidding the very use of Belorussian language and any nationalist expression of indigenous culture. In 1922 the Belorussian hierarchs attempted a move towards autonomy, but it was resisted by the patriarch of Moscow and suppressed by the Bolshevik government, which took in Belorussia as an integral part of the Soviet Union. It thereafter experienced the usual suffocation of its church life, and suffered greatly during the Second World War. There has been some strong feeling for independence ecclesiastically, after the political division occurred in recent times, but the patriarchate of Moscow granted the Belorussian Church a large degree of autonomy in 1990, raising it to the status of an exarchate. Most of its church life naturally looks to Moscow for its direction, and most sermons are preached in the Russian language (not Belorussian). Today there are about 5 million faithful in this church, which is part of the patriarchate of Moscow.

3 *Moldova*⁹⁷

Between the tenth and twelfth centuries Moldavia was part of Kievan Rus. But in more recent times the largest number of the population were ethnic Romanians. Before the power of the Soviet Union absorbed what is now known as Moldova, the majority of the Orthodox there looked to the Romanian church as their natural home. As an integral part of the Soviet Union, the patriarchate of Moscow has had, and continues to have, jurisdictional charge over it. The Soviet communist authorities attempted by every means to suffocate Christianity in the region, but unsuccessfully, even though most churches and monasteries in the land were destroyed or put to secular use. After the collapse of Russian communism there were the usual deep stirrings of a desire to dissociate from the very shadow of Moscow. In the light of their newly found political independence many of the lower clergy wished to return to a union with the patriarchate of Romania, but this was strongly contested, and a considerable schism occurred as a result, which is still in process of being healed. Moldova is a heavily agricultural economy, and had been bled dry by the communist system. Today it is struggling to emerge from generations of poverty and neglect, and the ecclesial divisions are hindering its progress. The Moldovan Orthodox, in their beautiful land, amount to a total of 850 parishes with eleven monasteries, and about 2 million faithful.

4 *The Baltic Lands*

The Baltic states were formerly small satellites of the Soviet Union. The political break-up of the empire in the 1990s caused considerable ecclesiastical instability as

parts of the church in this area sought release from Moscow, to mirror their new-found political freedom.

The Lithuanian Orthodox are a very small minority of 114,000 faithful from the national Christian total of 3.25 million, the majority of whom are Roman Catholics.

The Latvian Orthodox have been in the sphere of Russian influence since the early eighteenth century when Peter the Great annexed the land. Most recently, after fifty years of Soviet oppression, the country regained its independence in 1991. The Orthodox in the land number just under half a million faithful, and represent about one-third of the Christians of the nation (Catholics and Protestants being equally divided to make up the other two-thirds).

The Estonian Orthodox make up about half of the total of the Christians in this nation, numbering as they do just under a quarter of a million faithful. The other half is predominantly Protestant. Among the Orthodox there are 100 parishes, attached to the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church. It is jurisdictionally under the care of the ecumenical patriarchate, though the patriarchate of Moscow claims that ecclesiastically it should be what it was in the days before the break-up of the Soviet empire: one of the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church (the diocese of Tallin and Estonia). The considerable ecclesiastical friction precipitated by the flight from Moscow of the Estonian Orthodox brought about a short-lived state of mutual excommunication, in 1996, between the patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople. Recently the patriarchate of Constantinople has endorsed the Estonian Church's claim for autonomous status, which Moscow continues to reject.

5 *Hungary*

There are a very small number of Hungarian Orthodox, largely of Serbian and Romanian origin. The country is otherwise largely Catholic with a sizeable Protestant minority. The Orthodox amount to 1 per cent of the country, totalling 90,00 faithful. In 1925 the Serbian patriarch announced that he was taking the jurisdiction of these faithful into his own care, establishing a bishop in Budapest. The Hungarian government of the day then encouraged the priest Stephen Nemetz to resist this, and having been ordained as a bishop in Syria he led a movement of secession. It was ended when Hungary fell under communist control in 1946, and the Orthodox of the country were placed under the administration of the patriarchate of Moscow.

6 *The Russian diaspora*

There is also the Russian diaspora to consider. This will be treated in more detail subsequently, after the cases of the greater various autocephalous and autonomous churches have been set out completely. But for clarity's sake it will be useful simply to give the barest outlines here (while we are considering the Russian heritage) in relation to the four major divisions which now constitute the very large Russian Orthodox diaspora in the world outside Russia.

Moscow patriarchal parishes abroad

In the first place, the Moscow patriarchate has several exarchates and missions in various countries; many of them operative from long before the revolution. There was a resident Russian bishop in New York in the time of the tsars, for example, and

another well-known example is the (British) diocese of Sourouzh, headed for many years by the much-loved metropolitan, Antony Bloom. These parishes continue to be directly responsible to the Moscow patriarchate in all respects.

The Russian Church outside Russia

After the revolution many of the Russian hierarchs fled the country, and those who were already living abroad, serving the needs of Russians in different countries, set up a governing synod independent of communist control and infiltration. This was known as the Karlovtsy synod. Sometimes this part of the Russian Church is known as the Synod, or Synodal Church, and more properly as the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile, or the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR). In the latter years of the twentieth century there were extensive discussions under way for what promised to be the eventual return of the hierarchs and faithful of this jurisdiction to full canonical union with the Moscow patriarchate. In the autumn of 2006, after earlier eirenic approaches to the ROCOR by the Moscow patriarchate, the bishops of the Synod announced the decision for restitution of canonical union with the patriarchate. They have retained an autonomous governance of their parishes under the terms of the reunion; but the reconciliation, which was formally celebrated in 2007, is an important and positive event, welcomed by the whole Orthodox Church, and signalling a new era of harmony for the Russian diaspora.

The Russian archdiocese of western Europe

There is also another part of the Russian Church abroad known as the Russian archdiocese of western Europe. Again growing up as part of the great fragmentation that affected the Russian Church after its devastating oppression by Soviet communism, several bishops and many parishes of the Russians who had fled for safety to western Europe placed themselves under the patronage of the patriarch of Constantinople, who now takes under his Omophorion these parts of the heritage of Russian Orthodoxy.

The Russian Metropolia of America (the Orthodox Church in America)

Before 1970 this church, of Russian origins, was known as the Metropolia. In 1970 the patriarchate of Moscow granted autocephaly to it, acknowledging the large degree of autonomy it had exercised in the years after the revolution. It is now a large and important body of the Orthodox in the New World with important seminaries and presses. After 1970 it changed its name from the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America, to the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). It is no longer solely of Russian character, but has not, since its birth in 1970, grown into the position of being the undisputed 'national' church of the Orthodox in America. The Greek Orthodox archdiocese of North America remains under the Omophorion of the patriarchate of Constantinople, and the OCA now stands (in effect) as one more 'jurisdiction' in the welter of the jurisdictions of Orthodox that comprise the melting-pot of the United States. It is governed by its own metropolitan, based in Washington, and its own synod. It enjoys full communion with the patriarchate of Moscow and the wider Orthodox world, but not all the Orthodox churches apart from Russia recognize its autocephalous status. It is discussed in more detail under its own heading below.

The Orthodox Church of Greece

The Greek Orthodox Church is the concept most west Europeans immediately think of in reference to Orthodoxy as a whole, and it sometimes comes as a surprise to them to discover how relatively small the actual local church of the Greeks is, and how recently it came into its independence among the Orthodox family of churches. The Greek Church of course, is the heir to an immensely proud and ancient heritage. It is quite amazing to sit in the church at Corinth, for example, or in the several beautiful churches in the region of the Acropolis in Athens, and see the fruits before one's very eyes of the preaching ministry of the apostle Paul. The impact of the Greek people on the formation of Christianity is inestimable, and inestimably beautiful too. One often takes it for granted. But even a slight reflection can restore the insight. The Lord himself lived and taught and spoke entirely in a Semitic medium, using Aramaic as the language of his teachings. Even so, within less than one generation after the historical ministry of the Lord, the entirety of the New Testament was conceived and written in the medium of Greek. The very name of the Lord was transmitted, not in its Aramaic form (Yeshu), but in its Greek translation, Jesus, and everything of formative significance for the first four centuries of Christianity (and indeed for long afterwards) was delivered in the medium of Greek: Gospels, epistles, creeds, liturgies, and councils.

The Greek Orthodox are the guardians of the whole theology of the early church. These pillars of the faith have been preserved by them in an undying heritage which makes the Greek people outstanding in the annals of Christianity. Even the great Church of Rome, the capital and bastion of the Western empire, prayed and worshipped in the medium of Greek for the first four centuries of its life, and has among its earliest popes many who were Greeks. The missions of the Greeks to the wider world have brought the light of the Gospel to all nations, either directly or by not so remote a mediation. The Greek evangelization of the Slavs was a work of immense import, and the history of so many of the other, newer, national Orthodox churches shows that it was to Constantinople, the home of the Greek Christian empire, that almost all Eastern Orthodox faithful once looked. As the Russian theologian Father Georges Florovsky once remarked: 'We are, all of us, Greeks.'

The present Orthodox Church of Greece was formerly part of the patriarchate of Constantinople. It sought its separate national identity, as a jurisdictionally free church, largely because of the continuing Ottoman domination of the Phanar in the time of the Greek struggle for independence. Even now as an autocephalous church, it is immensely closely bonded to the patriarchate, which it supports, and the patriarch is one of the most revered figures in the wider Greek world and the extended consciousness of Hellas, which of course reaches far beyond the present national boundaries of the Greek state. Its continuing level of relationship with the patriarchate gives the best witness possible that autocephaly in church government is not a rupture of the deeper reality of church communion, but merely one of its mature manifestations.

Even at the height of the Byzantine empire, Greek culture was not primarily located in what is now known as the heartland of the Greek nation. The real centres were twofold: Constantinople and Thessaloniki. Athens and its environs were very provincial places indeed during the long Byzantine period. In the medieval era many Slavs migrated south into the Greek homelands, and Frankish knights held dominance over

the Orthodox faithful until the tide of the Ottomans finally engulfed them in the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople. The Byzantine aristocrats held out a few years longer in isolated pockets, but soon all the Greek lands were under Turkish Islamic rule. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the sprawling Ottoman administration was noticeably weakening, and aspirations for freedom gripped the Greek peoples, even though the fight against the power of so great an oppressor seemed suicidal. In 1821 the Greeks in the homeland raised the new national flag with the blessing of Metropolitan Germanos of Patras, and declared their political independence. So the Greek War for Independence began. Immediately relations with the Phanar were suspended. The Ottoman government regarded Patriarch Gregory V as responsible for the good behaviour of all subject Christian peoples throughout the empire and, having seized him in full vestments, immediately after the paschal liturgy, hanged him from the main gate of his palace at the Phanar (which remains closed to this day in respect to his memory). The revolutionary government declared at the time that 'Greece is autonomous and independent; and her church is autocephalous.' This state of affairs was regularized by the constitution agreed between the church and the state in 1833, when Greece became an independent kingdom whose sovereignty was recognized and assured by the Christian powers. The new charter was submitted to the patriarch of Constantinople for his comment and approval, and the autocephalous status of the Greek Church was eventually recognized in 1850.

Originally the Greek Church covered the extent of the kingdom of the Hellenes, the Peloponnesos, and continental Greece (until the disastrous war of 1921 with the enforced exchange of populations when the Greeks were expelled from Asia Minor). The Ionian Greek islands were added to it in 1864, as they too achieved independence, and in 1881 the territory of Thessaly. Today these are called the Ancient Regions (Palaiai Chorai) and amount to thirty-seven dioceses. After the further collapse of Turkish power in 1912–13, Macedonia, Epirus, and the Aegean islands were also included in the Greek Church. Their adoption into the autocephaly was not acknowledged by the Phanar until 1928. These are now called the New Regions (Neai Chorai) and amount to thirty-three dioceses. Several parts of the modern Greek state developed along a different line ecclesiastically, and have retained a direct jurisdictional relationship with Constantinople: namely the monastic republic of Mount Athos (near Thessaloniki), the islands of the Dodecanese, the patriarchal exarchate of Patmos, and the semi-autonomous Church of Crete. Today the Greek Orthodox Church is the only example of Orthodoxy which is state-supported. There are presently a total of 36,00 parishes and just under 10 million faithful.

The patriarchal Church of Bulgaria

Christianity came to ancient Roman Thrace in the second century, and was established in a secure way despite the regular waves of invaders (Goths, Huns, Slavs, Bulgars, Avars) from the fourth century onwards. These were generally assimilated to Roman ways. In the time of the Byzantine empire present-day Bulgaria was an important part (Thrace) of the patriarchate of Constantinople, but also contained territories (Illyria) that had once formed part of the Roman patriarchate. Ecclesiastically Bulgaria's church history has long been marked by the grinding friction between the two great patriarchal

sees as to who should have jurisdiction over it. This was, in no small measure, one of the disaffections that led to the increasingly bitter alienation of the two great sees at the end of the first millennium. By the seventh century the lands comprising present-day Bulgaria were settled by new immigrants from the east, the Turanian nomads, who were tribal offshoots of the Avars and Huns. Byzantium sent missionaries from the south-east, and Rome sent missionaries from the north-west.

The Turanian Bulgars set up their Khanate (princely state) in successful opposition to the Byzantine emperors and were later caught up in the evangelizing mission of SS Cyril and Methodios. In light of this, the Bulgarians adopted the Slavonic language after the early ninth century, and since then have been counted among the Slavic peoples. In 865 Khan Boris I wished to adopt Christianity, and strengthen alliances with Byzantium. After his baptism by the Greeks, he approached St Photios, the patriarch of Constantinople, asking him outright to set up an independent hierarchy in Bulgaria. This the patriarch was not ready to accede to so quickly, and so the khan took advantage of the strained relations between Constantinople and Rome and approached Pope Nicholas I with the same request. The pope sent two bishops to examine the situation, but the khan broke off relations with Adrian II, Nicholas' successor, and returned with his suit to Constantinople. For centuries afterwards the 'Bulgarian question' became something like an ecclesiastico-political football. In 889 Khan Boris left the throne in favour of the monastic life. His son, Prince Simeon, who was also a monk, was highly energetic in making Slavonic the language of the new church. It was Simeon who led the Bulgarian hierarchy, despite Constantinople's opposition, to declare their ecclesiastical independence. They then led the Serbs, to their west, into the Orthodox fold and encouraged their own path to autocephaly.

Bulgaria's burgeoning independence was severely nipped in the bud by the military and political renaissance experienced by the Byzantine empire in the time of Basil II (the 'Bulgar-Slayer'!) who violently brought the country, and its church, back into the obedient fold of the Christian Romans in 1018. After that time the church, centred on Ohrid, was increasingly Hellenized, but retained a large degree of autonomy until 1767 when, by order of the sultans, it was suppressed, and the Bulgarian Church was fully subjected to the immediate jurisdiction of Constantinople. Eastern Bulgaria reasserted its independence from the Byzantines in 1186 and thereafter had its church life centred on Trnovo. The patriarchate was re-established in 1235. It was overrun by the Ottoman Turks in 1396, and also lost its ecclesiastical autonomy in 1767. After this absorption of all the Bulgarians by Constantinople a rigorous Hellenization was enforced among them; the liturgical language of Slavonic was suppressed in favour of mandatory Greek, and Phanariot Greeks monopolized all the senior clerical positions.

Relaxation of the Turkish yoke led to the Bulgarian petition to the sultan in 1856 for measures of independence for their church, and some Bulgarian bishops were then appointed as a concession by the Phanar, but the course was set for independence from Constantinople and from the sultan too. The sultan proved more amenable than the patriarchate to hearing the requests, made with increasing insistence from 1860 onwards. In 1870 the declaration of ecclesiastical independence was acknowledged by a Firman of the Sublime Porte, against the wishes of the patriarchate, and the Bulgarian Church declared its autonomy under an exarch and a local synod. The patriarch of Constantinople promptly held a synod of his own in 1872, to which he invited the (Greek) patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, and excommunicated

the Bulgarian hierarchy, rejecting their petition for autonomy on the grounds that the concept of a 'national church' was contrary to the spirit of ecclesial oneness and led to the heresy of 'phyletism'.⁹⁸ The Bulgarian Church ignored this, and though their separation was at first classed as schismatic by the Greek churches, the Slavic churches came to acknowledge it, especially after the successful Bulgarian revolt which, with the assistance of the Russians, forced the Ottomans to give the country a large measure of independence.

The other European nations, fearing Russian control of the region, considerably undermined this, and shored up the Turkish administration of Bulgaria. It was not until 1908 that the Bulgarian people effected their full independence. In both the world wars they allied with the losing side, and lost much territory and political prestige as a result. Seventy-three years after their declaration of independence, in 1945, the exarch of the Bulgarian Church approached the Phanar once more and reconciliation was effected, with Constantinople acknowledging the autocephaly.

The year before this, Bulgaria had fallen under communist control, and most of those involved could see the dark clouds on the horizon. Within three years the exarch, Metropolitan Stephen of Sofia, was forcibly retired from office, and the communist authorities pursued a policy comparable to that in Romania: simultaneously seeking the rights of the Bulgarians (even ecclesiastically) while at the same time suffocating their own people (especially religiously). The communist government established a new 'constitution' for the church in 1950, among whose provisions was the declaration of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to have the status of a patriarchate, based at Sofia. This was effected in 1953. Constantinople at first objected to the procedure, but acknowledged the new status quo in 1961.

The communist yoke was immensely stifling in Bulgaria. Monastic life was particularly hard hit. The higumen of the ancient monastery of Rila, one of the most important centres of church life in the country, was quickly targeted and arrested in 1945, dying in prison. The buildings were turned into a meteorological station. The hierarchy declared the church's loyalty to the state authorities in 1953 and as a result were given back many church properties, even receiving some (very poor) state subsidy. There was a slight thaw in the 1970s, but church attendance had dwindled to a trickle, and the task of rebuilding a vibrant Christian life now faces a church with relatively few young clergy. In the years before the Second World War the Orthodox Church represented the faith of 85 per cent of the country (though church attendance was not particularly high). A census in 1962 estimated that Orthodoxy then represented only 27 per cent of the population. A church census conducted in 1970 set the figure of believers at more than 5 million, 65 per cent of the country. The church is currently constituted of about 6 million faithful (71 per cent of the nation) worshipping in 4,200 parishes. After the fall of communism in 1991 there was a series of bitter divisions in the Bulgarian Church, with priests and faithful protesting loudly about the conformism of the existing hierarchs, and demanding their dismissal. The crisis was only partly resolved when the government and representatives of the patriarchate of Constantinople came to Sofia to join with the patriarch and his synod in the celebration of the divine liturgy, as an act of public endorsement. Relations among the Bulgarian Orthodox themselves, as well as the repair of the church's much devastated infrastructure and educational programme, remain a pressing part of the long rebuild required after the communist gloom.

There is a Bulgarian diaspora in America whose hierarchs retain the closest links with the Bulgarian synod. The Bulgarian monastery of St George, on Mount Athos, is (like all Athonite monasteries) under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople.

The patriarchal Church of Serbia

The Serbs are a Slav nation originating from the Carpathian region. In the sixth and seventh centuries, with the active encouragement of the Byzantine emperor, Heraclios (d. 641), they established themselves in the regions of southern Dalmatia, Herzegovina, and Serbia, and acted as a frontier guard for Byzantium. An early mission from Rome did not gain much fruit, but a mission from Constantinople later in the ninth century was more long-lasting, and Christianity in Serbia looked to Constantinople for its guidance. The foundations of the modern state and nation of Serbia were laid between 1159 and 1195 by Stephen I Nemanya. It was his son, Stephen II, who was crowned as the first Serbian king, and who established the first metropolitan see for his Orthodox people in 1219. He appointed his own brother, St Sava, as metropolitan archbishop, and Patriarch Manuel of Constantinople consecrated him to the office, at Nicaea, where he was in residence because of the Latin occupation of Byzantium. St Sava had already founded the Serbian monastery of Hilandar, on Mount Athos (1197), and in his own country he efficiently organized the infrastructure of the churches, crowning his brother as king in 1221 with a golden crown supplied for the occasion by Pope Honorius III.⁹⁹

In 1346 the synod of Uskub, in the time of King Stephen III, declared the Serbian Church to be autocephalous, and the archbishop of Ipek (Pec) was given the title patriarch. Its time of early glory was to be short-lived, however, for the military disaster of Kossovo in 1389, followed by another at Smederevo in 1459, marked the subjugation of the country to the power of the expanding Turks. The Serbian Church followed the pattern witnessed in all provinces subordinated to the Ottoman power, and was made a direct jurisdiction of the Phanar. The patriarchate of Ipek was abolished and the archbishop subjected to the Greek archbishops of Ohrid. In 1557 it had another era of independence. A Serbian grand vizier, Mohammed Sokolovich, who had converted to Islam to serve the sultan, appointed his natural brother, a Christian monk, to be patriarch once more. The independence lasted until 1767 when the sultan ordered the independent churches of the empire to revert to the immediate jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople.

During the early years of the nineteenth century independence once more became a possibility given the weakened state of the Ottoman empire. After the treaty of Adrianople the church adopted autonomous status in 1832, with a metropolitan see at Belgrade. After Serbian political independence was fully secured in 1879, the church declared itself for autocephalous status. At the end of the First World War the Balkan borders were redrawn again, bringing together the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes into Yugoslavia. At this time four smaller autonomous Orthodox churches were joined together: Karlovtsy in southern Hungary, Montenegro, Czernovits, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The reunion, accomplished finally in 1920, was announced at the same time as the restoration of the patriarchate at Pec. The senior hierarch, based at Belgrade, is called His Holiness the Archbishop of Ipek, Metropolitan of Belgrade

and Karlovtsy, and Patriarch of All Serbia. The autocephaly and elevation to patriarchal status were acknowledged formally by the patriarchate at Constantinople in 1922.

After the Second World War Serbia fell under communist control, but life under Tito was freer than was the case elsewhere in eastern Europe. Under Tito's regime, monasticism, which was already in a weakened state in Yugoslavia, fell into a poor condition. Women's houses seemed to do better than those of men, and several of the vacant monasteries were taken over by nuns at this time. The largest women's community is at Ljubostinja. In 1939 there were 166 active monasteries with a total of only 540 monks. The medieval Serbian monasteries are world-famous sites: Krusedol (1512), Studenica (1190), Milacevo (1230), Gracanica (1320). Because of their association with Serbian national history, several of them became targets in the bitter civil war that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia after the collapse of communism, when Christian-Islamic divides shattered the national synthesis. Throughout the communist period church attendance was very low, although there have been signs of revival since. Today there are about 7.5 million Serbian Orthodox faithful worshipping in 3,100 parishes. Of these, 12,000 Orthodox are in the Republic of Slovenia (overwhelmingly Catholic for the rest). There are also Serbian diaspora parishes in America, Australia, and England, closely related to the patriarchate. The liturgical language of the church is Slavonic.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church, with a small synod of six bishops and 1,260,000 Orthodox faithful in the country, encouraged by the communist government, broke away from its union within the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1967 and declared its autocephalous status. This has not been recognized either by Serbia or by any other of the Orthodox churches.

The patriarchal Church of Romania

The Romanian Orthodox Church is the heir to the Christianity of the ancient Roman province of Dacia. It was an imperial province established by the Emperor Trajan for his veterans, in the second century. The Romanian language and culture, to this day, are marked by a deep basis in Latin, of course with many later Slavic elements added, making it, arguably, the only Latin Orthodox culture in the world. There are archaeological remains of proto-Christian churches, especially in the Black Sea region. Recently proto-Christian martyr shrines have been discovered, all of which gives testimony to the great antiquity of Christianity in these lands. Church tradition looks to the planting of the Gospel here by the missionary efforts of the apostle Andrew around the Black Sea shores. By the third century Christians were so strong in the region that they attracted the attention of the Emperor Diocletian, and many were victims of the Great Persecution which he initiated at the dawn of the fourth century. One of the Romanian Church's great patristic theologians was John Cassian, who travelled throughout the ancient church, settling in the west after years spent among the Egyptian ascetics. He became a foundational figure in ascetical theology: having an equally marked influence on the Eastern as well as the Western monastic culture.

The Romanian Church's Latin basis has always remained part of the special character of Romanian Orthodoxy, whose geographical position is, as it were, still a bridge point between the Latin and Greek ecclesiastical worlds. The mission of Cyril and Methodios and their establishment of the Slavic liturgy which became the

dominant culture of the newly emergent eastern European churches such as Bulgaria and Russia were important elements in decisively bonding Romania to the eastern ecclesiastical world. And this orientation was not fundamentally shifted despite Dominican missionary activity from the west in the fourteenth century and extensive pressure from the Catholic Austro-Hungarian empire from the seventeenth century onwards. For a long time in its early existence the Bulgarian Church exercised a strong influence over Christianity in the region.

In the tenth century the territory was organized into Wallachia, which became an independent princely state in 1290. Its voivodes, the princely rulers, would become great patrons of international Orthodoxy both before and after the fall of Byzantium. A second state, Moldavia, was established to the north in 1363. Both territories had their own metropolitan archbishops. Daniel, the metropolitan of Moldavia in the fifteenth century, was one of the Orthodox hierarchs at the Council of Florence, who signed the *Tomos* (official decree) of Union. But it was rejected by his faithful at home, and both he and his successor were forced into exile in Rome. The establishment of the province of Transylvania, to the west, followed in 1526. At the same period the Turkish armies were extending outwards to increase their hold over Europe. During this time of expansion and settlement of the Orthodox, against a backdrop of bitter military struggles against the invading Turks, magnificent monasteries were established. Several of them have functioned uninterruptedly, and many more are now undergoing extensive renewal.¹⁰⁰ Under the Turkish domination, the leaders of the Romanian Orthodox hierarchy were Phanariot Greek clergy appointed from Constantinople, and the political rulers of the country were also appointed from the Phanar, under the supervision of the sultans.

After Transylvania's capture by the Austrian and Habsburg armies in 1688 there was extensive proselytism conducted, under the aegis of the Jesuit order, and in 1698 a great number of the local Orthodox churches seceded to Roman communion as 'Uniate' or Greek Catholic communities. By 1733 the Transylvanian clergy numbered 2,294 Greek Catholic priests compared to 458 Orthodox. The nineteenth century witnessed the great national struggle for independence from Turkish control to the east, and for the reclamation of control over Transylvania to the west. The rule of Phanariots, under the supervision of the Sublime Porte, came to an end in 1829 when the treaty of Adrianople conceded autonomous political status to Wallachia and Moldavia. In 1856, at the congress of Paris, Moldavia and Wallachia reasserted their ecclesiastical autonomy.

In 1862 the Romanian Church signalled its desire to end the long period of Phanariot domination by the replacement of Greek liturgical usage with the Romanian language, which had already been used in the country regions of Transylvania, to encourage the local congregations to know and value their faith in the face of the appearance of Calvinism in those areas. The whole Romanian Church has worshipped in this elegant romance language ever since, and a distinctive form of liturgical music has also evolved alongside the classical Byzantine musical styles. In 1864 the country won its complete formal independence under the rule of Prince Alexander Cuza. In 1865 the Romanian hierarchy declared the church to be autocephalous, with the primate being the Wallachian metropolitan, with his see at Bucharest, and the metropolitan of Moldavia second in honour. In 1881 Charles von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was crowned king of Romania (the monarchy lasted until the Second World War), and four years afterwards,

in 1885, the *de facto* situation of Romanian ecclesiastical autocephaly was eventually recognized by the patriarch of Constantinople, Joachim IV.

After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the wake of the First World War the 'greater Romanian territories' were once more reorganized, bringing together three separate church groups: Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. The negotiation of union took six years, from 1918 to 1924, and culminated in the declaration of the Romanian Church as a patriarchate in 1925, which was immediately recognized by the patriarchate of Constantinople and the other Orthodox churches. The patriarch is known as His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania, Locum-Tenens of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Metropolitan of Ungaro-Wallachia and Archbishop of Bucharest. The first patriarch was Miron Cristea, who has since been followed by a succession of skilled and energetic leaders. After the end of the Second World War Romania fell under heavy Soviet control. During the communist regime, the Greek Catholic communities were suppressed and ordered to rejoin the Orthodox. Since the post-Ceausescu liberation many of them have wished to return to Roman communion, though many parishes have also expressed the desire to remain Orthodox. There was some lively tension over the rightful attribution of church properties which is now being resolved in a collaborative inter-church dialogue.

During the communist years following the Second World War, the condition of the Romanian Orthodox Church was among the best in all the zone of Soviet satellites, though it was far from happy. Soon after the communist takeover, 200 priests were imprisoned, and six bishops were forcibly retired. Patriarch Justinian (1948–77) often annoyed many of the free exiles by stating the self-evident truth that many of the principles of Marxism were in harmony with the evangelical spirit of dispossession and communion. He and his successors worked out a *modus vivendi* with the authorities that, in a sense, continued the prior Romanian tradition of close political collaboration (in the 1930s, for example, the patriarch was the prime minister of the state and another bishop headed its State Department of Religion). The practice of the faith flourished, and was deeply rooted in the personal lives of millions of ordinary Romanians. Church activity was officially hampered, but one-third of the salaries of the clergy was paid by the state. In 1955, when the Church of Romania celebrated its seventieth anniversary of independence, the government made much fuss about it as a symbol of national pride. At the same time, however, thirteen bishops and hundreds of priests languished in Romanian gaols.

From time to time the flourishing condition of the church drew disapproving remarks from the central Soviet leaders, resulting in periods of church demolition and visibly heavier oppression. The state secret police, the Securitate, were especially brutal in communist Romania, and there have been many examples of the suppression of individual dissidents, monks, and priests, which have amounted to many bloodless (as well as bloody) martyrdoms in the course of the last two generations. In 1958 there was a sustained crackdown against the church, as the authorities took fright at the programme of renewal over which Patriarch Justinian was presiding. Five hundred priests and leading monks were arrested and subjected to the infamous communist show-trials. Two mass trials were held, inflicting sentences of between eight and twenty-five years in gaols and labour camps. The aspirants of the women's monastery at Agapia were taken from their college, and sent en masse to a labour camp. Legislation subsequently demanded that no aspirant to the monastic life should be

under 60 years of age. Approximately 1,200 monks and nuns were expelled from their religious houses and many monasteries were forcibly closed.

From 1948 onwards the authorities had generally made it immensely difficult to recruit new monastics, recognizing the importance of the monastic life in Romanian church affairs, but after the fall of the communist regime there was a rapid increase. Monasticism in Romania has generally been closely bonded to the diocesan life, under the care of the local bishops. The monastery of Agapia contains several thousand nuns following a range of lifestyles, from the cenobitic to the completely eremitical, in an extremely beautiful wooded valley. In other houses of men, such as at the historic centre of Sihastria, or the beautiful Transylvanian community at Rohia near Satu Mare, the hesychastic life is followed with admirable fervour. Romanian monastic architecture is a wonderful hybrid of Gothic–Orthodox, and the painted monasteries of the north of the country¹⁰¹ supply some of the world's greatest examples of Christian cultural achievement.

The spiritual and mystical life of the Romanian monasteries was inspired by the hesychastic movement, and St Paisy Velichovsky widely disseminated copies of the *Philokalia* (a large collection of Orthodox ascetical and mystical writings from the Fathers) from his base at Neamts. One of the great modern Romanian theologians, Father Dimitru Staniloae, began the issuing of a modern Romanian *Philokalia* (a new edition of the patristic writings from critical editions), and the new version ran to many volumes more than the original, presided over by SS Macarius of Corinth and Nicodemos the Hagiorite in the eighteenth century, with new commentaries and critical notes that were a testimony to how well the intellectual life of the Romanian Church was flourishing under such difficult circumstances. In Romania today there are several nationally regarded monastic elders (*starsi*), many of whom endured years of persecution for the faith.¹⁰²

After the fall of communism the incumbent patriarch, Theoctist, offered his resignation to the holy synod (acknowledging student protests over the past conformity of the church to communist policy) and retired to monastic life. The loss of his skills and acumen was soon felt, and his return was requested by the church at large. He subsequently presided with a skill and energy remarkable for his advanced years over the important transition of the church to post-communist freedom. Romanian Orthodoxy has traditionally had a lively intellectual life. Its theologians are today rebuilding their devastated libraries and schools, and can be expected to offer a substantial, and vital, contribution to the character of world Orthodoxy in the years ahead. The national census taken after the fall of communism showed 20 million people declaring themselves to be Orthodox Christians, worshipping in about 8,300 active parishes, which makes Romanian Orthodoxy the second largest of all the Eastern churches, and arguably the one with the most open and outward-looking mentality, and with vigorous and educated bishops.

Romania is one of the liveliest members of the family of Orthodox churches with a desire to engage with the rest of Europe, of which it feels itself to be an integral part: the only example of Orthodoxy among a Latin people. The current social-ethical problems in Romania (the street children, chiefly a result of the appalling communist orphanages), which are the legacy of the communist autocracy, face the Romanian Church as a pressing future agenda which it is beginning to address, and will focus on more directly when it has re-established the base infrastructure of its churches, monasteries, and schools. The rebuilding of the ecclesiastical life and structures is

proceeding with extraordinary rapidity and vigour, which is a testament to the love and respect in which the church is generally held by the ordinary people. The country is rich in natural resources, as well as in the resources of the native intelligence of its people and clergy. The impoverishment of such a fertile land after fifty years of misrule is testimony in itself to the lunacy of the post-war political administration that squandered such vast gifts in the tyrannical oppression of its own people. The church has much good will in the country at large, and is regarded as a hopeful force for the rebuilding of Romanian pride and national self-direction.

The Church of Georgia

The ancient Christians of Georgia were known as the Iberians. They became a distinct people after migrating in the fourth to the third centuries BC from the regions of the Euphrates and the Tigris, to their present homeland in the mountains between Russian and Armenia in the southern Caucasus. The church was founded in the fourth century by St Nina, the 'equal to the apostles'. There had also been missions in the time of Constantine the Great, and local traditions assign a foundational role to the apostle Andrew. At first it was jurisdictionally dependent on the patriarchate of Antioch. The Georgian homeland was a place of transitions and struggles of empires, beginning with the conflicts between the Byzantines and Persians, in whose midst the Georgians found themselves, and as a result the history of the Georgian Church has been full of martyrdoms and suffering, not least in the annals of the last century. From the seventh century onwards the predominant influence on the Georgian Church came from Constantinople, but it also established its effective autonomy at that same time, with a *katholikos*¹⁰³ of its own as senior hierarch. Georgia's nominal subordination to Antioch continued until the eighth century, when it became effectively autocephalous. It was ravaged by Timur in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and, shortly after him, by the expansion of the Turks, who took control after the sixteenth century. It was incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church in 1811, after Tsar Alexander I had annexed the entire country to Russia. At this time the resident *katholikos* was forcibly retired by the Moscow synod, and they appointed in his place a Russian to act as exarch. The use of Georgian language in both church and state was forbidden, and for a century all the exarchs were Russian nationals. Understandably this did not encourage warm relations between the Georgians and their perceived oppressors. On the eve of the revolution, Tsar Nicholas II issued a decree of religious toleration, and the Georgian hierarchs were unwise enough to trust it. They sent in a formal appeal to the throne for autonomous status for their church. The result was the exile of the pro-independence hierarch who drafted the protocol, a setback which resulted in great disaffection among the people, and many stirrings of Georgian nationalists. The Russian exarch of the Georgian Church was himself one of their assassination victims at this time.

Immediately after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Georgian Church again asserted its autocephalous status and elected Bishop Kirion as its first restored *katholikos*. In 1917 there were 2,455 Orthodox parishes operating in the country, with fifteen diocesan bishops in the synod. In 1919 Constantinople acknowledged the autocephaly, but Moscow refused to do so. In 1921 Georgia fell under Bolshevik Soviet control.

After initial resistance, severely repressed by the harsh imprisonment of the clerical leaders, the hierarchy settled into a conformist relationship with the communist powers, that was rewarded in 1944 when Patriarch Sergius of Moscow officially recognized the Church of Georgia's autocephalous status. It endured a long suffocation under the Soviets. By 1970 there were only eighty state-recognized churches in operation, but this period also saw the start of a revival of church life. The church had always kept the affection of the Georgian people, who knew it had been one of great preservers of Georgian identity. In 1991 Georgia declared its political independence. The *katholikos* Ilya II was a charismatic leader at this time, and presided over a call to return to faith. The revival gained symbolic publicity in 1992 when the Georgian president, Shevardnadze (a former atheist and member of the Russian Soviet Politburo), accepted baptism in the Orthodox cathedral of T'bilisi. But Georgia's progress to democracy was a difficult one, and the country began to suffer great instability because of the close-following civil war of 1993, its own separatist movements (there are over a million Muslims in the eastern parts of Georgia), and great economic difficulties. Today the church consists of 600 parishes, and about 3,011,600 faithful, forming the vast majority of the Christians of the country. There has been a sizeable ethnic Armenian Orthodox presence in Georgia from ancient times. They number about 340,000 faithful.

The Church of Poland

The Polish Orthodox Church traces its origins back to two chief periods of formation; the first in the tenth century, and the second revival after the union of Lithuania and Poland in the fourteenth century. When Poland was dismembered politically in 1722, its Orthodox population was absorbed by the Russian Church. When the country was reconstituted as a sovereign independent state, after the cessation of the First World War in 1918, her new borders contained about 4 million Orthodox faithful, mainly Ukrainians and Belorussians in the eastern part of the country. They had hitherto belonged to the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Moscow. At that time, Patriarch Tikhon was willing to grant autonomous status to the new church, but the new government was pressing the Polish hierarchy to establish its complete independence from Russian control by declaring autocephaly. In 1923 the senior Polish hierarch, Archbishop George Yoroshevsky, was still arguing for a greater degree of autonomy when he was actually assassinated by a crazed Russian monk who felt such a move was scandalous. The degree of scandal this, in turn, caused, occasioned the Polish government to appeal directly to the patriarch of Constantinople for the award of autocephalous status, and this was given by Constantinople in a *Tomos* of 1924. The Moscow patriarchate did not recognize this until the country came under its own political control once more in 1945, and, in 1948, Patriarch Alexei wrote to the Phanar announcing that the Russian Orthodox Church had itself conferred autocephaly on the Polish Orthodox. Attempts by the Catholics in the pre-war years to over-zealously persuade the Orthodox to come back into union (they were regarded by the Polish Catholics as former Uniates who had been pressured to enter the Orthodox Church in the nineteenth century) involved many cases of lawsuits to claim back churches and buildings, and forcible closures of institutions. This heavy-handedness extensively soured relations between the Orthodox

and the Catholics for many generations afterwards.¹⁰⁴ Prior to 1918, the Orthodox had ten bishops in their synod, five dioceses, fifteen monasteries, and about 2,000 parishes with 4 million faithful. By 1960 the Orthodox totalled only 4,500 faithful. Today, there are 400 parishes with 1,021,000 faithful. The senior hierarch of the Polish Orthodox is now known as the Metropolitan of Warsaw and All Poland. The church retains very close links with the Moscow patriarchate.

The Church of Albania

Originally part of the patriarchate of Constantinople, the Albanian Orthodox Church became autocephalous in 1937. It is a religiously mixed country. After the fifteenth century there were extensive Muslim conversions from among the Orthodox population. Today, of the total 3.6 million Albanians in the homeland, official statistics suggest that approximately 60 per cent are atheist or radically secularized. Just less than 20 per cent of the country is Orthodox, with the other half of the religiously active citizens represented by Islam and Roman Catholicism. The Orthodox of this land took their origin ecclesiastically from the famed missionary centre of Ohrid. But in 1767, pressured to it by the Ottoman political masters, the patriarchate of Constantinople absorbed the church and thereafter directly appointed its metropolitan bishops, all of whom until 1922 were Phanariot Greeks. The local church pressed for more independence, first in 1908 when the Young Turk movement disrupted Ottoman control, and again after the Balkan wars of 1912–13. In 1922 a synod of the local church demanded the grant of autocephaly, and the Greek hierarchs left the country. By 1926 the Phanar had agreed to afford autocephaly under certain terms, but the head of state, the Muslim Amadh Zoghu, refused to countenance them. He would later assume the title of King Zog of Albania, and (though a Muslim) patronized the Orthodox, confirming their right to officiate as bishops, just like the sultans had before him.

In 1929 the local Albanian synod proclaimed autocephaly independently, and was excommunicated for its pains by the Phanar, a state of affairs which brought about the immediate state-ordered exile of the exarch of Constantinople, Metropolitan Hierotheos, then resident in the country. The patriarch of Serbia recognized the autocephaly eventually, and fostered a reconciliation with the Phanar. Constantinople accepted the state of autocephaly in 1937. In the years after the Second World War, Albania fell under the heavy hand of severe communist oppression. There was extensive persecution in the years after 1945, with several leading Orthodox hierarchs murdered by the communists, and in 1967 the government declared the complete and final closure of all Christian places of worship (a premature statement as it turned out). The state policy during the 1950s was to bring the church under the jurisdictional care of the Moscow patriarchate, and several Albanian hierarchs who resisted that policy were forcibly deposed. The Orthodox currently represent about half a million faithful, worshipping in 909 parishes. The senior hierarch is His Beatitude the Metropolitan of Tirana and Durazzo, Archbishop of All Albania. There is also an Albanian diaspora which continues under the jurisdictional protection of the patriarchate of Constantinople. The communist rule, as was usual elsewhere, succeeded in bringing an already poor country down onto its knees, and the Orthodox Church in Albania, like the rest of its people, is only now beginning to emerge from the chaos of its recent nightmare.

The Church of the Czech lands and Slovakia

Orthodoxy was present in Moravia, the medieval forerunner of Czechoslovakia, from the time of the mission of SS Cyril and Methodios in the ninth and tenth centuries, but the majority religion of the region had always been Roman Catholic. The stirrings of the Reformation secessions were severely controlled by the Habsburgs in the early seventeenth century when they gained power over Bohemia and Moravia. Czechoslovakia was constituted as an independent nation in the years following the First World War, part of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Orthodox churches of recent times were founded in Prague in the mid nineteenth century, and since then have come under, at various times, the patronage of the patriarchates of Serbia, Constantinople, and Moscow.

In 1918 the vast majority of the population was Roman Catholic. During the First World War Orthodoxy had been suppressed in the country, and it was also to endure some element of persecution again during the Second World War. When the Czechoslovakian Orthodox Church was reconstituted in the aftermath of the First World War, approximately 40,000 declared themselves and a bishop (Gorazd Pavlik) was appointed for them by the Serbian patriarch. Bishop Pavlik succeeded in rallying together most of the Orthodox faithful under the jurisdictional care of the Serbian patriarch, but in 1942 he and several of his clergy were assassinated by the Nazi invaders.¹⁰⁵ By 1946 the political mantle of the Soviets had fallen over the country, and the patriarch of Moscow acted independently to assume jurisdictional charge of the Czechoslovakian Orthodox. This was one of the reasons the Phanar at first looked askance, for many years, on the canonical status of the churches of Czechoslovakia and Poland, although now relations are fully restored. The concept of a separate Czechoslovakian Orthodox Church had been shrunk significantly by the Soviet annexation of much of its former territory in Podcarpatska Rus, but was soon after swollen in 1950 by the 'supposedly' free return to Orthodoxy of the Byzantine-rite Catholics of the diocese of Preshov in Slovakia. These reunited congregations demonstrated their true opinion in 1968 when large numbers elected to return to the Roman Catholic Eastern rite communion. In 1951 the patriarchate of Moscow declared the Orthodox Church of the country to be thenceforward autocephalous under the guidance of the metropolitan of Prague. The country separated politically once more into its chief constituent parts of the Czech lands and Slovakia after the collapse of communism in the last decade of the twentieth century. The Orthodox remained united across the national divide. There is a smaller Orthodox presence in Slovakia, with ten parishes and 23,000 faithful, while the Czech Republic has 100 parishes and 51,000 faithful who use the Slavonic rite. The total number of Orthodox in the region amounts to 74,000 faithful.

The three autonomous Orthodox churches

1 *The Orthodox Church of Finland*

The Church of Finland petitioned to come under the Omophorion of the patriarch of Constantinople in 1923, as part of its reaction to the communist oppression of the Russian Church, and the achievement of its own political independence in 1919. Before

that, Finland's small Orthodox community had historically looked to the patriarch of Moscow. The Moscow patriarchate did not accept the legitimacy of this exchange of jurisdictions until 1957. Most of the Christian Finnish population since the Reformation have been Lutherans, but the birth of Orthodoxy in Finland long pre-dated the Reformation, originating from the missionary work of the Russian monks of the famed monastery of Valamo on Lake Ladoga, who evangelized the pagan tribes of this region in the thirteenth century. The church is a relatively small one. There are forty parishes, with about 70,000 faithful, but it is a vigorous community which has for centuries known itself in the context of a much larger Lutheran majority, which itself has given way to an increasingly extended atheistic secularism. The Finnish Orthodox Church has experience, beyond many others, of the issues of witnessing to, and dialoguing with, a profoundly secularized environment which will prove invaluable for other Orthodox communities in a new age of 're-evangelization' and ecumenical dialogue.

2 *The Orthodox Church of Japan*

Orthodoxy in Japan was initiated by the Russian priest (after 1906 archbishop, and since 1970 canonized as 'saint') Nicholas Kassatkin (1836–1912). He was sent in 1861 by the patriarchate of Moscow to serve the pastoral needs of the Russian consular offices in Hakodate, Japan. Once there he decided that he should work as a missionary priest among the local Japanese too, and mastered the language and culture, beginning translations of the sacred books into Japanese. In 1868 he performed his first baptism of a Japanese convert, and a mission was established in 1871. In 1872 he was able to witness the ordination of two indigenous Japanese priests. Since his foundation the church has grown, through periods of stagnation and setback, to the point where it now has forty parishes in three dioceses, and about 38,000 faithful (28,000 were listed in 1904). The political effects of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, then the Russian Revolution, and then the Second World War, disrupted relations between the patriarchate and Japan. The Japanese government, in 1939, also put a heavy nationalistic hand on the constitutions of all societies, and pressed the church to draw up a new constitution for itself that diminished reliance on foreign intervention. Accordingly the archbishop at that period, Metropolitan Sergei (Tikhomirov), resigned his charge (along with many other non-Japanese church leaders) and handed over the property of the church to Japanese ownership.

The Professor of Russian Language at the Japanese military academy, Arsenius Heikichi Iwasawa, was appointed as head of the new episcopal committee to find a new chief bishop, but remained administering the church until 1941, to the accumulating protests of a significant group of clergy who, representing the 'All Japan Church Council', had elected Archpriest James Shintaro Tohei as the legitimate episcopal candidate. Having approached the Russian synodal hierarchs (ROCOR), Iwasawa's group secured the episcopal consecration of Archpriest John Kiichi Ono. He and his wife (daughter of the first Japanese priest ever ordained) took monastic vows on the same day, and he received episcopal ordination, as Bishop Nicholas, shortly after. When he returned to Tokyo cathedral for the first Pascha service, however, he found the doors of the church locked against him. Persuasion from the government led to a reconciliation between the two parties, and Bishop Nicholas was acknowledged as presiding bishop. Archpriest James was put forward for episcopal consecration too, but died before this could be effected. At this time the government formally approved the

new constitutions. After the Second World War, Bishop Nicholas retired (some said he was pressured to it by enduring opposition), and a movement was quickly inaugurated to separate the Church of Japan from the supervision of the ROCOR synod, and open dialogue with the Metropolia Church (the Russian Church in America, eventually to become the OCA). A group within the church clung to the jurisdictional link with ROCOR and for a short time Bishop Nicholas joined them as their head, setting up a tendentious schism. In 1954, however, he reconciled with the Church of Japan, which was then under the wing of the Metropolia Church in America. It was the Metropolia which helped it towards its present ecclesiastical status, when in 1970 the patriarchate of Moscow officially granted full autonomous status to the Church of Japan, under its own renewed spiritual patronage.

3 *The Orthodox Church of China*

Christianity in China dates back to antiquity. It is said that the apostle Thomas preached the Gospel there in the first century. But concrete evidence of the once massive extent of the missionary work of the Syrian Church can now only be found rarely, for example in the surviving stele of Xian, set up by Nestorian missionaries to mark their work in China, in 781. The records that would have clarified how extensive this Eastern Christian mission once was were extensively burned in the later period (sometimes by later missionaries), a profound loss to the history of Christianity in China.

The modern history of the Orthodox in China begins once more with the Russians. In 1685 the Chinese emperor resettled in the capital a group of some thirty or so Russian cossacks who had entered his service after his capture of a few Siberian border towns. Among them was the priest Maxim Leontiev, their chaplain, who subsequently built the first Orthodox church in Beijing for himself and his companions. In 1715 a Russian archimandrite, Hilarion, began a mission in Beijing, and it appears in official records in 1727 as part of a Sino-Russian treaty. Its purpose was largely to provide pastoral services to Russian diplomatic staff resident in the Chinese capital. An estimate of the mid nineteenth century suggested there were still only about 200 Orthodox faithful resident in Beijing, most of whom were ethnic Russian descendants. The latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed a revival, following on the cultural work of the priest Hyacinth Bichurin and the monk Archimandrite Palladios, who became masters of the Chinese language.

The Boxer rebellion of 1898–1900, where Christian converts in general were a target of violence, saw 222 Orthodox Christians martyred for their faith. The library of the Beijing Orthodox mission was also burned to the ground. Nevertheless, by the year 1902 there were an estimated thirty-two Orthodox parishes in China with a body of about between 5,000 and 6,000 faithful. By 1949 this had risen to about 106 Orthodox parishes in China. There was also a seminary, and several Chinese priests working in the parishes. The 1917 revolution in Russia increased the missionary activity in so far as many fleeing the turmoil in Russia, came east via Siberia. By 1939 there were estimated to be 200,000 Orthodox in China, with five bishops, and one Orthodox university operating at Harbin. Most of the clergy and people were ethnic Russians. The advent of repressive communist masters to China altered this situation of slow growth. At first the communist government ordered the repatriation of all ‘foreign’ missionaries working in China. Many of the Russian ethnic Orthodox clergy were sent back at that time to the USSR to meet a difficult fate, though others escaped to America. Later the Cultural

Revolution savagely crushed all forms of the surviving Chinese Orthodox Church. In 1957 the Chinese Orthodox Church was given autonomous status by the Moscow patriarchate. This occurred despite its tiny size, and its still struggling condition, because of the political necessity of having verifiable independence from all 'foreign powers'.

Today Orthodoxy is not among the official forms of Christianity acknowledged by the Chinese communist state, but a small body of the Orthodox continues nonetheless. There are Orthodox parishes in Beijing and north-eastern China that still meet despite official disapproval, as well as parishes operating in Shanghai, Guangdong province, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The Russian Orthodox church of SS Peter and Paul resumed services in Hong Kong, and the ecumenical patriarchate has also sent a bishop there recently. The Orthodox mission church in Taiwan is also operating freely. The Chinese Orthodox have had an immensely difficult time under a heavy yoke that still has not lifted from them.

The various Orthodox diaspora communities

The diaspora consists of the Orthodox faithful of all the above patriarchal, autocephalous, or autonomous Orthodox churches (known practically speaking as 'the jurisdictions'¹⁰⁶) who have moved elsewhere in the world and are, in their new countries,¹⁰⁷ looked after by bishops appointed by the home synods of their originating churches. All Greeks living in the diaspora (a large number indeed) now fall under the jurisdictional care of the patriarchate of Constantinople, which has exarchates and missions in most Western countries, given that the modern Greeks (like their ancient forebears) travelled far and wide. The Russian Orthodox also had a large diaspora population (especially after the political disruptions of the early twentieth century), but its diaspora situation was fragmented, because of its political troubles, into four major divisions which will be discussed shortly. The other larger churches that had a considerable number of faithful living abroad either set up pastoral missions for them or knew that they could be pastorally cared for by the existing Greek and Russian church provisions. In recent times, for example, there has been much mobility among younger Romanians (following the political relaxation of the country and its entrance into the European Union), and, naturally, an extension of the pastoral provision for Romanian Orthodox in Europe and America has followed. It has been, typically, organized by the patriarchal synod of Romania, with specific reference to the pastoral needs of the Romanians in the diaspora, with an archbishop in western and central Europe respectively, and also in America. All of them are members of patriarchal synod. The political problems of Romania in the twentieth century caused the diaspora churches across America to experience some of the fragmentation known among the Russians: with parts of the diaspora wishing to remain in communion with the home synod and other parts wishing to break the link on the grounds that the communist secular powers had infiltrated the mother churches to an unacceptable extent. What was true about the Russians and Romanians was true also of the other churches whose hierarchies came under the Soviet oppression, but who had extensive communities in America and elsewhere.

Diaspora church in this sense means an outlying 'mission' of the original church. Problems arise as to how long a church mission can be established in a land without

becoming indigenized. It is invidious, to the Orthodox, to establish churches where the church has historically already been established under the protection of an ancient patriarchate (the West falling under the aegis of the Roman patriarchate). The overlaying of a separate ecclesial structure (indigenous dioceses and synods, for example), is regarded by the Orthodox as proselytism, not true missionary activity, and is taken as a sign of a profoundly defective ecclesiology when it is forced upon the Orthodox in their own countries by so-called Western Christian 'missionaries'. This situation holds, even after the long-established secession of the Roman patriarchate from the pentarchy. Diaspora churches, therefore, which are in the traditional territories of the Roman patriarchate are in a different situation from those in the 'New World' (Asia, the Americas) a situation which was envisaged canonically by the Fathers of Chalcedon in 451, who laid responsibility for authentically 'new' missions with the patriarchate of Constantinople.¹⁰⁸ Indigenous Orthodox hierarchies will not, then, be declared in the traditional regions of the Western Church but can and ought to be declared in the 'new lands' that are part of neither Western nor Eastern Christianity. One example is the large and energetic Syrian diaspora in America, part of the patriarchate of Antioch. Over the course of time this has grown more and more acclimatized in the American cultural scene. It has attracted many converts, even among its clergy, who have no ancestral connection with Syria. The expanding grant of 'autonomous' status (without a formal declaration of autonomy being made) often marks this level of acclimatization of such a community which was once truly a mission. As a partially autonomous church, however, it retains its organizational links with its founding community, even though its day-to-day governance may be wholly in the hands of the local hierarchs.

Apart from these continuing 'mission' churches of the national Orthodox bodies, for example the Serbian or Romanian Orthodox churches with their parishes in England, or America, which all look back to the authority and jurisdiction of the patriarch and his synod (but through the administration of a small resident hierarchy set up for the pastoral oversight of that particular diaspora in western Europe) the concept of Orthodox diaspora churches comes most into view in the cases of the Greek and the Russian Orthodox, who are the most numerous.

The Greek churches of the diaspora are the simplest to account for. As mentioned earlier, all of them are under the immediate jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople. The largest of them are the archdiocese of North and South America, the Greek Orthodox in Australia, and the archdiocese of Thyatira and Great Britain. They each have a large measure of autonomous government, but are, canonically speaking, simply extensions of the Constantinopolitan Church in foreign parts.

The other largest single group comprising the 'diaspora' is the Russian Orthodox outside of Russia. This diverse and extended community of Orthodox faithful has been to a large degree 'problematized', ecclesiastically speaking, mainly because of the communist revolution of the early decades of the twentieth century, and the immense hold that these hostile masters placed over the Russian Church within its borders over the course of an entire lifetime. Resulting from this time of persecution, and the considerable refugee problem resulting from it, the Russian Orthodox community abroad fragmented into four divisions that continue to cause considerable disturbance among the affairs of the Russian Orthodox world-wide.

Of the four major groups the first is composed of those dioceses outside Russia that have remained loyal to the allegiance of the Moscow patriarch. There are a small

number of such parishes, in America, western Europe, Britain (the archdiocese of Sourozh¹⁰⁹), and elsewhere. They were never attached to the Karlovtsy synod and in places (such as America and Britain) the disunion between these two groups was always a public sign of the wider troubles of the Russian Church under communism.

The second is the group of churches organized after the Karlovtsy synod (1921). Tikhon, the last patriarch of Russia before the communist yoke was imposed with a vengeance, disseminated an encyclical in 1920 that laid down emergency plans if communication between the Russians abroad and the patriarchate at home should become difficult or impossible. He was acting out of the foresight that a long darkness was about to descend. Just how long that would last perhaps escaped even his saintly perception. In 1921 the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church outside the borders of Russia, who were free to act, met at the invitation of the Church of Serbia, to discuss how to organize themselves in those difficult times. It was decided that the final authority over this 'Russian Church Outside Russia' (ROCOR) would be vested in the holy synod of the free bishops, who should meet every year at Karlovtsy (Sremsky Karlovtsy)¹¹⁰ to discuss the condition of the churches under their control and their relation with the church of the motherland, which they now knew to be more and more under the thumb of autocratic political controllers, who were inimically hostile to the church and the Christian religion. Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky, the former metropolitan of Kiev who had been exiled by the Bolsheviks, was elected as the synodical president. They had the allegiance and good will of many of the Russian exiles abroad, but by no means all of them, and not all were willing to recognize their authority when they constituted themselves, more and more, as an 'alternative' to the Russian hierarchy in Russia. In 1921 a statement they issued declaring themselves for the restoration of the monarchy, and pledging the support of the church for the return of the Romanovs (as a matter not only of political right, but ecclesiastical polity), made their identification as 'reactionaries' easy for Bolshevik propaganda at home, and caused much unease among the wider Russian Church, which did not universally have rosy memories of life under the tsars.

Tikhon, who retained a high standing in the eyes of all the Russian bishops overseas, was meanwhile arrested and imprisoned (1922–3) by the communist authorities. Most have presumed that they exerted extreme psychological pressure on him in this time of incarceration. In the following year, he issued (or was ordered to issue) a statement expressing dissatisfaction with the way the Karlovtsy synod had arranged matters, even though it had gained the assent of most of the hierarchs outside Russia. Instead he appointed one of the leading Russian hierarchs, Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievski) of Paris, to work out a new plan for the governance of the ROCOR. This too was adopted by the synod outside Russia, but received no official endorsement from Tikhon. Tikhon established Evlogy as his personal representative for western Europe, and Bishop Platon (Rojdestvensky) for North America. At first the ROCOR synod was very anxious to keep Evlogy and Platon closely bound to its decisions, but the tension was soon to prove too much. After Tikhon's death in 1925 the succession to the newly re-established patriarchate¹¹¹ was somewhat irregular. While alive, Tikhon had nominated three potential successors, only one of whom survived by 1925, namely Sergius, a prelate whose career had already manifested a certain willingness to 'bend' to the new political masters.

The hierarchs of the ROCOR synod had little confidence in him, and would not recognize the legitimacy of his election or that of his immediate successors (under a synod that was no longer free). They have also claimed, following the logic of this rejection, that the decrees of the patriarchs under Soviet control lacked canonical force, being merely the political tools of communist oppression. In 1927 the ROCOR synod issued a condemnation of Evlogy and Platon. In the following year it flatly refused any ecclesiastical obedience to Patriarch Sergius following on his demand that all exiled Russian bishops should cease from political activities of any kind, and was in turn condemned by the patriarch and the Russian synod as a result. Evlogy was reconfirmed in his role as representative of the Russian Church in western Europe by Sergius, but in 1930 he was relieved of his duties in a blatantly political move. From the death of Tikhon onwards the ROCOR synod has been immensely suspicious of the Russian hierarchs, regarding them as tools of the state. In their turn they have been denounced and excommunicated, and pilloried as reactionary monarchists. In the decades following the fall of communism in Russia, however, there were encouraging signs of reconciliation between the hierarchs of the synod and the Moscow patriarchate. Patriarch Alexis made every effort to restore union, and the results of that 'dialogue of love' advanced to the point that, in the autumn of 2006, the hierarchs declared their decision for the restoration of full canonical union with the patriarchate, though retaining the autonomous administration of their parishes and clergy. The reunion finally took place in 2007, and now the ROCOR synod will receive the chrism from the hands of the patriarch of Moscow, and its bishops will be given seats as part of the Moscow holy synod. This welcome reconciliation marked the end of a long chapter of sufferings resulting from the severe persecution of the Russian Church throughout the twentieth century.

The third group of the Russian Orthodox diaspora was led by the aforementioned Metropolitan Evlogy of Paris. At first he had been a significant part of the hierarchy of the synod, but after 1926 he ceased to attend its meetings. Separating from them, he had intended to keep lines of communication open with Patriarch Sergius in Moscow, but in 1927 he was denounced by the ROCOR synod for vacillation, and in 1930 he was personally disowned by Sergius for having had the audacity to pray in public for 'persecuted Christians in Russia', when there was, as everyone knew, 'no such thing'. By 1931, therefore, Evlogy realized that his hope of keeping formal lines of connection open under such bizarre circumstances was not realistic, and he placed himself and his parishes under the jurisdictional care of the patriarch of Constantinople, despite the loud protests of both Moscow and the ROCOR synod.

Evlogy was never happy with this arrangement, however, and at the end of his life was personally reconciled with the Moscow patriarchate, but the parishes of his jurisdiction had no desire to follow his example, seeing the communist powers in Russia gaining more and more of a stranglehold over their church and homeland. The ecclesiastical arrangement of Constantinopolitan supervision of the Russian parishes abroad was suspended in 1965 (one presumes after protests by the Moscow hierarchs), but even at that stage the Russian parishes harboured deep suspicions of the intentions of the Moscow patriarchate, and refused to return to its allegiance, continuing their independent existence. In 1971 the patriarchate of Constantinople once more assumed a supervisory role. It was the French group of Russian Orthodox who had a massively important role in raising the consciousness of the Western churches in regard to

Orthodoxy after the Second World War. The White Russians in Paris were among the first to bring to the attention of most Europeans (especially French Catholics and British Anglicans) the beauties of the Orthodox liturgy, and the strengths of Orthodox theology. Many theologians were among the group of exiles,¹¹² and their works gained a large and sympathetic audience in Europe.

One of them, Sergius Bulgakov, was instrumental in founding the Society of SS Alban and Sergius which did so much to open up friendly relations between the Anglican Church and the Russian Orthodox in exile. Bulgakov was a brilliant teacher and writer, a protégé of Evlogy of Paris, who appointed him as a professor in the Theological Institute of St Sergius which he had founded in 1925. Bulgakov's trial and condemnation for heretical teaching¹¹³ by the Karlovtsy Synod hierarchs was a cause célèbre at this period, and further complicated relations among the Russians in exile.

The fourth group of the Russian diaspora was formerly known as the Metropolia Church (The Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America) and has had a lively and dramatic story of growth, to the point that it is now known as the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). It is undoubtedly the largest body of the four we have been considering that originally grew out of the Russian patriarchate 'abroad', and the one with the most interesting history in recent years.¹¹⁴ Its size and importance today are such that we ought to consider it apart from the ethnic diaspora origins it once had, and list it under its own classification as a church that has claimed autonomous status, even though the whole Orthodox world has not yet recognized that autonomous position.

The Orthodox Church in America

The Russian Orthodox in America, even before the Russian Revolution, were constituted into a formal diocese of their own as an integral part of the synod of the Moscow patriarchate. The pre-revolutionary metropolitan in America, Archbishop Platon, had his residence in New York. In 1924 he too severed relations with the Moscow patriarchate, but in the year after his death, that is, in 1935, his successor Metropolitan Theophilus joined with the Karlovtsy synod, and so things remained until a synod of the American Russian Orthodox, held in Cleveland in 1946, caused a major rupture among them. Five of the nine constituent bishops of the American Russian synod affirmed their loyalty to the ROCOR synod but were only followed by a minority of the parishes. The other four bishops voted to rejoin the Moscow patriarchate, and so they separated. When the pro-Moscow bishops made their offer, however, it was on condition that the patriarchate should acknowledge their extensive autonomy *de facto* (they meant their synodical form of self-government 'free from communist interference').

The patriarchate refused to grant this, and so the group continued in an autonomous fashion generally known as the Russian Metropolia, the Greek Catholic Russian Orthodox Church in America. To this body belonged a cadre of eminent theologians who were very important in the self-articulation of this group as having a consciousness of its own destiny beyond being simply a colonial extension of the Russian 'mission' in the United States. Among them were Fathers Florovsky, Schmemmann, and Meyendorff, known as much for their theological writings as their work in

establishing the Russian Orthodox seminary of St Vladimir's, in New York.¹¹⁵ It was this ecclesial group which, in 1970, was granted autonomy by the official decree of the Moscow patriarchate. At that time the patriarchate went even further, and granted autocephalous status too. Few of the other Orthodox churches have acknowledged the legitimacy of this grant of autocephaly by the Moscow patriarchate. This was without prejudice to the regard in which the OCA was held, generally speaking, in terms of its doctrinal purity and Orthodox legitimacy. But 'autonomous' status was one thing that could be granted to the Metropolia by the Moscow patriarchate. To go beyond that with either a grant or a declaration of autocephaly was tantamount to the OCA laying claim to be the representative and indigenous 'Orthodox Church of America' of which, according to the ancient canons of the Orthodox Church, there can only be one such body in a nation, never more. This claim for autocephaly was thus regarded by many of the other Orthodox in America (certainly by the large number of Greeks) as transgressing on the rights and privileges of the American Orthodox who wished to retain allegiance to their ancestral traditions, and not be an autocephalous church.

More than one other body, it is true, joined in the 'synthesis' which made the OCA more than simply the Metropolia Church which it had been prior to 1970,¹¹⁶ but the extent of the 'coming together' entirely left out the vast Greek archdiocese which remained under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, and that alone meant that the passage to autocephalous status (at least as recognized by the wider Orthodox world) will hardly be a *de facto* condition without the Phanar's future agreement. In 1970 there was very little interest among the Greek Orthodox in America to separate from Constantinople, and join with the OCA project, and there is no indication this situation has altered since.

The considerable size of the OCA, however, with over a million faithful, and its vigour in pushing for the establishment of an indigenous American church, have raised the pressing and controversial matter of how long an Orthodox church can pretend that it is a diaspora, or a mission. At what stage does a church cease to be a collection of immigrants and move towards an indigenous establishment? This is, of course, exactly what constituted the Russian Orthodox themselves in the sixteenth century; and many would argue that it is exactly what ought to be happening in America today. While some lament the very idea of severing historical and cultural ties, many others of the Orthodox, in one of the largest, and arguably the most powerful, countries on earth are finding it a natural thing to progress towards the establishment of an American Orthodoxy.

While it is normal that many groups would prefer not to be wholly Americanized, but retain cultural and religious ties with the ancestral homeland from which their churches were first established as overseas missions, the problem becomes exacerbated, generation by generation, as the younger Orthodox belonging to those ethnic groups cease to regard themselves in any residual sense as Russians, Serbians, Albanians, and so on, and think and speak of themselves only as Americans. The continuing use of the ancestral languages, Greek or Slavonic or Romanian, in the liturgy in America, thus stands as a comfort and an important symbol to some, while to others it has become a real stumbling block, which seems to contradict the historical principles of Orthodoxy, which encourage the establishment of worship in the natural language of the people. Many younger Orthodox see their church experience as

hopelessly immured in 'past-looking' nostalgia, which has little interest for them, and makes their catechizing of their thoroughly Americanized children increasingly difficult within a living ecclesial environment.

What makes the situation even more confused (and confusing) however, is that America in the third millennium continues to act, as it did in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a massive magnet for immigrants from eastern Europe, the traditional Orthodox countries who first established missions there for the first wave of American Orthodox immigrants. Many OCA churches have had to revert to more and more use of Slavonic in the liturgy, after having spent many decades evolving towards an English-language liturgy, simply to accommodate the pastoral needs of newly arrived immigrants in their churches. The new arrivals, for the most part, have not the slightest interest, yet, in the establishment of an indigenous American Orthodox Church.

In addition to all of this, the growing number of Orthodox groups (every national church of the Orthodox world has some representation in America), all with their own separate episcopal jurisdictions in the United States, continues to contradict fundamental canonical principles of the establishment of the church in a 'new territory',¹¹⁷ not least among which is that there must be only one Orthodox bishop in any city, to whom all the Orthodox faithful should give allegiance. This principle of 'one bishop, one church, one Eucharist' is day by day being muddled by the overlapping confusion of 'jurisdictionalism' in America. Attempts to resolve this contradiction, by the establishment of a Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA) which would represent all the Orthodox hierarchs in international communion meeting together to find a common mind on all issues important to American Orthodoxy, have so far produced little more than a small movement towards the 'appropriate' situation, towards which the OCA (perhaps prematurely, some of its hostile critics sometimes say) pointed the way with the notion of an indigenous American Orthodox church.

Notes

- 1 The term now more commonly designates the Roman Catholic 'Eastern rite' churches.
- 2 A mystery typified in the icon of the Anastasis, or 'Harrowing of Hell'.
- 3 In the sense that the world was made for beatific union with its God.
- 4 Acts 2.2–4.
- 5 Matt. 28.19.
- 6 Christians have historically read the Old Testament through the lens of the New, up until the rise of the historical-critical method in the schools of the West.
- 7 See the account of the healing of the blind man in John 9. Many modern scholars read the regular references in this story to community tension with the Pharisees (John 9.22) as revealing the concern of the evangelist in his own day with the problem of expulsion of Christians from the synagogues.
- 8 Barrett 2001.
- 9 See Ignatius of Antioch: *To the Magnesians* 6.1; *To the Smyrnaeans* 8.1–2; *To the Ephesians* 20.2.
- 10 For a more detailed presentation see McGuckin 1989.
- 11 Cf. 1 Pet. 2.1–3; 2 John 1.7–11; Matt. 24.24; Rev. 2.2.
- 12 And, of course, some that were in use then have since been allowed to fall into abeyance.
- 13 Originally the name of a division of provincial Roman territory. Christianity followed

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- a pattern of assigning a single bishop to each of these areas. Today the word has come to mean primarily the 'ecclesiastical' division of a single bishop's territory.
- 14 The term cathedral comes from the Greek *kathedra*, or 'seat' signifying the church where the bishop's throne of doctrine was situated. In antiquity the famous orators sat on 'thrones of doctrine' and the bishop's signified his role as apostolic successor and source of Orthodox teaching for the diocese.
 - 15 The exchange was known as the Quartodecimans Controversy. Further: see McGuckin 2004a.
 - 16 1 Tim. 3.1–7.
 - 17 The battle of the Milvian Bridge, 28 Oct. 312. On his way to this critical fight for control of the Roman empire, the church writers Lactantius and Eusebios tell us that he either saw a vision in the sky or had a revelatory dream, instructing him to adopt the chi-rho (a cipher for the name of Christ) as his army's battle standard.
 - 18 Now continued in the ritual of the consecration of a Christian king or queen.
 - 19 Further, see McGuckin 2003.
 - 20 The ancient church was eventually to recognize the super-city status of five great sees: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem (the last as a nominal symbol). Their bishops were afforded the title 'patriarch' or 'pope'. The highest level of international consensus of the faith was lodged in the communion of the five popes. When the Pope of Rome separated from the communion of the other four Eastern popes, Orthodoxy regarded the ancient unity of the Eastern and Western churches as having been broken: a disunity which still continues. The four popes are still an integral part of the Orthodox system of governance. The Western Church, of course, also still looks to its pope, the only one the Latin world had in antiquity or in the present. In more recent times the number of Eastern 'patriarchs' has been added to, recognizing the importance of the growth of new patriarchal sees as countries have risen in status since ancient times.
 - 21 1 Cor. 2.16.
 - 22 Now collected in the volumes known as the Paterika. The collection gathered in the eighteenth century, known as the Philokalia, is one of the Paterika sources best known in the West.
 - 23 For its creed and decrees (and those of the other ecumenical councils) see Percival 1900, or Tanner 1990; for more on their history and theology see Tanner 2001 and Davis 1987.
 - 24 The word derived from a bishop's seat, or throne of teaching (*kathedra*), that designates a diocese.
 - 25 For more detail see McGuckin 1994b.
 - 26 Since ancient times there have been many attempts at reconciliation. At the end of the last, and during the present, century, there have been renewed efforts, based upon a newly advanced claim presented by scholars from both churches that the Coptic Christology (founded upon the writings of St Cyril of Alexandria and those of Severus of Antioch) can actually be reconciled with the meaning of the statement of faith issued by the Chalcedonian Fathers. The results of this theological dialogue need to be much more disseminated through the Orthodox world before they can be objectively considered, and assessed, by the faithful at large.
 - 27 His treatise on the *Mystagogy of the Spirit* is an important text articulating the Orthodox sense that the *Filioque* doctrine (the teaching that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from two distinct sources) is a radical subversion of the patristic doctrine of Trinity.
 - 28 Dvornik 1948.
 - 29 Cited in Runciman 1955: 139.
 - 30 Innumerable relics of the saints, and icons, and other treasures were taken back to Latin churches in the West in the manner of 'spoils of war', a fact which sent shock waves of scandal all over the Eastern Christian world.
 - 31 Cited in Ware 1987: 71.
 - 32 Words he would come to regret when he fell into the hands of Mehmet the Conqueror, who treated his family unspeakably.

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- 33 See Obolensky 1971.
- 34 Constantine adopted the new name on his tonsuring as a monk.
- 35 Barrett 2001.
- 36 Namely the anti-Chalcedonian churches in Syria and Egypt. as discussed in de la Taille 1926: 281.
- 37 In older English books they used to be called collectively the 'Oriental Orthodox' churches.
- 38 'The one concrete embodiment of God the Word in flesh.' See Newman 1874; Romanides 1964–5.
- 39 The term *Mia physis* means the one concrete reality of the Christ, God-Man, whereas 'Monophysite' is a term applied to them from without as a logical extrapolation of their refusal to assent to the conciliar formula of 'two natures in one person'. The deeper and more accurate understanding of St Cyril, and the conciliar agenda is a critical need for Eastern Christians today. Cf. McGuckin 1994a.
- 40 Which reflects the fact that they tend to base their Christological position on St Cyril of Alexandria's early theology.
- 41 Once called Jacobite (from a famous early bishop, Jacob Baradeus), but as an 'outsider' descriptor.
- 42 Only one legitimate ruling bishop in each city according to the ancient principles of church order. Other bishops arose in the course of history on the claim that the incumbent bishop was not teaching Orthodox faith. But Orthodox ecclesiology is still based on this principle: one faith one bishop. If there are two or more ruling bishops in a given city, only one can be authentic, only one can be Orthodox.
- 43 Especially canon 34 of the apostolic canons; canon 6 of Nicaea I (325); canon 2 of Constantinople I (381); canon 28 of Chalcedon (451); canon 36 of the synod in Trullo.
- 44 Rom. 12.5; Gal. 3.28.
- 45 Tribalism, or nationalism, in the sense that it erects human prejudicial categories over and against the ancient demand of catholicity, and the mystery whereby Christ dissolves human barriers by unanimity of mind and heart in the allegiance to his common lordship. There were some sceptical voices heard at the time, in the Orthodox communion as well as outside it, that suggested the patriarchate was being severe to nationalistic phyletism among the Slavs, and had been rather blind to it among the Hellenes.
- 46 That is, an autocephalous church, as distinct from an exarchate or a mission designed to serve the needs of Eastern Christians who happen to live in western Europe.
- 47 Rome, of course, which was the oldest see, is no longer held to be in communion.
- 48 Excepting the ancient Church of Nubia (modern Sudan) which had, from antiquity, ties with Byzantium but which was submerged under Islam, and lost to the Christian world in the fifteenth century; and (of course) the ancient and most venerable Church of Ethiopia, which is now one of the anti-Chalcedonian Eastern churches.
- 49 The patriarch of an autocephalous church will have a supervisory power (not divorced from the national synod, but in its context) of serving as a court of appeal out of the dioceses, and the decisions of local bishops. The same locus of appeal continues often from the churches that were once 'founded' by those patriarchates originally. The patriarchate of Constantinople was given, by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, a right to serve as the final court of appeal for the whole Eastern Orthodox world.
- 50 It may be easiest to adopt the distinction of an 'inviolable jurisdictional power', applying to a ruling bishop in his own diocese, and a 'supervisory power', limited by the canons and interpreted by the synods, applying to metropolitans and patriarchs.
- 51 The patriarch of Alexandria, actually is designated as the 'Pope of Africa', but what is meant here is that there is no papal equivalent of a jurisdictionally monarchical super-episcopacy in Orthodoxy.
- 52 Autocephaly signifies the right of a local church to be completely self-governing, and elect its own hierarchs without the

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- intervention of any other ecclesiastical supervision other than its own local synod. Autonomous status can represent a degree of self-regulation lower than autocephaly, where the supervisory oversight of an older patriarchate can still be combined with more or less complete local self governance in day-to-day affairs. The word 'autocephaly' means 'head of its own affairs': with its own ruling synod. Such synods will be led by a metropolitan archbishop or a patriarch.
- 53 Given a certain precedence of honour according to the date of the establishment of their ecclesiastical independence. But some of them such as Russia, Romania, and Greece, are much more significant than the others in terms of their magnitude.
- 54 The church is so tiny (one monastery), that some regard it as autonomous rather than autocephalous. It is technically the latter since its archbishop has no supervisory senior other than his own synod.
- 55 Bulgarian, Georgian, or Serbian Orthodox living in foreign parts, for example would often not require a separate church, since the Russian liturgy was celebrated in the same church Slavonic they knew at home, and they often joined with the existing Russian diaspora churches. They might only have their 'own' church building in a particularly large city where a sizeable local expatriate population justified it.
- 56 Now known, politically, as Istanbul in Turkey. Formerly it was the centre of the eastern Roman empire and the headquarters of the emperor. The Great Imperial Church (once the church of the patriarchate too) was Hagia Sophia. After the conquest of the city by Islamic forces in 1453, the emperor was killed, and his dynastic rule was ended, and the patriarchate took over (under the sultans) political and religious supervision of all the Christians of the eastern Islamic dominion. After many vicissitudes and sufferings, the patriarchate came in 1603 to be established in its present location in the modest church of St George at the Phanar in Istanbul.
- 57 'Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans only and such bishops also of the dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople; every metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of his province, ordaining his own provincial bishops, as has been declared by the divine canons; but that, as has been above said, the metropolitans of the aforesaid Dioceses should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom and have been reported to him.' Canon 28, Council of Chalcedon (451).
- 58 Making exceptions for ancient custom (where once glorious Christian capitals have been overthrown by non-Christian power, for example) it is expected that the senior hierarch of a church should be seated in a leading city, not a backwater.
- 59 It argued (although it too had risen in importance in Christian affairs because of its own geo political position) that an apostolic foundation imparted a superiority of juridical charism. This was the germinal

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- foundation of the claim for Petrine primacy that would develop in late antiquity into the theology (what the Orthodox would call the *theologoumenon*) of the Papacy.
- 60 Inappropriate nationalism.
- 61 Kidd 1927: 305.
- 62 The statistics of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Barrett 2001) clearly show that the nineteenth to twentieth centuries have been the era of the greatest number of martyrdoms in Christian history.
- 63 John 17.22–3.
- 64 The first among equals. Outlining his rank in terms of the position of other Orthodox bishops.
- 65 Then numbering 1.5 million souls, many of whom were murdered.
- 66 Rhodes, Leros, Kos, and Karpathos.
- 67 As the recent catalogue of Byzantine and post-Byzantine religious art from the Holy Mountain can demonstrate: Karakatsanis 1997.
- 68 An idea can be gained from the illustrated book by P. Sherrard (1985): *Athos: The Holy Mountain*.
- 69 See McGuckin 2004b, 2005a.
- 70 Further, see McGuckin 1994b.
- 71 Those who followed the faith of the king, that is the emperor of the Byzantines, and in other words accepted the Council of Chalcedon (known as dyophysites because they professed the two natures, divine and human, of the Incarnate Lord).
- 72 A corruption of the Greek word for Egyptian. Known also to their enemies as Monophysites because they would not accept the formulation of ‘two natures [in Christ] after the Incarnate Union’.
- 73 In the fifth century Christian ascendancy the archbishops had taken over parts of the Serapeum in Alexandria as their residence. The obelisk now in Central Park, New York, was once found gracing the steps to their palace.
- 74 The story of the foundation of the church, by indigenous initiators, who were then supported by the Alexandrian patriarch, is told briefly in Ware 1987: 196–8.
- 75 Between 1600 and 1720 six patriarchs of Antioch made professions of allegiance to the pope.
- 76 It is a commonly used word (though one that is regarded as pejorative by the communities themselves) to describe those churches, formerly Orthodox, who acceded to the jurisdiction of Rome. Thereby they technically became Roman Catholics of the Eastern or Oriental rite.
- 77 The Orthodox patriarch used to reside at Damascus, the Latin at Rome, the anti-Chalcedonian at Mardin, and in addition there were the four Uniate communities of the Greek Melkites, the Armenians, the Maronites, and the Syrians. The residences are now more mobile.
- 78 The ancient Antioch is now Antakiya, a small, provincial and massively Islamic town.
- 79 The Roman imperial province of the *Oriens*.
- 80 Founded by Origen of Alexandria and Bishops Theoctistus of Caesarea and Alexander of Jerusalem. It had many luminaries holding its headship after that point including the great church historian Bishop Eusebios of Caesarea.
- 81 In the West it is more commonly called by its medieval name: the church of the Holy Sepulchre.
- 82 The later Crusades were in part stimulated by the act of the mad Caliph Hakim, who destroyed the tomb of Jesus in the eleventh century. The Al Aksa mosque built on the platform in Jerusalem where the Temple once stood (actually on the site of the southern portico of Herod’s Temple complex) incorporates the Crusader church of the Templars.
- 83 For a good modern narrative see the sobering account in Dalrymple 1998.
- 84 Patriarch John of Antioch had also heavily censured their collective behaviour at the synod, and was himself regarded as canonically irregular in his behaviour by refusing to join in the conciliar sessions.
- 85 Once they were Christians, as were the surrounding lands, part of the Byzantine empire, but for centuries past they have been Muslim.
- 86 The ‘Mountain of Moses’ is sacred to all three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

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- 87 See Baddeley and Brunner 1996.
- 88 Old Rome (fallen, that is in its separation from the Orthodox fold); and New Rome (Byzantium), fallen in subjugation to the Ottomans. The Russian monk and political theorist Philotheos of Pskov wrote, in 1510, a letter to Tsar Basil III which included the following lines: 'I will add a few words on the present Orthodox empire of our ruler. He is on this earth the single Tsar of the Christians, the leader of the Apostolic Church which stands no longer in Rome or Constantinople, but in the blessed city of Moscow. She alone now shines in the whole world brighter than the sun. . . . All Christian Empires are fallen and in there place stands only the empire of our ruler, in accordance with the prophetic books. Two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and a fourth there shall not be' (cited in Baynes and Moss 1961: 385).
- 89 In 1472 Ivan III (Ivan the Great) married Princess Sophia, niece of the last Paleologan emperor of Constantinople. From this time the grand dukes adopted the title of 'Junior Caesar' (tsar is a corruption of Caesar) and used the heraldic device of the Paleologans, the double-headed eagle (the dominions of Rome in East and West). More and more they came to see themselves as the continuing might and legitimacy of the Roman emperors, with rights over church and state based on those of the Christian emperors.
- 90 Those (like Princes Boris and Gleb) who have elected a path of suffering rather than the assertion of their rights, in honour of the suffering Lord of Humility.
- 91 Bouteneff 2004: p. vi.
- 92 Mark 10.45.
- 93 See Meyendorff 1981; Obolensky 1971.
- 94 The Holy Wisdom: in emulation of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, though architecturally it was more in the form of the Byzantine church of Holy Apostles.
- 95 What has been called the 'Northern Thebaid' after the first exemplar of monasticism in the arid heat of the Egyptian desert.
- 96 Many of the old guard remained in power after the fall of Russian Soviet communism and the Ukrainian declaration of independence, relabelling themselves superficially.
- 97 Moldavia today is normally used as a regional designation for the parts of the ancient Moldovian principality still remaining in the territory of Romania, and the new republic now detached from the Soviet Union is designated as Moldova.
- 98 The word connotes 'tribalism' and opposed the notion of ethnic groups claiming to be separate churches on the basis of ethnicity. Its strong point is that the Church of Christ cannot be subdivided along 'ethnic' lines. The communion of the Gospel has (or ought to have) transcended this way of humanly thinking about society, as something merely tribal, divisive, and self-protective. But the patriarch's denunciation, at the time, overlooked the two significant perspectives: (a) that many of the Slavic churches under the jurisdiction of the Phanar as it conducted itself under the yoke of the Ottomans, seemed to be suffering from Greek phyletism, and (b) that the ancient canonical principle of independent secular administration, meaning independent ecclesial administration (which had given birth to the ancient patriarchates themselves), had not evaporated in the modern age, leaving only the old privileges unsailable, but on the contrary was rightfully being applied to new political realities in a world where the Byzantine emperor was long dead.
- 99 St Sava managed to maintain the warmest relations with both the senior patriarchs.
- 100 Henry 1930; Joanta 1992.
- 101 Chief among them are Neamts, the central church of Moldavia, rebuilt by Stephen the Great in 1497 (the printing press of Paisy Velichovsky was based here: Humor, founded in 1535); Putna monastery, built by Stephen the Great in 1466, who is himself buried here; Voronets (1486), built to replace the wooden cell where Daniel the Hesychast (Stephen's confessor) had spent his last

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- years, and to house his tomb – it received its magnificent frescoes in 1547 under Prince Petru Rares – the monastery and the numerous Hesychast cells in the surrounding hills were destroyed by the Austrian armies in 1786; Sucevitsa (1583–6); and Moldovitsa monastery (1546), rebuilt under Prince Petru Rares.
- 102 See Stebbing 2003.
- 103 A title originally used by the primate of the Armenian Church to signify the leader of an autonomous church – one which was largely in charge of its own affairs, but which recognized the right of an older patriarchate to appoint its senior hierarch.
- 104 Bolshakov (1940) puts it in these terms: ‘They were repelled for ever by the methods used to turn them into Roman Catholics’ (cited in Attwater 1962: 126 n. 8).
- 105 On the charge of protecting the assassins of the infamous Gestapo chief Heydrich.
- 106 There are, of course, no ‘denominations’ in Orthodoxy, which regards such a thing as a heresy, since the Church is one, and cannot be other than one.
- 107 Generally speaking that means the non-Orthodox lands of the West, but even in Orthodox countries the various national churches tend to have a pastoral oversight of their own faithful, at least in terms of offering a church where the liturgy can be celebrated in their language (although this is never set up as a independent church in another Orthodox church’s territory). So, for example, in Athens there is a Russian-language church staffed by Russian priests, a fraternal arrangement between the hierarchs of both countries.
- 108 It has never been as simple as this in ‘real life’ however, as the establishment of Orthodox mission churches has always followed the natural process of the establishment of trade with new countries, that immediately required the setting up of churches to care for the pastoral need of the traders from the different national churches. This particularly had reference to the Russians, who had an expanding empire of great proportions while the rest of the Orthodox world was politically in bondage.
- 109 Formerly led by the widely respected metropolitan, Antony Bloom. Throughout his life he retained full relations with the Moscow patriarchate. After his death parts of the Sourozh diocese preferred to place themselves under the jurisdiction of the Russian archdiocese of western Europe under the Omophorion of the patriarch of Constantinople.
- 110 Sremsky Karlovitz in Yugoslavia. Its first meeting was held at the invitation of the patriarch of Serbia. After the Second World War, and the fall of Yugoslavia to communist control, it moved its meeting headquarters to Munich, and after 1949 to buildings on the Upper East Side of New York City.
- 111 The Muscovite patriarchate had been abolished by Peter the Great several generations before, who replaced it with synodical government, and it had only just been reconstituted when Tikhon was elected as the first incumbent of the restoration. After Tikhon’s death, Stalin delayed the reassignment of patriarchal status for many years until he had observed how Sergius would behave.
- 112 Bulgakov, Florovsky, Lossky, Zernov, Evdokimov among them.
- 113 Especially his Sophia speculations, which have never been received by Orthodoxy at large. His condemnation, however, was more than an act designed to ensure purity of doctrine, and was politically motivated to weaken Evlogy’s prestige. One of the results was to identify (rightly or wrongly) ROCOR as the group that tolerated no new thought, and wished to recreate Russia in the Romanov mould out in the West, while the Evlogy group was producing fascinating writings and engaging in the complicated ecclesiastical world they now discovered in the West. That tension is still in evidence today, a peculiarly enduring pathology of the communist legacy in relation to the validity of Orthodoxy’s

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- relationship to its non-Orthodox intellectual environment.
- 114 See Bogolepov 2001.
- 115 This, growing from small seeds in the classrooms of Union Theological Seminary, New York, moved to a fine campus in Crestwood, near New York, and today is one of the leading Orthodox seminaries of the world, with one of the most important of all English-language Orthodox presses.
- 116 The OCA currently includes within its organizational unity parishes of Romanian, Albanian, and Bulgarian tradition.
- 117 How long one can go on regarding America as a 'new world' is also a matter of some speculation.